

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 117

December 1982

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VISION AND ITS EFFECT

R.W.Flowerdew

Proverbs 29: 18; Titus 1: 5-9; 1 Corinthians 9: 24-27

I have an impression to speak about vision, and its effect. We would all say, and would all rejoice in the fact, that we are not living in the days of Eli when the word of Jehovah was rare and a vision was not frequent (see 1 Sam 3: 1). It is clear in our recent, and not so recent, experience that there is what we could describe as vision among the saints, and we can rejoice in it for it is a mark of the Lord's goodness. It is altogether fitting that we have the sense from the Lord of a fresh view that He gives, particularly of what is eternal, and of fresh views that He gives of His own glory, because He was the One who when here opened the eyes of the blind. Morally and spiritually He continues to do that, and as He does it He Himself fills the view of those whose eyes are opened. There is no greater object.

In speaking of vision I do not refer to what is particular or unique. There was, we know, what was given to Paul, "visions and revelations of the Lord" (2 Cor 12: 1), of which he had a special experience, but I understand that even in that section in his second letter to the Corinthians there is an application to all of us. I do not, however, wish to suggest that vision is something commonplace. In no sense is it commonplace. If the Lord opens our eyes and fills our view, perhaps touches our consciences, reaches our hearts, shows us the things that are eternal, displays time after time His glories to us, we cannot describe this as commonplace. Our personal experience may be that it is not frequent. We would have to examine ourselves as to that.

The effect of vision is my principal concern. It is bound to have an effect. As at the outset, if the Lord touches the eyes of one who is blind morally and opens them, that is bound to have a great effect, a very practical effect; so it is now and so it continues as the Lord touches our eyes, adjusts our own vision, helps us to see things

clearly. I wonder as to myself what the effect is. It is clear from Proverbs that one effect is restraint: "Where there is no vision the people cast off restraint". I think we would understand that where there is vision, where there is clarity of view and some understanding as a result of that view of God's purpose, and what is eternal, and the truth to which we have been recovered in this time of revival in the past 150 years, that the effect of that practically is restraint.

Restraint is not a word that is commonly used among us. One does not say that it is not used but that it is not frequently used. We rightly speak of deliverance in respect of the activity of the flesh. We speak of wisdom. We speak of selfcontrol as one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit. The word 'restraint' is here in Scripture. It is a practical word. It is a word that we cannot very easily spiritualise away, if one might so say. We cannot dismiss it. Because it is valid and it bears upon us individually and collectively, we cannot dismiss it. There is to be with us, as a result of the vision we have, restraint.

The meaning of the word 'temperate', which comes into both these sections read in the New Testament, is essentially self-restraint. I would not confine the meaning of the word to that. I think that one who is temperate is also mature. A brother or sister who is temperate is also balanced. However, a person who is temperate, one who has this vision and is concerned about its application to himself, is certainly restrained. I do not say much about it. The word has an edge to myself as much as to anyone, and therefore it is not something of which I wish to speak at length. But if we would know what it is to sit in stillness at His feet, there must be restraint. If we would hear His word, no other voice or sound interrupting, there must be restraint; restraint – of thought, restraint of speech, restraint having its effect upon one's outlook. These things are very practical, but I feel the need of a reminder as to them.

What is apparent about one who has restraint is that he does not resort to extremes. We know the tendency to resort on the one hand to legality, or on the other hand to licence. There is a tendency with us to resort, it may be, to intellectualism, or on the other hand, to emotionalism. There may be a tendency with us, perhaps

unconsciously, to resort to levity, or on the other hand to sanctimony. A person who is restrained is not so characterised. He is characterised by the view that he has of the Lord, who is able to fill his field of vision, is able to act upon his heart, his eyes having been enlightened, so that the evenness which was seen in the Lord Jesus here, that fine flour, is not foreign to us but begins to have its effect in expression in us. I do not think that we can exercise restraint by some act of will. I do not think we can arrive at it by great study or by punctilious behaviour. As we have our eye upon the Lord, as faith is active with us, as scope is provided consciously and deliberately for the Spirit, then the result of this vision is seen.

I hesitate to dwell unduly upon the effect of vision. It is all too easy to be preoccupied with an attempt to imitate the outward effect, as if one could do so satisfactorily in one's own power. I hesitate to do it, but I think that there is need (because of the occurrence of the word in Scripture, in Paul's practical ministry) of a reminder to myself, and perhaps to others, that the truth is to have its effect. The view of the Lord which we treasure in our own day is to be valued increasingly, but it is to have its effect among us. If there is such vision, if there is restraint that is consequent upon it, then there will be normality of relations between us; then matters of administration will proceed in an orderly way; then the testimony will be strengthened. There will be increasing liberty and richness in God's service because there will not be diversion of thought or of behaviour. The Lord is able to bring this about. I would that we might become more occupied with Him, that as resorting to His presence – and I think in these occasions, as we have sung, we do have a sense of His presence – we might look to Him to give us fresh views of His glory which will fully occupy us and take our attention from ourselves and from our views of others.

We sometimes say, if I might just add this, that the truth is all out. I do not dispute this as to its fundamentals and framework, but would you and I be prepared to say that we have seen every facet, every aspect of the beauties of the King? "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty", Isa 33: 17. Let us be taken up with Him and His

beauties, not with one another and our abnormalities, or perhaps our abilities. Let us be occupied with Him. There will be a practical result, but there will be an incalculable result beyond that. As a consequence of occupation with Him there will be formation after Him, there will be what is unsullied, what is unalloyed (to use a word which Mr Darby loved) in answer to Him, for His pleasure.

LONDON

10 August 1982

TWO HELPERS

G.A.Brown

1 Samuel 5: 32-35; Judges 1: 12-15

Each of these women, Abigail and Achsah, helped their husbands. It might be said, of course, that Abigail was not really David's wife at this point, but it was because of the way she helped him, and the feature of discernment that David saw in her, that caused him to make her his wife. Many a wife has been the making of her husband, and the reverse, of course, is also true. But I am not thinking so much in this setting of the literal relationship of husband and wife, although that may apply as well, but rather of the subjective element amongst the brethren which is symbolised in the wife, and the responsible element which is set out in the husband.

This subjective side must be equivalent to the responsible side. It is when the two get out of step that danger looms, and danger certainly does loom in this chapter because David here, great man though he is, does not shine. David, the responsible man, is being vindictive, he is being petty, he is out for revenge, and it is going to involve bloodshed and loss of life. He knows it all, and we sometimes get like that: we have read it all and we know it all and we are going to push it through. What we think needs to be done is going to be done come what may, irrespective of who is going to be hurt. We have known these things and we have had our part in them in the past; may we never have them again. Then Abigail comes on to view and she helps David by restraining him. Many a time we have had cause to be thankful for restraint, have we not? – perhaps from our wives, perhaps from the subjective element amongst the brethren, what has been called 'the body of the saints' which can be relied upon, perhaps the emergence of the underlying work of God in our own souls, which holds back this impetuous kind of feature which many of us find in ourselves. It is said of Reuben that he was "Impetuous as the waters", Gen 49: 4. We do like to have our own way, but there is another way and it is a better way. Let us listen to the voice of Abigail. David says "And blessed by thy discernment". She saw

what was going to happen, and this is a great feature, the feature of foresight. It is not too common, dear brethren, it is not like hindsight. Hindsight, someone said, is the most prolific gift known to mankind because almost everybody has it. Anyone can tell you what ought to have been done after the calamity has taken place, but here is a woman who is able, on account of what was wrought out in her, to foresee the danger, and not only to foresee it but to forestall it. O! it is far better, beloved brethren, to forestall the danger and avoid the calamity than to try to patch things up after the calamity has happened. Let us learn to look for this feature, let us' learn to discern. She has everything that is needed, she brings out an astonishing amount of wealth and wisdom. Who would have thought she had such resources? I believe that every local meeting is furnished thus if we but have the grace to listen, to pay heed to what Abigail says. The result is that she becomes wedded to David; that is to say, the responsible man, the man who takes things in hand for God, becomes moderated, he becomes mellowed in his spirit. What a man David was! I do not want to detract from the greatness of David as a man of God, one who characteristically pleased Jehovah, a man after God's own heart. What a wonderful thing it is when these two features – what is responsible and what is subjective – become wedded together! Then you have the true features of the assembly coming out; may it be so in every place!

Now Achsah helped her husband, not by restraining him but by urging him. He had been active, active in conflict and successful in conflict. What a man he was too! But then the time came when the victory had been won, and she urged him to ask of her father a field; she urged him. What a service lies with the dear sisters, and indeed with us all if we can but develop this underlying feature of spirituality. "She urged him", it says, and then "she sprang". "And Caleb said to her, What wouldest thou? And she said to him, Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a southern land". She is speaking from the point of view of possession and enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance. You will find this element, beloved brethren, if you look for it; it is not only in sisters, you will find it in brothers too, you will

find it perhaps sometimes in the most unlikely places, in persons who are enjoying their heavenly portion. Such are the persons to listen to, they will help you; they will help you to get a spring into your step, to view with fresh urgency the glory of the inheritance. It says "She urged him... and she sprang", and then she says "for thou hast given me a southern land; give me also springs of water" – and she got them.

Well, dear brethren, these are two great voices that we need to listen to, I believe; the voice of restraint when we might go too far, and the urging voice when we do not go far enough. There is that in the body of the saints in every locality, I believe, which can bring this about if we are ready to listen to it.

May we be ready, for His Name's sake.

EDINBURGH

September 1982

"I BEING IN THE WAY"

E.C.Burr

Genesis 24: 26,27

This chapter is familiar to most, if not all of us, as containing much precious typical teaching as to the way in which, in the feelings of God as Father for the Son, the Holy Spirit has undertaken service here in order to secure the assembly as an answer to the heart of the Son, that is Christ. All of us would do well to reflect on its bearing on the fact that the present occupation of the Spirit is to secure a bride for Christ.

I have an impression, however, to seek to say a word in regard to the close of verse 27: "I being in the way, Jehovah has led me to the house of my master's brethren", as bearing on the progress of the individual soul. Each of us as being subjects of the work of God would be interested, not only in the progress of divine work in us, but in our progress in relation to divine work. If we are not, we tend to settle down with a certain satisfaction at whatever place we have reached. The ultimate result of that is that we tend to lose ground.

Unless the believer is making progress in his soul, and consciously so, he generally tends to lose ground. In fact, there are many with whom we have had happy fellowship in the past, who were lost to us as far as fellowship is concerned at some particular point in their history and they seem to dwell on that point and never make progress from it. The traceable result is that ground is lost in the soul. But there is to be progress in the soul – I trust the Spirit may help us to say – in the light of the way this verse may be applied to our personal history.

If I refer to this particular part of the verse, "I being in the way, Jehovah has led me to the house of my master's brethren", one thing that is obvious, but may be remarked on, is that the sentence starts with 'I'. This reinforces the truth that the first thing we have to arrive at in Christianity is what is true of us individually. Unless you can say something as to yourself as 'I', not in any egotistical or self-

centred way but as having arrived at the reality of the fact that God has done something in you personally, you will make very little progress. I could quote the ministry of another, to say that no one can enter fully into what is collective until they know what is true of them individually. There is a need, therefore, with each of us to arrive at what Scripture has in view in speaking of 'I': "I being in the way", not 'we'. It is very easy to become absorbed – I will not say lost – in a crowd or in a company, and to assume that we are going with the company. In fact we may only be going with the tide. What is needed, if there is to be any establishment or security in the Christian, is apprehending what is true of me, so that I can speak of I "being in the way". Hence the essentiality of each of us being fully established in what is true of us individually.

Much enters into this. Paul, who is a very great instructor for us in the New Testament, is not afraid to speak of 'I'. He says "by God's grace I am what I am", 1 Cor 15: 10. He says "I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me", Gal 2: 20. You see Paul's insistence on individuality. The epistle to the Romans is virtually entirely concerned with what is true of a person individually; hence the need for our being established in the truth of the gospel as it is presented in that epistle. The first thing, of course, that each of us has to come to is that, as to ourselves, "all have sinned" (Rom 3: 23), that is each individual. You cannot really get lost in a crowd or a company in regard to that verse – "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God". You have to come to it that if Paul speaks of 'all' he is really speaking of individuals one by one, and each of us has to come to it that I have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The bearing of that is not only that I have come short of the glory of God but that I do come short of the glory of God. Paul, therefore, in that epistle unfolds the divine remedy for individuals as sinners. As the old hymn says: 'That wonderful redemption, God's remedy for sin'. The remedy for sin and for the sinner in the epistle to the Romans is redemption, not, exactly, forgiveness. It is interesting that the remedy of forgiveness comes in in the epistles on the highest level, that is Ephesians and

Colossians, where you have the forgiveness of our offences. But what Paul is doing in Romans is to establish beyond dispute and argument the fact that God has established in redemption an unshakable basis in which there is no accusation and no condemnation. We go through that epistle and we come to God setting forth Christ as "a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood" (chap 3: 25) in order that souls individually may come at the experience of redemption. It goes on to unfold the truth of justification, Christ being raised for our justification, in order that individually we may know our standing before God, as chapter 5 has it: "by whom we have also access by faith into this favour in which we stand" because we are justified by faith. You are established before God, therefore, individually.

The epistle goes on from the second half of chapter 5 and shows how, either through apprehending immediately the value of Christ's death, or experimentally in your own history – and many go through the experience of much conflict in themselves – you come to what is established as 'I', and at the end of chapter 7 you have an establishment of what I am and that is 'I' as clear of the condemnation of sin or of the law, so that you are free before God.

You then come, in chapter 8, to "There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus". There is a history worked out in the epistle to the Romans which establishes the individuality of the believer and there is no progress in the soul until that point is reached. Nobody will make progress as a Christian until they are fully established in what is true of them individually. There is redemption, there is justification, there is reconciliation and there is deliverance, as to all of which much might profitably be said; all those things relate to the individual. I urge on every one of us here to be concerned whether you have for your self the gain of redemption; have you the gain of justification, have you the gain of reconciliation, reconciled to God through the death of His Son?

Think how wonderful these things are! And whether you are in the gain of deliverance from everything that once held you in bondage to

sin, so that you are now free for God, and you arrive, as I say, as has often been said, at what I am according to the work of God.

Now that is the starting point for the journey to which I am applying the verse that I read, and there is no Christian progress unless the foundations are secure. In a certain sense you are not even in the race. Much is familiar to people nowadays about athletics, and they check the credentials of anyone who wants to enter. If you want to enter the Christian race your credentials must be checked and they will be checked as to what is true of you experimentally and individually. There is just this to be added, that in chapter 8 you have the full power of the Holy Spirit individually.

As I have said, Romans is an individual epistle. I was quite surprised the other day to come across a remark that Romans is individual and Galatians is individual. I had not thought of Galatians being individual, but once you think of it, of course it is. Sonship is not collective: "ye are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3: 26); it is individual. But let us get the 'I' established, let us get established what I have, so that I can start in this progress of the soul. I ask every one here this afternoon – it does not matter who you are, even if you are breaking bread – are you fully established in the fundamentals of what Christianity is and have you the power of the Holy Spirit as testifying the reality of these things to you, so that you have the credentials to start on this journey?

Now, "I being in the way": having established your individuality the next thing is to ask, Are you in the way? Because you are expected to be. In the Acts of the Apostles 'the way' is the description of Christianity here in testimony. (As I understand it, in the Acts the way is not exactly Christianity in its response to God in worship and service – you get more of that in the epistle to the Hebrews, where you have "the new and living way which he has dedicated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh", Heb 10: 20).

When we say 'in the testimony', what we mean is what we are in public; that is what the testimony is; it is the public aspect of Christianity. One thing that has impressed me in visiting Australia recently is the need with many of us to be sure we can explain in

everyday language words which have conventional meaning among us. But being in the testimony is what you are as a Christian publicly. Now what is a Christian publicly? If you read the Acts you will find out. Christians were so well known in the Acts – known by 'the way' – that all Paul had to identify in Acts 9 was, if he found any who were of the way. It does not say anything else about them, but they were known publicly as being Christians testimonially. Now, are we all in the way? You cannot be in the way without knowing you are in the way. You cannot be in the way secretly. In John's gospel there was a man who came secretly and therefore his value testimonially was diminished because it was private, secret. No doubt he treasured his impressions of the Lord learned in secret, but as far as what is public is concerned he was not in the way. What is needed by us all in this present day is commitment to the way.

There must be the testimony of the Christ in the present day.

Unless you and I, who have knowledge of the truth of what is fundamental in Christianity and who have the Spirit, are concerned about the testimony of the Christ and the testimony of God publicly, we have no right to assume that it will be anywhere else. You and I cannot say, well it is all right, I do not need to do much, those people down there preach; or I do not need to do much, there is a man in my office who will talk to anyone about the Lord. That is not the spirit. You must be in the way if you are concerned about the testimony of the Christ in the present day, you must be publicly in it and committed to it. Our beloved brother here spoke when he was with us in England as to our becoming remote from humanity. Let me say this, that the way runs right alongside humanity and the testimony is working out to humanity from those in the way. Let us feel for humanity. You may take up a newspaper in the morning and find that here, there or anywhere, some fresh disaster has happened to somebody. Somebody has been murdered, somebody has been run over or assaulted: have lost their money or been robbed. All these things are a sign that sin is in the world and that sin is very active, and what is needed alongside that is the testimony of the Christ, and it will come from people who are committed to the way.

"I being in the way": it is a way that has sorrow and reproach in it. Much has been misrepresented about the reproach of the Christ.

We should hang our heads about the way in which, having brought things on ourselves, we then attributed it to the reproach of the Christ: but the reproach of the Christ is here. If you want to learn about the reproach of the Christ, read John's gospel, because Jesus is rejected from chapter 1. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. In Luke the Lord is received up to chapter 4. It is as if there are three chapters in Luke in which the Lord is received; in John there is no chapter at the beginning in which Jesus is received; He is rejected from the beginning. We must learn the reproach of the Christ and it comes from manifesting the features of Christ in the world. It does not come from maintaining the law, that is the law in its religious sense; it comes from the features of Christ manifested in testimony. It ought to be simple for those who have arrived at the identity of which I was speaking, and who have the present power of the Spirit, to manifest the features of Christ in the world. You will find that you are still in the world where that Man is not wanted. I still carry with me a remark made many years ago by a man of whom, I would sorrowfully say, he turned out of the way, but he said the world goes on as if Christ was not rejected. That is very true, but you and I are not to do that. Being in the way is to go on as if Christ was rejected and as if I was rejected with Him. It is testing. Think of the blind man in Mark's gospel; in the last progress of Jesus through Jericho and up to Jerusalem the man received his sight and followed Jesus in the way. And where was the way? He was in the way going up to Jerusalem and men who had had His company for three and a half years were afraid and amazed as they followed, but a blind man received his sight and went where disciples were amazed and afraid; he followed Jesus in the way.

Now that is the way and it is Christ manifested in testimony. It is not Christ manifested just in words, it is Christ manifested in formation in people. "I being in the way": the question for us this afternoon would be, Am I in the way? It does not mean, am I breaking bread or in fellowship with a particular company. It means

in a phrase, am I here for Christ? Much is attached to that, and many believers are in the world at the present time, professedly here for Christ, and yet you might have to say to them, how can you go on with that and still seek to attach that to the name of Christ? There is much that might have to be said in that regard, but being in the way is being here in the testimony of the Christ. It has often impressed me that, unless Christ is continued in His people, the Father has lost, as far as the world is concerned, by having Him in heaven, because for thirty three and a half years He had Jesus here on the earth – His beloved Son in whom He found His delight. If that has been taken away and there is nothing of that Man left, as far as the earth is concerned the Father has lost by having Him in heaven; but the Father has not lost because the Spirit is here to maintain the features of Jesus in the world in which He was rejected. Would that we were more like Him! Would that more of the influence of that Man by the Spirit was expressed in us! The way would be signposted much more clearly for many of our fellow believers. The hymn says 'Blessed and glorious Man' (No.268). That is the character of the Christian way, the character of a blessed and glorious Man; that is what is to be here. "I being in the way". What happened? Did I have to find my own way? There is that excellent hymn of Mr Darby's (No.139): 'This world is a wilderness wide... The Lord has Himself gone before; He has marked out the path that we tread'. That is the way. The Lord led. I being in the way, the Lord led me. There is no one who seeks to be committed to the way whom the Lord will not lead. There is no one who, having arrived at what is individually true of them and in the power of the Spirit commits themselves to the Christian way in the testimony of the Christ that the Lord will not lead. We all need leadership, we all need the leading of Christ and we need the leading of the Spirit. We need the leading of the Father. "I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee", Ps 32: 8. Think of finding yourself led just by watching the Father's eye! Think of your Christian course being such that you never needed divine Persons even to speak to you; you just watch the Father's eye. That is what Jesus was here. "I do always the things that are pleasing to" my Father, John 8: 29. From time to time

it is clear that He was under, if I could use the word, the verbal direction of the Father, but not generally so. He lived here in that communion with the Father which always led Him on to the next step in the Father's will. At the end of John 14 He says "Rise up, let us go hence".

There is the Father's will. Think of "My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me, and that I should finish his work", John 4: 24! What does Mr Darby say? 'His power was the powerful service of God: His weakness the patience of all His will'. And we are to be led, and we can be led if we are leadable. One thing needed in Christianity is submission to God, known in the Father and the Son and the Spirit, and the Father will lead you, and the Lord will lead you, and the Spirit will lead, and They will all lead you in the same way and together, and the blessedness of knowing the divine will in being led is something that you cannot know outside your own personal links with God.

This line of things is intensely individual. It tests us as to how far we rely for our power simply on the power of God, known to us, whether in the Father or the Son or the Spirit, or whether we need props of one kind and another, whether we make props of our brethren and those who help us, valuable as they are. A lot of believers in the world need the prop of devotional books. Some of the books are quite good, quite tending to encourage, but they are a prop. It may be that if your links with God were closer you would not need devotional books, you would find your devotional books in the secret of His presence and would learn from God as you went in and waited before Him and He guided you. "I being in the way, Jehovah has led me". Who of us can say, who of us would not say, that the Lord has led us hitherto? Some of us have come by an easier route than others to the present point in our history. Some have come a way of the most profound sorrow, sorrow that nobody can measure save those who have been through it. I hear of things and I wonder how people came through, but the Lord's way is best, and peace as to your history is never found until you come to it that the Lord led me. There are periods in our history which in a certain sense we

might desire to be taken out of our minds, but the Lord having led us, He would have us get the gain of them, because He is leading us on; He is not leading us back, He is leading us on and teaching us in everything that happens to us, and if you are in the way He will teach you as more and more desirous of learning where He is taking you. I cannot over-emphasise the necessity for personal links with God and with Christ and with the Spirit. These have been neglected to our loss, and if we go on neglecting them it will be to our further loss, but let us get back to them and we shall find that there is a power that we never thought was possible, because we have found the centre from which everything is intended to spring – the Lord led me. Can you look back and say that? Are you willing now to look back and say that? It is much better to look at the wilderness from Deuteronomy than it is from Numbers. Most of us are still in Numbers. Let us look at the wilderness from Deuteronomy. "And thou shalt remember all the way which Jehovah thy God led thee", Deut 8: 2. What for? "To humble thee". But then to make thee learn "that man doth not live by bread alone, but by everything that goeth out of the mouth of Jehovah". If you are still in Numbers you may still be grumbling about the wilderness, even grumbling about the manna, wondering about the next supply of water, but you come through, and on the border of the land you come to it that the way the Lord my God led me was to humble me (as has been said, the wilderness wears out the flesh) but it was to make me learn God. And at the end you have learnt God and, being in the way, the Lord has led you. Well, beloved, let us submit ourselves to the leading of the Lord. If at the moment we have not come that far, let us get back to it, let us find that it is the Lord who is leading us.

And where is He leading us? In the expression of this verse – a remarkable expression – He "has led me to the house of my master's brethren". What an expression! This is not a sect; my master's brethren in this verse is not something with a capital B; it is "Behold my mother and my brethren" (Matt 12: 49) and it is "go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God", John 20: 17. He has brought me to a

place where what is precious to Christ and what Christ would minister is made known in a circle of those who are associated with Him in a dignity that would never – have been thought open to us if He Himself had not said it. How would any of us dare to take the ground of being brethren of Christ if He had not Himself said it? But He has brought me "to the house of my master's brethren". What respect it gives you for the people who are there! One thing that has been missed in the history of a good many 'of us is respect for one another, the respect there is for persons who are the brethren of Christ. There is no other adjective here, but they are "my master's brethren". It just affects you to think of one another like this; they are my Master's brethren. They are not just the brother for whom Christ died; we are to esteem one another on that ground. But just think of my Master's brethren! You come to the meeting and look round and you say, Who is here tonight? Well, there is only so and so and so and so. Who is here tonight? My Master's brethren are here. What an impression it gives you of what has been secured, because His brethren are associated with Him in the place in glory that He has as Man. He has a place down here where they can be found and that is where the Lord is leading us, beloved; He is leading us into the circle where in profound respect for one another we may esteem one another in the light of the fact that Christ will associate us with Him.

It is not a denominational position, and because it is not a denominational position it is open to everybody who belongs to Christ and is willing to submit to Him as Master. "I... the Lord and the Teacher", He says, John 13: 14. In the Authorised Version it refers to Him as Master, and He is Master. Fit, it says in 2 Timothy 2, for the Master's use. The house of my Master's brethren is a place where we would love to be, to find there in that circle of respect for those in whom He has worked and whom He has secured for Himself, what it is to be associated with Him in all that He has as Man. What He has as God and what He is as God is not something in which we are associated with Him, but in what He is as Man we are associated with Him and we should esteem one another as my Master's brethren.

The impression it leaves on your soul is something of intense value. When you come to the house of your Master's brethren you get in easily. In the next verse or two it says "Come in, blessed of Jehovah!" That is the way, that is the receptive spirit. The spirit of Christianity is receptive. We confer nothing on anybody if they wish to come and break bread with us in remembrance of the Lord. There are the requirements of consistency with the Lord's name. It has been well said by another, perhaps a hundred years ago, that it is the *Lord's* table, therefore everyone who is the Lord's has a right to be there, but it is the *Lord's* table and thus only those who acknowledge Him practically as Lord have the right to be there. But "Come in, blessed of Jehovah!" is the spirit of everyone who is in the house of his Master's brethren. Beloved, have we that spirit? While maintaining what is rightly exclusive, have we still too much of an exclusive spirit not to welcome anyone who wishes to come and sit down alongside of us? How good it is, how we long to see others coming in to share what the Lord has given. You remember what has been said about the cherubim in Solomon's temple which were looking outwards – they were looking to see who was coming. Laban says "Come in, blessed of Jehovah! why standest thou outside?" Have we that receptive spirit in the house of our Master's brethren? It is not our house, it is His house and it is the house where blessed relationships with Him are known in an intimacy that can only be known because He draws us into them and the Spirit gives us the power. But "Come in, blessed of Jehovah! Why standest thou outside?" What had the daughter of the house said earlier? Come in, she says, there is plenty – in my father's house, there is food, there is straw and also much provender, that is, there is plenty of food in the house of my Master's brethren. Is there not? Do you not find that every time you come there is plenty of food? There is always more than you your self can absorb. There is often more than the company can absorb. Sometimes we need twelve baskets to carry out what remains over after everyone has been fed. There is a lot of food, she says, and also room. There is room still, beloved. It is not quite on the same line as the hymn that says 'God's house is filling fast, Yet there is room!' (No. 70). It is not quite

on the line of "Go out into the ways and fences and compel to come in", Luke 14: 23. All that remains blessedly true, but this is from the inside, in the house of my Master's brethren there is a lot of room.

There is room there actually for every believer who has the Spirit.

The sad thing is that some prefer to go their own way and to choose this or that, bound up with one thing or another that perhaps would not fit into the house of my Master's brethren if it were brought in.

One of the greatest concerns of those who know the blessedness of that circle is consistency in every respect with what could be brought fittingly into that house. There are other houses where you can perhaps take other things, but once you have known the house of my Master's brethren you will find it has to govern you in everything. And it becomes exclusive, not in that capital E sense, but it excludes what is not suitable to 'my Master'.

Well, these things make Christianity work and they give us an expansive and open outlook and it springs from this, that I have the most intense respect for everyone else who has a place there. I underline that it springs from apprehension of what is true of me in the work of God individually – 'I'; then "I being in the way, Jehovah has led me". Where did He lead? He led me into the sphere where I can find perfect association with Himself amongst others who have the same rights there and the same blessedness as I, and I sit down there and enjoy things in this house of my Master's brethren. Have you ever looked at the brethren like that? ever looked at them as 'my Master's brethren', because that is what they are. We all have one Master, "One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren", Matt 23: 8 (A.V.). It is not just that we are brethren of one another, we are His brethren. And that is the way the progress in the soul takes. In type, once you come and find a lodging in that house, what begins to be unfolded to you is the reality of what the assembly is, you learn more about what Rebecca is typical of, in the house and on the journey back to 'my Master', than you ever learnt before.

The house of my Master's brethren is a great place for learning about the church, what the church is to Christ, what it is in its perfection, what it is in its submissiveness, what it is in its

willingness. "Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go". And when they went, they came along the journey – we are not told all the detail of the return journey – but she says "Who is the man that is walking in the fields to meet us? And the servant said, That is my master!"

And those who have been acquainted with 'my Master's brethren' will readily find their way into what is peculiarly for Himself now, that is His church which is His body.

These things are very precious, even reading the scripture says something. I am greatly attracted by this expression: "the house of my master's brethren". If we could but recover ourselves to that kind of view of one another we should find that there is there a blessedness, an unfolding of what is true about the assembly, that perhaps we have never found anywhere else. I do not think you arrive at what the brethren are by learning about the assembly; I think you learn what the assembly is by learning about the brethren, my Master's brethren. There is no better company than that, and that is the way the Lord is leading us, that is where the progress of the soul is to be now. What I have said is not exhaustive; you understand that readily. Much more might be said about the 'I' and 'the way' and the Lord leading; a great deal more might be said from experience about the house of my Master's brethren, but perhaps the Spirit will leave some impression on our souls that will lead us to desire more and more to be led in this way into a place of the most immense privilege, as I said, which we could never have thought of if He had not told us of it Himself. "Go to my brethren". The house of my Master's brethren is a place of the very greatest blessing and "Come in", he says, "blessed of Jehovah! why standest thou outside?" What an evangelical message from the inside, from one who knows what is in that house.

Well, I have taken up this scripture in a way perhaps differently from what it has often with profit been taken up amongst us, but what I was impressed with is that alongside the typical side in relation to the Spirit seeking a bride for Christ, there is that which bears on the

progress of our own souls into a sphere of very great blessedness and help. May it be so, for the Lord's sake.

MOTUEKA NZ

11 September, 1982

THE CHILDREN'S PROTECTION

Of the birds that Jesus spoke about, the domestic cock and hen have a special interest because of their protective instincts. At the time of the apostle Peter's denial of the Lord the first cockcrow was in the nature of a warning of danger. Children who live in the country will perhaps know how a night alert of this kind is taken up and answered to by cocks at quite distant roosts. Thus in our own histories we may be given warnings of moral danger which we should heed. The second cockcrow, after about an hour, was no doubt the morning call and this brought the beloved apostle to repentance. Just ponder for a moment the fact that the Lord, whilst about to endure the sufferings of making "by himself the purification of sins", ordered in detail the crowing of the cock for the safety of His disciple! It was a new day for Peter, through grace.

The protective ways of the hen are more intense, while the cock gives his warnings widely. The wings of the hen are of little use for fluttering about but they are a perfect means of safety for her little chickens. Even a large brood may there find protection and even comfort in the presence of danger. You would very rarely find a chick that would not come and snuggle down at the alarm call.

Jesus as Messiah, the promised protector of the Jewish nation, would have gathered together the people of Jerusalem as safely as a mother hen would her chickens, but they refused. The people who enjoyed the benefit of His self-sacrificing love mostly came with Him from Galilee into the city. Of Ruth, who was like a young Christian believer, it was said that she had come to take refuge under the wings of the God of Israel.

In a quite different connection Paul wrote to young believers at Thessalonica about being protected with armour – moral of course!

This was more to preserve them from being discouraged in the Christian path rather than for actual conflicts. As in the love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13 which all children should learn by heart, the apostle wrote to them of faith, hope and love. Faith and love are especially a breastplate protecting our hearts and the hope of salvation is a

helmet protecting our minds. Salvation from judgment is for us now and for ever but the living hope of being kept in safety will prevent our being discouraged. Do you know the God of hope?

J.C.Evershed