

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 116

November 1982

Contents

THE CHRIST

FAITHFULNESS

EXTRACT

THE CHILDREN'S CROWN

THE CHRIST

Luke 2: 25-33; 24: 25,26; Ephesians 3: 14-21

J.M. I thought we might look at the thought of 'the Christ'. It comes into each of these passages. The Spirit would help us to expand our knowledge of the Christ. It involves the anointed Man, God's ideal. I think it is related to the question of God and men. The Son generally is related to the Father and I judge that the Christ is related to God. I think that in the thought of 'the Christ' there is concentrated the thought of man, so that everything that is for men is seen in Him, in that blessed Person. That is what is in mind in the passage in Luke 2, though perhaps we might not be justified in confining it to that. In chapter 24 we have the great thought of Christ glorified: "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" Divine righteousness enters into the glorification of Christ, but we might see in His glorification the great system that is in the divine mind for God's pleasure, involving men. In Ephesians 3 we have the thought of the Christ dwelling through faith in our hearts, and then to know the love of the Christ which passeth knowledge. Both references are very profound, particularly the latter, involving, as it does, that which surpasses knowledge. Yet something is there which is to be known, and if we think of 'the Christ' we think of what He is in relation to God. It might be profitable to feel after what is involved in the expression 'the love of the Christ'. "That the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts" means that He has a settled place in our affections. It is safe to say that God has a settled place in the affections of the Christ. The idea of 'the Christ' brings that out, the perfection of man in relation to God, and that God would have a settled place in the affections of the Christ. The love of the Christ would really involve that, but it is that that blessed Person has a settled place in our affections in order that we may be drawn into this great system of divine glory, divine affection, which is for God's pleasure.

Jas.M. Reference was made yesterday to Acts 2: 36: "God has made... Jesus... both Lord and Christ". 'The Christ' would be another

thought than 'the Lord'. It is something that He has been made. We have been taught that He is Lord in His own right (although as it says He is made Lord), and that He has been made Christ.

J.M. That brings out the great place He has as the administrator of all that God is towards men. The woman in John 4 says "Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?" (v 29). That would particularly come home to her in that He was the administrator or the giver of the Holy Spirit, which would have a strong connection with the beginning of the Acts. It would also relate to the way in which He was leading her in her affections into the service of God.

Jas.M. She would understand that as He goes on to speak about God in that section.

J.M. "God is a spirit; and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth". Underlying what we say, of course, is the necessity for the Holy Spirit, but if we are rightly to enter into the service of God it is necessary to know the Christ.

A.McB. Would you say more about the thought of the Christ being related to God and man. In the epistle to the Hebrews, for instance, the writer speaks a great deal of 'the Christ'.

J.M. I cannot say very much but I have the distinct impression that the Christ sets out the thought of man. I think what is stressed is His humanity and the perfection of His humanity, so that what is set out in the Christ is what God really desires to see in man, and that it is related to God rather than to the Father. It is not exactly the idea of family relationships; it is a question, if I have understood it rightly, of men and God. It is not that sonship is not an eternal thought, it is; but finally the tabernacle of God is with men. I think 'the Christ' comes into that line of consideration.

A.McB. I think that is very suggestive. One thinks of the anointed vessel being spoken of as the Christ. That would relate to the testimonial sphere, would it not?

J.M. That is right. There is a vessel here which is morally like the blessed Man who is in the presence of God and is glorified there, a vessel in which every thought of God is seen. The thought of 'the Christ' as related to the assembly in the Corinthian epistle is that she can be representative of God. We see in Christ personally a Man under the divine eye who is entirely for the pleasure of God. He sets out fully and uniquely what God has in His thoughts in relation to men.

A.McB. Is it intended then to affect us that Simeon saw a babe but he saw the Lord's Christ? Does that show how attractive the idea of the Christ is?

J.M. It does, and he was able to look on in anticipation in his affections to what would be there for men. He speaks of Him as "a light for revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel". In Simeon there is also some thought of the consecration of the priesthood. His hands and arms were full, full of the fine flour. The Christ had a place in Simeon's affections by the Spirit. Luke develops the idea of what is priestly in the service of God.

Jas.B. Later in the gospel Peter says, in reply to the Lord's question, "But ye, who do ye say that I am?", "The Christ of God", Luke 9: 20. Do you think that bears on it?

J.M. It does; it is the Christ of God. That emphasises what we are saying, that it is really a Man for God. He sets out, as far as God is concerned, the thought of man fully. I sometimes wonder whether we sufficiently appreciate the reality of the humanity of that glorious Man and how as man He answered in His affections to God.

H.F. Would you just say what is the difference between 'Christ' and 'the Christ'. Christ has become a name but 'the Christ' carries something more.

J.M. Yes it does. I hesitate to use the word but it is an "official" position from a certain point of view. We want to be careful as to that but I think 'the Christ' becomes the administrator of all that God is towards men. That is what the woman in John 4 came into: "is not he the Christ?" (v 29). He brought God and all that God was towards

mankind into the soul of that woman. The result is that He leads that woman on to the service of God. That is the idea of 'the Christ'.

H.F. That is helpful, and it does not detract from affections for the Lord. As the hymn says, 'In Him, Thy Christ, Thine own anointed One' (No.119). It does not diminish any affection for Christ to see Him thus, does it?

J.M. I do not think it does. The position He occupies as the great administrator is a position of tremendous affection. Ephesians speaks of "the love of the Christ". In a certain sense I do not think there can be a greater expression than that. Mr Hibbert helped us some years ago in Maidstone as to a descending and an ascending love. The way love is presented in Scripture is generally as coming down, but I noticed that Mr Taylor refers to the water as rising to its own source; that is, the love that has come down must ascend, and I think that in Christ we see both sides of it. We see what has come down from God, but gloriously we see also what is returning to God. It is in the latter consideration that one finds one's own deficiency.

J.S. Does the anointing then involve God's pleasure? As you say, 'the Christ' is somewhat an official position, but it is what the Lord is morally that has brought it out. The heavens opened upon such a One and heaven declared its delight. What shone in Christ morally gave God a basis for the anointing, did it not?

J.M. Yes, the Person who fills that official position is Himself glorious, morally glorious, and that enhances the official position that He fills. In the thought of 'the Christ' we must see what Christ is personally. In Luke 24 where we read, divine righteousness enters into His glorification. Mr Taylor goes as far as to say that God would not have been God if He had not raised and glorified Jesus because of what He was morally.

W.H. Simeon says "for mine eyes have seen thy salvation". "Thy salvation" is Christ, is it not?

J.M. That is right. He is the One who is taking up everything for God and for men. Luke presents Him in relation to the whole race,

all mankind. That is why I say that the Christ is related to God and men.

W.H. He is "a light for revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of... Israel".

J.M. Yes. He will be known as the Messiah. There is a close connection between the Messiah and the Christ. That is what the woman raises in John 4. She says "I know that Messias is coming" but He says "I who speak to thee am he" (vv 25,26). When she speaks to the men she does not say she has found the Messiah but "is not he the Christ?". I think 'the Christ' goes wider. The Messiah is particularly related to Israel but there is a close connection between the two thoughts, and I think it is as the Christ that He fills the office of the Messiah.

A.A.B. The men say "the Saviour of the world" (v 42). It is how God has come out. He has come out fully in Christ. I was thinking of the expression "before he should see the Lord's Christ".

J.M. Yes, Jehovah's Christ. Finally that is what it will be, God and men. "The tabernacle of God is with men", Rev 21: 3. That thought would involve that this glorious Person has come in as the Christ and that He is glorified as the Christ. I think both sides are in that.

Jas.M. The revelation is within the realm of the Holy Spirit in this setting, is it not?

J.M. I think it is. We need to be more dependent on the Spirit that we might have greater penetration into what is involved in 'the Christ'. I would like to encourage every one of us just to contemplate what that blessed Man means to God. God has found a Man in whom He is fully satisfied and who is the answer to every desire on the part of God Himself. That is the Christ. As the Christ He brings persons into this great sphere of glory and affection that they should be for God's pleasure.

A.McB. I wondered if that very affecting verse in Hebrews 9, "the blood of the Christ, who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God" (v 14), would connect with what you are saying?

J.M. That is a very fine reference: "the blood of the Christ". I understand that is the burnt-offering. Mr Darby says very touchingly that it is the culmination of a life of entire devotedness to God. Every moment of the Lord's life here was filled out for God's pleasure - what He had in a Man in the Christ here apart from the need for the settlement of the moral question! It is a fact that that life was terminated by His offering Himself without spot to God. God made him a sin-offering, but primarily it is not the sin-offering, it is the burnt-offering. It is presented in its purity as apart altogether from the need to settle the moral question. Is that how you understand it?

A.McB. Yes; the fire for the burnt-offering was never to go out; it was perpetuated for the pleasure of God.

J.M. Yes. We often think of what was in such a Person here and it is right to contemplate it, but think of what God has in that blessed Man now! That is one of the points of the epistle to the Hebrews.

Jas.M. The fact that the Gentiles are put before Israel would show that by the Spirit Simeon had a wider outlook. The Messiah, as you were saying, is primarily for the Jews, whereas the Christ would involve the whole human race.

J.M. Yes; and, as we know, Luke is very much influenced in his writing by Paul; so I have no doubt that the development of the thought of the Christ is through Paul. It really involves the assembly and the whole system of glory which God has secured for Himself centred in that Man.

A.A.B. In John 20 when He says "to my God and your God" (v 17), is it as the Christ that He is speaking? I am thinking of those final conditions you have referred to, God and man.

J.M. I have often wondered about that. There are also the promises to the overcomer in Philadelphia (see Rev 3: 12) which link with that. The hymn writer has transposed that to 'The city of Christ's God' (Hymn 221), which is an expression I have thought much about. I would judge that what you say in regard to John 20 is right.

A.A.B. The word that is given to Mary is "my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God". It is, as you were saying earlier, the ascending line. There is One being made known, Christ's God.

J.M. It is always well to keep simple, because if we become too analytical we might sometimes lose the beauty of Scripture. I have a distinct impression that when it is a question of the Father it is a question of sonship. Therefore John, who deals very much with the family side of things, stresses the sonship of Christ. When it is a question of God it seems to me that it is a question of the Christ. It is my impression that when the Lord says "my Father and your Father" and "my God and your God", in the latter connection He would be thinking, if I may use that expression, as to the Christ. Hymns are of course not scripture; nevertheless they express the experiences of spiritual men and men of maturity and it has always affected me that it has been transposed in that hymn to be 'The city of Christ's God'. I think that opens up a wonderful range of things seen in this blessed Man, a Man in relation to His God. That I understand is the thought of the Christ.

A.A.B. That is helpful; it is like final conditions, God tabernacling with men.

J.M. My impression is, speaking carefully, that the more the brethren understand union, what it is to be united to that glorious One, the more we will understand what Christ's God really involves. I think that is what is involved in the passage in Ephesians: "to know the love of the Christ". I think it is the love of a perfect Man for His God, and that what you say in regard to John 20 is right.

J.S. Joseph is spoken of as a fruitful bough whose branches shoot over the wall (see Gen 49: 22). Would that carry the thought somewhat? Also in his history there is his personal affection, and he carries the thought of the great administrator to which you referred earlier. It is not confined to Israel but would extend universally, yet there is his personal love.

J.M. Yes, Joseph is really Christ among the Gentiles. As you say, what comes out in him is tremendous affection. In the type of

Joseph there are two sides, and we must understand both. Pharaoh is generally a type of God and Jacob is generally a type of the Father. I think that bears on what was said as to "my Father and your Father, and... my God and your God". I wonder whether we can get an impression as to what that really means.

Jas.M. What is the difference between 'the anointed Man' and 'the Man anointed'? The anointing involves His present position, does it not?

J.M. Yes it does. The idea of the anointed Man in a certain sense brings in His official position, but the Man anointed is more what He is morally. That is one of the choicest thoughts in this consideration, what Christ was and is as a Man in relation to God Himself, what is in His affections. There are some very fine touches for instance in the epistle to the Romans. It is in a slightly different connection, but there we have "in that he lives, he lives to God", chap 6: 10. What a wonderful thing to think of a Man who is entirely living to God! I think that is involved in 'the Man anointed'.

T.M. The fact that Simeon was not to see death before he should see the Lord's Christ would show the importance in the divine mind that he should see this and receive it too; would it not?

J.M. That is the exercise for us that we should see it. "He should not see death before he should see the Lord's Christ": it is almost as though his life would not have been complete had he not seen the Lord's Christ, because immediately he sees Him he says "Lord, now thou lettest thy bondman go... in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation". It should exercise us therefore that we might get a view of the Lord's Christ. I think we might all agree that in the service of God we are very much affected by our own portion and the blessed relationships into which we have been brought, but the Spirit would help us to develop in something of what God really has in man. That is seen supremely in Christ and then there is the extension of that to men like ourselves. We could well exercise ourselves to be with the Spirit because we need His help in order that we might enter affectionately into what He has in His own mind in relation to Christ.

A.McB. You spoke about the experience of union as bearing on this and helping us. Would you say more as to that because we need help by the Spirit to carry forward these thoughts as the service proceeds? He never, as the service proceeds, gives up the thought of His bride.

J.M. No. Someone a few years ago sought to say that the idea of brethren and the idea of union and even sonship were temporal thoughts, but that is not so. If we are before God as men we are before God as the persons who are united to the Christ. Union goes through. Where union helps us in regard to the thought of 'the Christ', and particularly the love of the Christ, is, as I understand it, that you love the way that Christ loves. It says for instance "we have the mind of Christ", 1 Cor 2: 16. We generally relate that to the area of administration and I am not going to say anything against that, but I would think that "we have the mind of Christ" really springs from union; that is, that the assembly is united to Christ and she is so in the affections of that blessed Man that she thinks the way that He thinks. One was struck a few months ago at the Supper with the way in which the assembly loves as Christ loves. It is immediately from that point that there seems to be some direction from Him as Head in relation to the Father and to God.

A.McB. I think that is very attractive. Joseph goes out over the land of Egypt immediately following the reference to his being given the daughter of Potipherah as wife.

J.M. I was thinking of that, Asnath the daughter of Potipherah the priest in On. What could you say as to the priest in On? It is a mysterious reference, but you have to take Scripture in its simplicity. I think it indicates that there was what was priestly in Asnath and she would then understand what was the mind of Joseph. That is a great thing and it lies at the crux of the service of God, that the assembly is so in the affections of Christ that she appreciates what is in His heart towards His God. I think it is on that basis that the service of God proceeds. It is not a question of the clock or a question even of the order (and I am not saying anything against the order in which we have been so much instructed) but I think the service of God

proceeds in the sensitivity of the Spirit of God helping us powerfully in union with the Christ. I think that is really the basis of the service.

In the scripture in Luke 24 the idea of Him being glorified, "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?", involves divine righteousness. That that Person should be glorified relates back to what was said at the beginning of the reading, that God has made Him both Lord and Christ. I think 'glorified' has in mind that He becomes the centre of a system of glory for God's pleasure. Luke's gospel is the priestly gospel and what is immediately in mind in Luke is the service of God. The Lord says "O senseless and slow of heart to believe". They were looking for the setting up of a system of things down here, but what He was indicating was that there is a system centred in Himself on the other side of death in this ascended and glorious position which is for God's pleasure. I think that emphasises His own place as Man.

Perhaps we might just think a little of "the love of the Christ". It springs from "that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts, being rooted and founded in love". It speaks there of "the breadth and length and depth and height"; then it adds "and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge". The thought of surpassing knowledge would bring in His own uniqueness. As we mentioned, it is "my Father and your Father... my God and your God", not 'our' God, so that He has His own unique knowledge of God which far surpasses what any one of us can have. We need to keep that in our minds.

Jas.M. Would the expression "the Beloved" in chapter 1 (v 6) involve the unique position He is in?

J.M. Yes, that must always be carried reverently in our spirits. But it says "to know the love of the Christ"; that is, there is something that the assembly is peculiarly to enter into as appreciating fully what really is in His heart as Man. That, I think, involves not only His love for the assembly, which undoubtedly would be in it, but primarily His love for His God.

J.S. Would that help us to be more extensive in our thoughts and expressions at the end of the service?

J.M. I think it would, although in the experience of it we are always challenged. It comes back to what we know of union. The whole idea of union is that the spouse is to enter feelingly into the affections of the husband. I think then the assembly is entering feelingly into the affections of the Christ, particularly His affections Godward. Therefore we are with Him in what He is proceeding in in the service.

A.D.M. I was thinking this morning as to that expression, "upon thy right hand doth stand the queen in gold of Ophir", Ps 45: 9. I sometimes wonder if it is right to speak of equality. We speak of the assembly being equal to Christ. I wonder whether it is right to use that expression. I suppose we would have to qualify it slightly.

J.M. Well, she is certainly united to Him; that is safe. We do need expansion on that line. What was said earlier about carrying these things forward in our spirits as we proceed in the service is important so that as we come to what we speak of as the end of the service, the assembly is still united to Christ; she is still under His influence, she is still entering into what is in His affections. If we could get something of that it would greatly enrich the service of God. What is being expressed is not the measure but the character of affection, the character of love that Christ has for His God. What a thing that is! But I think that is the truth. As to our experience we would just have to be humble about it, but if we have the truth before us we can seek help from the Spirit that our experience might deepen.

A.A.B. Do you think then that the assembly would be able to know something of this love which surpasses knowledge, and that this should enter into our answer Godward?

J.M. Yes, I think it should, and therefore the great need to be strengthened with power by the Father's Spirit in the inner man. In chapter 10 of Daniel it is not so much Daniel's own sin that makes him feel his weakness, it is rather the greatness of the things of God that are brought on to his view. He recognises that these things are

so great and he has so little power that it really calls for a power that is outside of himself. That is like "strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man". There is great need of the Spirit strengthening us in view of our entering into union, and if that be so the service of God will be greatly enriched. You can see the rightness of what we have been led to as to the appropriate time in which to have a portion for the Spirit. I think it follows from the experience of union with Christ.

A.A.B. We have an appreciation of the Spirit as having made everything living. "To know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge" is the kernel of it. It is not exactly intelligence, although that comes through love. Would that link with Mary in John 20?

J.M. That is really the secret of it. We need to develop in intelligent affection. The basis is really affection. The power of what is in the divine system, and the glory of the assembly being united to the glorious Man, and the Spirit working inwardly in us strengthening us in power, is all very wonderful and yet very practical. That is how the service of God proceeds. It is not in mere intelligence, but it is dependent upon the place that the Christ has in the affections of the saints.

A.A.B. In Revelation 21, where "the tabernacle of God is with men" (v 3), it is not that the mediatorial system is set aside, but it is not stressed exactly. Does that have a bearing on what we are speaking of?

J.M. Yes. Language fails because if we use the word 'immediate', it means that it is not mediatorial, and that is not quite right. The mediatorial position must be there, otherwise where would we be? We would have no place. But that is not stressed in that opening section of Revelation 21. In fact you get rather the opposite impression of the blessed nearness. "That the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts" indicates that we are still in this time scene. The Christ dwelling in your hearts becomes the basis to proceed in the service of God and what we come to finally is the tabernacle of God with men.

Well, these things are very wonderful. As to our experience, we are humbled, but let us not give up because we may not have entered into it in the way in which we should have. There is power on our side. I think "the love of the Christ" involves His love for His God but it also involves His love for the assembly. That love is to help us and then there is also the power of the Spirit. Strengthened with power by the Father's Spirit shows that there is adequate power to bring us into the glory of these things so that God may be rightly served.

H.F. It is very interesting to find how wide the thought of 'the Christ' is, even as we have been speaking about it at His birth, and as Man, and in His offering of Himself. The appearing is also connected with the Christ, is it not? "Then those that are the Christ's at his coming", 1 Cor 15: 23.

J.M. You sometimes get an impression of divine patience and divine feelings too. Think of God waiting all through the history of man for the Christ to come on to view - man after man after man. Of course it is said of David "a man after his own heart", 1 Sam 13: 14. God would say that that man is to come on to view in Christ, and He would wait. Think of His feelings all through that period of time in the histories of men! Now in our time that glorious Person has come on to view, and not only so, but He is installed in His office up there and we are associated with Him. It is a wonderful thing.

GRANGEMOUTH

22 November 1981

Key to initials

(All local unless otherwise stated)

A.A.Brown; Jas.Brown; H.Fentiman; W.Haldane Glasgow;
A.McBride; Jas.Mitchell; J.Mitchell, Bexley; A.D.Munro; Jas.Munro;
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FAITHFULNESS

B.M.Deck

Nehemiah 7: 1-3; Ephesians 6: 21-24; Revelation 17: 12-14

What would be in our minds, dear brethren, is the gravity of the times we are in, as well as the exceeding privilege of being here in the present testimony of the Lord in the moments just prior to the rapture. Hence, it calls forth a special quality of devotedness and affection and faithfulness to His interests.

We have read of one who is said to be faithful and feared God above many. And we have also read of a faithful minister in the Lord. It just occurred to me that these things would have their present and very searching bearing on us. The tremendous heritage to which we have come should rightly be accepted. We should feel responsible as to what has come down to us through faithful men - through Paul, Timothy, and faithful men who were competent to instruct others also. Thank God we can remember those who were competent to instruct us! How we need to keep the instructions and remember those from whom we have learned them, so that in this generation of faith in which we are called to have a privileged and yet a responsible part, we should not fail.

This recovery book of Nehemiah brings out something that calls for a peculiar quality of faithfulness. This man Hananiah is said to be faithful and feared God above many. The inference is that there were others, many faithful, but here is one above many. What an appeal to us! Not that we compete in faithfulness. I would not mean that. Faithfulness stems from affection for an object, affection for a divine standard, and for persons who are prepared to die for it, to be faithful even to death, as many have. The moment we are in, dear brethren, calls for such a quality of faithfulness and devotedness to that object, which is the assembly, that is next to the heart of Christ. This man, Nehemiah, had things put in his heart, what he would do for Jerusalem. What can we do for Jerusalem, the true Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem, the assembly? Let us think

of the full heavenly dignity and calling of that wondrous vessel, so soon to be caught up to where she belongs. What has been put in our hearts, as in the heart of this dear man Nehemiah, to do for Jerusalem? Who felt the disaster of what had happened as he did? He says "Ye see the distress that we are in" (chap 2: 17) and he furnishes a lead in devotedness that causes others to say "Let us rise up and build". It is very like the time we are in, one of reconstruction and recovery. But where we read the wall was finished, the doors set up, and the doorkeepers, the singers and the Levites were appointed. Oh thank God that what has been recovered is not lost! Now it is a question of our maintaining it in the quality of faithful devotedness. I think the test at the moment is to maintain possession in the energy and the power of life, and that will be in the quality of a devotedness of which I wish simply and I trust briefly, to speak.

So Nehemiah brings forward this remarkable man here, Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the citadel. It says of him that "he was a faithful man and feared God above many". He would stand out, therefore, in the quality of his faithfulness. Along with others he was faithful and feared God above many. Oh, how wonderful are the things we are called upon to maintain; in what has come down to us through these faithful men! Particularly is it so in the preaching of the glad tidings and the service of God. It may be that the reason we are left here is to maintain such a testimony in faithfulness amidst the ruin. I know we are a testimony to the ruin, as Mr Darby said.

But the testimony of the Christ is in the power of life by the Spirit in the glad tidings, in which is embraced the whole scope of the truth; and then in result is secured the service of God. It seems to me that it calls for a peculiar quality of devotedness and consecration to Christ. A faithful person is one, as I said, who has an object he is prepared to die for - to be faithful unto death. Such, it says, will receive a crown of life - not that we are looking for the crown; that will come in its own time. But there is nothing, dear brethren, that can take the place of devotedness to the person of Christ; and that involves His interests here in this world until He comes. Ephesians

brings out that quality: "love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption".

How searching it is! with the world around us in all its deterioration, its corruption and its violence. Never let us get accustomed to it. Let us learn to live in the realm of things beyond it where eternal life is, and see things as heaven sees them; and may we feel things as heaven feels them. We can be here, all of us, as a testimony in a quality of faithfulness and maintain it without drooping, or slipping away, or deterioration; but maintain it in the Spirit's power until the Lord comes.

So where we read in Ephesians it speaks of a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord. I know the Ephesians were addressed as faithful, and also the Colossians. Thank God there were faithful persons in these assemblies! And now there is reference made to "the... faithful minister in the Lord". It says he will make known to you all things. "But in order that ye also may know what concerns me, how I am getting on". Dear brethren, it is not Paul personally now, it is the precious heavenly and Ephesian life that has been brought down to us through faithful men, and we need to know how it is getting on. Think of the Lord maintaining, universally, a testimony to the truth of the heavenly character of the assembly. The enemy would attempt to break it down, and, if he could, to sweep it away. How needful therefore for us to be acquainted with how it is getting on universally. I believe the dear brethren love the touch of what is universal. We need to know what is going on and be acquainted with it; it helps us in our prayers.

And here is a faithful minister, it says, who "shall make all things known to you; whom I have sent to you for this very thing, that ye may know of our affairs and that he may encourage the hearts of the brethren to rise to this quality of faithfulness, this quality of love "in incorruption". Oh, may we love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption! I see no other quality that will protect the standard through which these things will be kept, cherished, and maintained, till the Lord comes. May we therefore make way for this kind of development in moral substance. We have come through difficult days. The very pressures and anguish of the way have drawn the

brethren together in a sympathy and a nearness and a oneness that maybe tribulation alone could produce. Let us hold to these things and go on in the light of what we have been recovered to, without any deterioration or slipping away.

Now I ventured to read in Revelation because, while its bearing is future, we need to be assured of a sense of victory. The allusion is to the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and to the Lamb who shall overcome them - that is those who follow the beast. Christ is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Therefore let us be lifted up from any sense of weakness or depression. As we think of the outward smallness, let us not be despising the day of small things.

Victory is assured. I know that this is future and that the position of these ten kings is already established, making the whole scene ready for the man of sin to appear at any time. What we are dealing with now is the character of these things in the enmity and the venom with which the enemy is seeking to sweep away and spoil the testimony of the Lord. Let us resolutely be committed to the present truth in the assurance that the Lord of lords and the King of kings will deal with things.

And then it says "they that are with him called, and chosen, and faithful". Think of being called to this! That is, our responsibility - to answer to the call. The 'chosen' would be His sovereignty. Oh, let us justify his sovereignty! Think of the exceeding grace that any one of us should be preserved for the present testimony. Let us justify His sovereignty in this quality of faithfulness. It says "with him called, and chosen, and faithful".

It is just that simple word, dear brethren. We need to be impressed with the gravity of the time we are in and see that it calls forth this kind of committal in quality to maintain things in piety and spirituality until He comes.

For His Name's sake.

PLAINFIELD

1 September 1981

EXTRACT

G.V.Wigram

As to confession, I can only say for myself that, first, the want of individual spirituality (in its divine and heavenly character), of singleness of eye, and of full purpose of heart; and secondly, the presence of unjudged flesh and worldliness (shown in mixed motives and intentions, in plannings, and oft in an energy not of God, as well as ways and doings) press on my own heart, as being among existing obstacles to the Father's working fully and freely for the honour of the Lord Jesus in the present day in England.

From The Christian Friend, 1884

THE CHILDREN'S CROWN

It is not an unknown thing for a child to wear a royal crown. Indeed Josiah, one of the kings of Judah, was only seven years old when he was acclaimed and crowned. Actually he was more pleasing to God when young than in later years. The Lord Jesus was born a King but although He is now crowned with glory and honour, the only crown that He received on earth was one of thorns. It is thought that the plant from which this was made was one known to have pliable stems with thorns and also leaves like common ivy. In this way, in mockery, He was given both a royal diadem and a victor's garland. No shame was spared to our blessed Saviour! No doubt He still wore the crown when crucified.

For the Christian there is a crown, always referred to as a reward kept in store for the end of life's course so as to encourage him or her to be an overcomer. In the games of ancient time there were no prizes as we know them now, but the victor's crown consisted of a simple woven circlet of ivy, parsley or laurel leaves. The old word for it was the same as the name Stephen. What an overcomer he was! To his Lord and Master he was faithful unto death and has received a martyr's crown.

In his epistle, James refers to the *crown of life* to be received by the one who endures temptation. This should be an encouragement to boys and girls to resist temptation and keep a good conscience before God and enjoy what is really life even before the crowning day. This crown is one of the things that God "has promised to them that love him". Another is a kingdom to go with it!

Peter's expectation was for a *crown of glory* from the Lord Jesus as the Chief Shepherd. The saints who form the flock of God need to be cared for and there are many ways in which the youngest believer can be of use. Even "a cup of cold water" given as refreshment where need is will find its reward.

Paul, thinking as he often seems to have done of the athletic games, wrote of his hope of a *crown of righteousness*. It would be a true answer to the agony of his contests against evil and to the steadiness of his Christian life. It was laid up ready to be displayed when the Lord will appear again in His glory and all those who long for His appearing will receive it. These must include many boys and girls who have Him for their righteousness and honour Him in their lives. Are you amongst them?

J.C.Evershed