

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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Contents

[THE ANOINTING](#)

[THE SPIRIT INDWELLING](#)

[JOHN THE BAPTIST'S COURSE](#)

[THE CHILDREN'S PEACE](#)

THE ANOINTING

Luke 4:16-22; Acts 2:14-21; 1 Corinthians 12: 12,13

J.N.G. We were speaking in London a few weeks back about the authority of the Scriptures, and a remark was made as to those who would acknowledge the authority of the Scriptures and use them in a wrong way. I thought we might use the time today to enquire into the anointing of the Spirit. I trust that the brethren will be free to come into the occasion and open this up so that we all get gain from it. We started with Luke 4 because we have the Lord Himself saying "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach glad tidings". Perhaps the Lord will help us to get some impression of what the anointing means, and why it is required. It is a very prominent thought in the typical scriptures, because the priest was anointed, and the prophet was anointed, and the king was anointed, in fact the whole tabernacle system was anointed - an evident allusion to the Spirit. But when the Lord comes into view and speaks of being anointed, our thoughts are immediately turned to a divine pattern in manhood.

E.M.W. Does the anointing involve God's committal to the persons, and in particular His unreserved committal to the Lord Jesus?

J.N.G. That is how I understand it, particularly in view of the public side of things; even the way the Scriptures are read involves this. A brother stands up to read the Scriptures, and as we listen some impression comes into our souls by the Spirit. An unregenerate mind can read the Scriptures and there is no result, but if the anointing is in evidence the very reading of the Scriptures will result in something.

E.M.W. In this first passage there seems to be a distinction between the anointing and the Spirit; what would you say about that?

J.N.G. It is quite evident that the Spirit of the Lord upon Christ is something unique, and yet the divine pattern is evidenced in it, particularly in this gospel where the manhood of Jesus is prominent, and the priestly side of things is in evidence too. But the levitical

touch comes in particularly in what we read in Luke 4 and also in Acts. So that would be the concern in bringing these passages forward and our enquiring into them - the way in which the Scriptures are read and how we develop these things mutually amongst us. There should be an effect left with us as to the present speaking of God, not only that the Scriptures are understood as to their interpretation but the current application of them in the conditions in which we are; we become conscious that God is with us.

E.M.W. In the Old Testament, in the recovery, it was said that the Scriptures were read, and that they gave the sense (see Neh 8: 8). That would imply, I judge, that the Spirit was upon the reader.

J.N.G. Yes. So it makes us very dependent, particularly in the time we are in; you feel increasingly conscious of the need of the Spirit, both in our own lives (and it must begin there as to our own relations with the Spirit individually in regard to our needs) and then our entrance into the thoughts of God. It is just a wonder that God in His mercy has given us any place at all to serve Him in any respect. But if He has, I think He is making us increasingly conscious that we must rely on the Spirit.

J.M. I was wondering if the anointing has a public bearing. Does it involve that what is done is demonstrated to be done in the power of the Spirit?

J.N.G. I was thinking of that, and therefore our minds go to Paul in Corinth, shutting out every activity of the natural mind and the flesh, and then saying that he would be amongst them in demonstration of the Spirit and in power (see 1 Cor 2: 4). That would be the anointing. That is what we want anyway, a demonstration of the Spirit, but in power so that there is some definite result for God in our souls.

R L. It says in Isaiah 42: "mine elect in whom my soul delighteth! I will put my Spirit upon him" (v 1). There was a basis there for it, was there not?

J.N.G. Yes, it is lovely to think of that; how God looked upon this blessed Man and delighted to identify Himself publicly with Him, as

has just been said, committing Himself to Jesus. There was no reserve in the Way that God committed Himself to Jesus.

W.A.M. It says in Psalm 133 that the precious oil ran down upon Aaron's beard, and then that it flowed down to the hem of his garments. I wondered if the reference to Aaron's beard would be drawing attention to the distinction and the glory of the manhood of Jesus.

J.N.G. That helps; that again is the public side of things, and would bring in the additional thought maybe of adornment, that we adorn the doctrine. So that they wondered at the manner of the Lord's reading and the way He spoke. The anointing shuts out just human oratory and human knowledge. There is an imitation of this currently; that is what is at the back of one's mind; this charismatic movement in Christendom, I think, is definitely opposed to the anointing of the Spirit.

D.J.H. So it says in Corinthians: "Now he that establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God", 2 Cor 1: 21. It is in Christ, is it not, nothing to do with the natural order of things?

J.N.G. Yes, that is what we need to get hold of.

E.C.B. Is the anointing in the New Testament connected with God? God anointed Jesus of Nazareth, Peter says, and the scripture that has just been quoted, and in Luke 4. I wondered if that bore on the remark that it is God committing Himself. It is a different thought from receiving the Spirit, is it not?

J.N.G. It is; receiving the Spirit is one side, but God committing Himself to men involves the testimony going forward in a public way, and that God is coming into evidence. This of course is very challenging, at least I find it so.

E.C.B. Peter says "Jesus who was of Nazareth: how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power; who went through all quarters doing good", Acts 10: 38. Does that bear on the demonstration that we were speaking of?

J.N.G. Yes. You would always expect that, where the anointing is in evidence, the brethren feel better when the meeting is over than they did at the beginning.

F.C.M. This divine committal actually happened in verse 22 of the previous chapter, the sovereign and distinguishable action of two divine Persons - the Holy Spirit descending and the Father's voice. It is very affecting that in His first public service the Lord Jesus should draw attention to this, to the power and authority in relation to which He was serving.

J.N.G. Of course there is always the moral side to the presentation of things and God coming into view, and it tests us; but there is also something very attractive involved in the anointing. Things are made attractive to persons who are the subjects of the work of God. If they are not, if the work of God is not in them, it will be the other way round. It came out in this chapter, in this very section. They wondered at the words of grace that were coming out of His mouth, but presently they were tested as to the sovereignty of God. There was not one thing in them that answered to what the Lord was saying, and that of course raised the flesh, and resulted in the rejection of His ministry. But it did not affect the fact that they had never listened to such an attractive ministry in which God was set forth.

F.M.K. Is it attractive to see the footsteps of Jesus here? In the previous verses He came in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and He came to Nazareth where He was brought up and entered into the synagogue on the sabbath day and stood up to read. Does all that indicate His divine perfection in the anointing?

J.N.G. Yes, that is a pattern for us, He came to Nazareth where he was brought up. That is where we are tested, where we are brought up. Can we make the presentation of the things of God attractive in a way that brings God in where you are brought up, and where, maybe, discrediting things have been said about the Lord. But He knew the Scriptures. He knew the Scriptures, young people. He

knew where to find the particular scripture needed at that particular time.

E.C.M. Would David help in that way? He said "The Spirit of Jehovah spoke by me, And his word was on my tongue", 2 Sam 23: 2.

J.N.G. That makes it very current. Is the Spirit of God publicly linked with what we say? That was a prophetic utterance on David's part at that time. All this bears upon what is priestly in a public way, and certainly bears on what is prophetic and our preachings.

H.A.H. Does it involve a dignity and deliberateness? You are impressed with the movements of the Lord, as has been said already, the deliberate way with which He went in and unrolled the book, found the place, then rolled it up again.

J.N.G. One of the main things connected with it is the dignity that is in evidence; not the worldly customs, not the light way in which scriptures are applied, but there is a dignity about what the Lord says here, and the way He did things, which made the whole position attractive.

J.W. Does it involve that there is something pleasurable to God to which He can commit Himself? God is only committed to one order of man. I wondered whether, if the anointing is to come into evidence, there is something already there which is pleasurable to God to which He commits Himself.

J.N.G. Well, it was so. He was anointed, as we have been reminded in the previous chapter, at thirty years of age. There were thirty years of history preceding that anointing, and here is a Man to whom God could unreservedly commit Himself, a Man who had been through the experiences of things. Think of the Lord growing up, as He did according to this gospel, from a babe, knowing therefore the feelings of the children, knowing the feelings of the young people and their desires, right desires normally; here was someone who knew all that. It is the perfection that was in that Man that God could commit Himself to in view of public service. We would fade into oblivion in the presence of this, yet we know that God in His

wonderful grace in the gospel has been able to meet everything in connection with our history, so that we can know, with histories finished in the presence of the cross, that God can commit Himself to us in the power of the anointing in such a way that we can adorn the doctrine in our public service, however small it may be, and can show that divine things are really attractive.

D.J.H. Between the history that you speak of - the anointing that we referred to in the previous chapter - and this, there is the time of the wilderness and the devil completing every temptation. What would be the bearing of that?

J.N.G. I think the Lord in His ministry connects Himself with every experience that we are called upon to go through, sin apart, that the Lord Himself cannot sympathetically give you a sense that He has led in it. One of the things connected with the anointing which we have not mentioned and which is prominent is that one of the main ingredients of the anointing oil was myrrh, which brings out the suffering side of things, and it may be that some of us think that the suffering position of the assembly is something abnormal. It takes us a long while to come to it that the suffering position in which we are put is normal to the assembly.

D.J.H. So would that be a pattern too, that service would not be academic? I was thinking of what you referred to at the beginning, but would it be feeling and sympathetic as under the power of the anointing?

J.N.G. Yes, I believe so. That is why it is where He was brought up, that others knew Him and knew His life, knew what He had been through and how He had reacted to what had been around Him; how the Lord had watched certain things in others. We are reminded of that in the gospels, that He knew a woman who had been eighteen years afflicted with something. That was when He was about thirty years of age; so could it have been when He was twelve years of age when He went into the temple that He noticed that woman? I do not know, but all these things enter into the kind of man that God anointed.

C.C.I. Is it right to think that the anointing applies to us in the provisional time, while we are here on earth? In the suffering or testimonial position the anointing would have very special emphasis.

J.N.G. Well, it would; nevertheless the fact that the tabernacle system was completely anointed with oil shows how the bearing of the sufferings of Christ is suggested in this and extends right throughout the universe for God, would you think?

C.C.I. Yes; and in the anointing oil were thoughts of what is holy - "Upon man's flesh it shall not be poured", Exod 30: 32. What would you say about that?

J.N.G. That is a very necessary thing to bring forward, because it shows that man after the flesh has no part whatever in the anointing of the Spirit. The oil was put on the blood; the priests were anointed first of all with blood and then with the oil.

C.C.I. I cannot but feel that we should emphasise the great privileges that we have at the present moment and what can be seen. Do you think we can really see the Spirit upon the faces of the saints? It speaks in a psalm of oil which makes man's face to shine (see Ps 104: 15).

J.N.G. Yes. What of course should be emphasised also is that the Lord was unique. The anointing of the Lord was without blood; He did not need the blood. That kind of man had never been seen before; it was divine perfection in a Man, and therefore the Spirit could come in totality upon Him. God committed Himself fully to Jesus. Now when you and I come into the picture we need the blood.

E.M.W. That would be typically seen in Aaron being anointed without blood.

J.N.G. Exactly.

S.D.K.R. It says in Exodus that it was "the holy anointing oil" (chap 30: 25); that is important I think.

J.N.G. That too is unique. Wherever you get the Holy Spirit brought forward, either in the types or actually in the New Testament,

His Person and His activities are guarded. The holy anointing oil would just refer to that, I think. We are to be careful in what we think as to the Spirit as well as in what we say.

D.E.B. The Lord was anointed "to preach glad tidings to the poor". I wondered if that linked with your thought as to the suffering side; the poor would be suffering persons, would they not?

J.N.G. Yes, to the captives and the blind and the crushed.

W.A.M. Do you think that the full expression of the grace of God in Him involved the anointing? Words of grace were proceeding out of His mouth; there was no other vessel like this.

J.N.G. No, and all Scripture had looked forward to this day.

W.A.M. Yes, and it is the complete fulfilment of that scripture.

J.N.G. Now having taken account of the Lord in His own perfection, can we bring that down to our own experience? Can the power of the anointing be seen in us as we apply the scriptures so that there is no question, when scriptures are read in our meetings that they apply in the day in which we read them:

J.M. Do you think that involves that the expression 'the truth' is seen in the persons anointed? There could be no anointing if the expression of the truth is not there in some measure in us, could there?

J.N.G. That is right, the demonstration of the Spirit in the person. We are what we say, or we should be anyway.

W.A.M. Would that link on with what we have in John: "full of grace and truth", chap 1: 14?

J.N.G. Yes, it is one thing.

J.M. While Luke delights to bring forward Christ personally in the anointing, he also refers to the Holy Spirit being upon Simeon? Do you think the beauty of the movements of Simeon shows that the anointing can be seen in persons like ourselves?

J.N.G. Just so, and the gospel finishes with the Lord sending persons forth. They were witnesses of what they had seen in the

Lord, and then the Lord in Acts says "and ye shall be my witnesses", chap. 1:8. That involved that the Spirit must come, the promise of the Father coming upon them.

E.C.M. Is it important to see that the anointing precedes the sending here? "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor; he has sent me to preach to captives deliverance". "How shall they preach unless they have been sent?", Rom 10: 15.

J.N.G. I think that would bring us over to the passage in Acts. In verse 8 of chapter 1 it says: "but ye will receive power, the Holy Spirit having come upon you, and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Sarmaria, and to the end of the earth". In chapter 2 Peter stands up and refers to the Scriptures; he gives a current application of the Scriptures in a powerful way that could not be resisted, and yet in one sense the full interpretation of this scripture is in a coming day.

F.M.K. These were persons with their eyes fixed upon Him, carried forward from Luke; there would be no operation like this unless we are in the gain of that.

J.N.G. Yes, these are anointed persons. Peter stands up with the eleven; it is a Levitical touch, as we have been taught, but he was what he said. There was no gainsaying the power and conviction that came with this preaching of Peter as under the power of the anointing. He refers to the scripture and says "And it shall be in the last days, saith God" - saith God - "that I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh".

A.T. So is it important to have anointed ears, anointed eyes and anointed lips? I was thinking of our senses, how necessary they are to our feelings as we preach and say things.

J.N.G. The whole person is involved in the anointing. Just how far we experience this would be something the Lord might raise as a question with us all, that it is not just light in our souls but, is this the way we serve? It is not only how we serve in preaching or giving

addresses or suggesting a reading, but how we serve God in our contacts with men, because that was involved in what followed.

E.P. It must have been personal assurance with Peter for him to say "give heed to my words" - listen to what I have to say. He had something in his own soul that he was able boldly and confidently to speak about.

J.N.G. I am sure that is right, and it does raise the question whether we believe what we say; whether in setting forth the truth and speaking to others there is a conviction about the way we say things, that we have no shadow of doubt in our minds as to what God Himself is doing, and we are identified with it.

R.L. Paul on the boat says "For the angel of the God, whose I am and whom I serve", (Acts 27: 23); he recognises that the whole matter belongs to God,

J.N.G. That is the whole thing, as we remarked earlier, God coming in in the anointing; it is really that God is making Himself known.

H.A.H. So Peter has no doubt; he says "this is that". We might have thought that the scripture he used was a little unusual, but he has no doubt in his own mind; and the pattern, as you say, is in the Lord Jesus - He knew where to stop reading.

J.N.G. That is a very interesting remark. Some of the most powerful and convicting words I have heard in a meeting for prophetic ministry have been in short words, almost just a sentence of scripture read; and one has thought, This brother has something and he is conveying it; he is not conveying it in a multiplicity of words, he is just selecting a scripture and in the power of the Spirit conveying something of God into your soul.

E.C.B. Would that be why the man coming in says "God is indeed amongst you", 1 Cor 14: 25?

J.N.G. That is what we want above all else, that God comes into our souls - "God is indeed amongst you", It is not a question of impressing one another with what we know or our ability to speak;

what we want is something of God Himself coming into the souls of the saints.

E.C.B. I thought recently as to the prophetic meeting, of the word in the Proverbs that "Every word of God is pure", chap 30: 5. A word in the power of the anointing would reflect the purity of the word of God, so that it would be unmixed.

J.N.G. Yes, and maybe we would have more liberty as to the way we use a scripture, not out of its interpretation, but an application obviously is directly under the hand of the Lord.

C.B. Why did not the preaching of Luke 4 bring out their Hosannas or responses? Peter's preaching brought about repentance.

J.N.G. The Spirit had not come of course, that would be the great difference; redemption had not been effected. When redemption had been effected by Christ, and the Spirit had come from Christ in glory, then it is that conviction comes by the preaching. But here the Lord Himself is the test, and He was rejected.

C.B. Their eyes were fixed upon Him but not their hearts; it is a heart matter, is it?

J.N.G. That is right. There is not much accomplished if the truth does not get into our hearts.

J.W. What does the scripture mean when it says "the word of God is not bound", 2 Tim 2: 9?

J.N.G. I think it means that you can bind persons but you cannot bind the word of God. Peter can be put in prison, Paul and Silas can have their feet put in the stocks, but you cannot bind the effect of the word of God.

E.C.M. Paul in Corinthians speaks of "my word and my preaching, not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power", 1 Cor 2: 4. That is what we want to see; the result is "that your faith might not stand in men's wisdom, but in God's power".

J.N.G. Yes, and it links with what has just been said; the devil would try all he could to bind the saints and restrict the preaching. Think of all that happened at Smyrna, the ten days of suffering in the history of the assembly, but the word of God was not bound. Think of the scattering there was from Jerusalem when the enemy tried through Saul to bind men and women and deliver them to prison, and instead of that the glad tidings spread. You cannot bind the word of God.

E.C.M. I think we should look for some demonstration today as the result of the Spirit and the power in the word. I was thinking of the beginning of Acts, what a wonderful demonstration there was in the Spirit's power.

J.N.G. Just so; it is one thing to look at it in Acts 2 but you have to come back to your own locality. There might be just two or three of us but it is the same thing, is it not?

E.C.M. That is what I was trying to get at. There may be conditions of smallness with many of us, but should we not look for this, have faith for it?

J.N.G. It is the same anointing.

C.C.I. What is involved in the idea of what is poured out? It is mentioned three times in this chapter, but ultimately Peter says "he has poured out this which ye behold and hear" (v 33).

J.N.G. It is referred to several times in the Old Testament; it implies that in the dispensation we are in there are no reserves with God. The presence of the Spirit here means that God has given His best without reserves, but it is seen first of all in His committal to Jesus in the beginning of Luke's gospel. That Man is the divine standard; redemption has been effected, there is a Man in glory now and the Spirit here poured out from that Man. The first administrative act of Christ was to give the Spirit, and that is the character of the dispensation we are in. I doubt whether we fully grasp the greatness of this present dispensation marked by faith and the Spirit.

C.C.I. Is the reference to the Spirit being given without measure (see John 3: 34), although primarily in relation to Christ, the present

position too, that there is no reserve whatever in relation to the presence of the Spirit among the saints?

J.N.G. Yes; I wonder whether we understand very much about the Spirit really. It is the way that God has come within our range without any fixed ideas; there is a certain fluidity about the way the Spirit is spoken of that is indefinable because He is God. I just say this because it has been said that the Spirit has His part in Deity. That is not good enough; *the Spirit is God*, without any qualification, and if that gets into our souls perhaps our thoughts in regard to what is in the divine mind might expand a little more.

J.McK. Do you think the reference to what is fluid would imply the Spirit's ability to cope with every possible exigency in the scene of testimony?

J.N.G. Quite so. If, for instance, you think of the types, you have wind - can you define that? Can you put that into a fixed measure? You have water - can you tell what channels that would go in? Then you have oil. These are definite types of the Spirit in the Old Testament, but the more you think of them the more you wonder about God coming within our range in the presence of the Spirit. It makes you bow in worship, that is all.

A.T. Do we have to realise, even sitting here, that the Spirit is here? It is God amongst us.

J.N.G. Yes. The other thing I think we ought steadily to keep in mind in the economy in which we are is that our thoughts in connection with the Spirit must be connected with Christ.

J.M. It comes out very clearly, does it not, in these early chapters of the Acts? The coming of the Spirit did not bring a testimony exactly as to the Spirit but a testimony as to Christ, Christ in glory.

J.N.G. That is right, and that is where He has come from as far as we are concerned; He has come from Christ in glory, and that is to attach our hearts to Him where He is.

H.P.W. The eunuch said to Philip, "concerning whom does the prophet say this? of himself or of some other?" (Acts 8: 34), and the

Spirit of God was able to help Philip to preach and continue from that very same scripture and open it up to him, and the result was most manifest, was it not?

J.N.G. Therefore we need to be careful as to what we say as to the Spirit. Sometimes we have attempted to say what the Lord can do and what He cannot do; sometimes we may attempt to say what the Spirit can do and what He will not do. I think the responsibility is on our side humbly to accept the limitations that God has put us in, and as we do, I think we will perhaps learn a little more of the greatness of God.

W.A.M. I was wondering what you said about 'part in Deity'. It is a wrong idea; you could not speak of any of the divine Persons having part in Deity; God is there in fulness in any one of the divine Persons.

J.N.G. I think that is more important than we realise; it maintains in our souls a spirit of worship in respect to the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

W.A.M. I remember that when we were seeking to define whether it was the Father or God in fulness involving the three Persons, Mr Taylor maintained that it was the same God.

J.N.G. Yes, and there is a mystery about it all, it is beyond us.

D.J.H. Peter says "ye know that from the earliest days God amongst you chose that the nations by my mouth should hear the word of the glad tidings and believe" Acts 15: 7.

J.N.G. I thought of that. If there are any questions about that, Peter answers, that is God; he is speaking of the Spirit and without any qualification says, God.

Maybe now we should refer to chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians which brings us to the anointed vessel; it brings us to the assembly: "so also is the Christ", a title which involves the assembly. It does not say, Ye are the Christ's, but "so also is the Christ", which means that he is speaking now of what is universal. Obviously the Corinthians were not up to it, but it is intended, I think, to put dignity

into our souls in respect to the local position, so that we respect every brother and every sister in our local company.

D.J.H. We were speaking of it on Thursday in our local reading; we often say there is no universal church council now, but if persons wish to see, or if we experience at all what the assembly is in function, we experience it locally, do we not, in our local gatherings? The assembly is universal but the expression of it, and the experience of it, is local. Does that put this dignity upon the local assembly?

J.N.G. That is right. There is only one universal gathering, and that was at Jerusalem, but when Paul's ministry came in it was a question of local assemblies. What you say is the truth. Whatever feature of the assembly it is that God gives us light as to, the practical working of it out will only be seen in the local assembly in which God has set us. There may be some extension of it in a gathering like this today, but in any case it is a local gathering; others have come into it and added in the sense of the wealth of the Spirit that is available in the work of God, but it is still a local position; it is in the local position that God gives us our real impressions of the assembly, and that can only be as we respect every brother and every sister.

F.C.M. As we enjoy it locally we are expanded in the sense that it embraces every one indwelt by the Spirit on earth: "in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body".

J.N.G. So our affections begin to work, because really that is the assembly, the place where divine affections are known and enjoyed; and that is what is going through.

C.J.H.D. And it is going through according to the principle of renewal. Titus says "and renewal of the Holy Spirit, which he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour", chap 2: 6. So while the Spirit is not given again, the principle of renewal must bear upon our state, must it not?

J.N.G. Is there not a scripture that speaks of fresh oil (see Ps 92: 10); that would link with what you are saying.

C.J.H.D. It is very encouraging that we should have been recovered on the principle of renewal.

J.N.G. Yes, that is the principle we live on; whether we call it renewal or revival that is the principle we live on every day.

E.C.B. While the anointing has its individual bearing, and no doubt we learn it that way, would it always be leading us to what is collective?

J.N.G. Exactly. That could well be emphasised. Every experience that God puts us through, every bit of enjoyment that God gives us, should lead into the assembly, and that locally.

E.C.B. It is interesting how Paul seemed to like to refer again and again to "one Spirit".

F.G.M. You referred to enjoyment: is that one of the features and evidences of the Spirit working happily?

J.N.G. It is. The idea of being given to drink of one Spirit would imply that, because inferentially it is a reference to the cup, but it brings about enjoyment, it brings about a lifting up of the soul, sets your soul free, you want to sing.

E.C.M. Would this not help us as to how we regard one another? I was thinking of the word: "Touch not mine anointed ones, and do my prophets no harm", Ps 105: 15. Do you think that is a word for us as to how we speak of or regard one another? Whether it is the servants, the prophets, or the saints, they are to be regarded in the dignity, the glory of the anointing.

J.N.G. That is a very good word; I think that is what the Lord would say to us out of this scripture. Difficulties come in but can we hold in our hearts every brother and every sister locally in the dignity of the anointed vessel? Now if that is so there will be a liberty amongst us in our enjoyment of what is proper to the assembly that will lead into what is priestly response to God.

D.E.B. Your passage in Acts refers to your sons, your daughters, your elders; it is almost everybody except yourself, is it not? That is

what you find in the local gathering, you draw upon the resource that is in others.

J.N.G. Yes, you feel the need of more skill in that, in being able to draw on one another instead of having too much to say.

J.McK. In an Old Testament setting it is interesting that David respected the anointing in Saul, even though the man's personal conduct at the time was out of keeping. Is that important?

J.N.G. It is. I doubt whether that would be repeated. I think that wherever the anointing is now, it is in persons equal to it, and that is why I think we need to respect one another. We do not choose one another, do we? But if God has taken us up in His grace and mercy and has given us a part in the assembly, it will lead us to respect every other brother and sister, because they are the subjects of divine sovereignty just as much as I am.

C.B. We need to anoint one another with the oil of gladness, do we not? It has been said that one ingredient of that oil is love.

J.N.G. Yes. It is a fine thing that the meetings end with a hymn; that is like anointing the whole of the saints together with the oil of gladness. There is divine wisdom in the way our meetings have come to us, the order in which they are. We open with a hymn, we have a prayer directly to God, or the Lord or the Spirit; God is brought in directly and then we are free to speak to one another. But then we do not finish without a fresh touch and a hymn, because a hymn brings in everyone, it brings in all the brothers and all the sisters; I think it has the effect of setting us together in a fresh way before we leave.

F.M.K. The section here goes on to say we cannot do without each other.

J.N.G. Just so; well, we need one another.

MAIDSTONE

23 April 1983

Key to initials

C.Beale, London; D.E.Burr, Redbridge; E.C.Burr, London; C.J.H.Davidson, Dorking; J.N.Grace, Melbourne; D.J.Hutson, London; H.A.Hutson, London; C.C.Ikin, Southend; F.M.Knappett, Maidstone; R.Lawrence, Maidstone; E.C.Muggleton, Croydon; F.C.Mutton, Redbridge; F.G.May, Maidstone; J.McKay, Sunbury; J.Mitchell, Bexley; W.A.Moseley, Vancouver; E.Palmer, London; S.D.K.Roberts, Croydon; A.Thomas, Gillingham; E.M.Walkinshaw, Gillingham; H.P.Wright, Gillingham; J.Wright, Redbridge

THE SPIRIT INDWELLING

J.N.Grace

Romans 8: 9-11; 1 Corinthians 3: 16,17; Ephesians 3: 17-19

How to get rid of that wretched man in chapter 7; thank God that though we cannot get rid of him exactly, we can get deliverance from him. We are in a world where everything is marked by turbulence, problems, strivings and troubles. How wonderful that the Spirit of God has come from an area where there is no turbulence, no troubles, no difficulties, no disturbances. O, would it not be lovely just to find yourself living in an area where there are no disturbances! Well, that is the area from which the Spirit of God has moved, and He wants to bring that into our hearts. It is not normal for a Christian to be struggling along from day to day; normal Christianity is that the Spirit of God dwells in you; that means the struggle is over. Would you not like that? Of course, we would all like it. Well, we can have it; that is what these chapters in Romans show us. But the struggle goes on. I cannot say much about these chapters - I would just confess that to the brethren - but I do know what happens is that you follow through and it leads you to Christ. When you find yourself led to Christ you find yourself led to the solution of everything - everything. There is not one problem in your soul or life, or in anybody else's, that cannot find the answer in Jesus. Christianity is very simple really; it is so profound because of who it is that has come within our range in Jesus, but it is so simple because it all

stands related to the knowledge of Jesus. So you find confidence in speaking to every brother and sister in this room in the sense that they have a link with Jesus.

Well, you have your ups and downs, and the struggle, maybe, going on, but then you find finally that there is something within you that is a direct link with the Man above. You may require a little analysis to get through to that; sometimes it takes years; I do not know how many years Jacob took in type to get through, it took him a long while to get through his struggle until he reached peaceful conditions, undisturbed conditions in Bethel, but he reached there anyway. There is no need for any of us to prolong it; we can find the answer in our links with Jesus. You say, I do not understand all this that is going on in these chapters, I am not any good at doctrine anyway. And I might say, Neither am I; but it is wonderful to find the answer to everything in Jesus. If you do not understand, tell Him, that is all. If you find a passage of Scripture difficult, if you find a circumstance of difficulty - tell Jesus. It is the very simplicity of things that stumbles us; we *do not put things* into *practice*. The burden of my movements amongst the brethren is that we practice Christianity, practice what it is to commune with Jesus and practice what it is to commune with the Spirit and to rely on Him. If you go through the Scriptures - and I hope you do every day - start the day with the Scriptures; start the day with Jesus and finish it with Him too, because that is the way we are going to finish one day, we will finish with Jesus never more to be away from Him. The hymn writer says that:

'But with Him - O, with Jesus!

Are any words so blest? ' (No.220)

Well, the struggle has been going on and now you find there is something in you, the "I myself ". You have been trying to do what you wanted to do and there is something acting against it all the time, and finally you find there is something in you that wants to do what is good. You say, There is something in me that wants to do what is right and there is something warring against it all the time, and then you get an outlook on another Man, and that is the secret

of all, simply that you have a Deliverer. There was not a point in your life where you found something that is going to be clear of things for ever, because the flesh does not change, and you will never get clear of the flesh while you are here, never. Do not think it is going to improve the longer you are in the testimony; you could have been fifty, sixty years amongst those who have been recovered to the truth and find the flesh is just as bad as ever. It does not change. All you need is deliverance; you need a Deliverer.

So that is what this person finds: "I myself with the mind serve God's law; but with the flesh sin's law", Rom 7: 25. When you come to the "I myself", there is something there that links with another Man, not the old man that has been condemned on the cross. You will find that God has dealt with the whole thing anyway before you ever came on the scene. He did not dally with it, He did not forgive it, He condemned it, He condemned it entirely; the whole thing was condemned when Jesus was lifted up. It says "and I, if I be lifted up", John 12: 32. The Son of man has been lifted up, and the whole man that has come under the power of sin has been condemned. What a simple thing to come round to God's side of things and say, I will stand with God in the judgment of that man, and I will condemn him too! You do it in the light of the death of Jesus, God's own Son. It is very affecting: "God, having sent his own Son in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh", Rom 8: 3. That is the finish of it as far as God is concerned, and it is a good thing when we come round to the finish of it in our minds. So you are no longer struggling because your outlook now is to another Man; you are not looking inward, you are looking outward to Jesus; that is what it means. As soon as you do that you will find that the Spirit will be free with you. He has been helping you all along the way and you did not know it; you did not know that in all these exercises and struggles the Spirit has been right with you, helping you, until you find the end of the tunnel, and then when your eye is on Christ you find that the Spirit is *free* with you, and He dwells. That is what He is after; the Spirit of God wants to dwell in your heart. So give up the struggle and just keep your eye on Christ. One of the fine things in

this chapter 8 is that again and again it refers to the idea of the Spirit dwelling in us. It is not a temporary abode, it is not a flat, not a hired lodging; it is in fact a divine Person now dwelling. And there is something there in your heart that is according to Spirit.

Two things come out in this chapter that it is a good thing for us to lay hold of in faith, and that is that there is what is according to flesh and there is what is according to Spirit. So lay hold of the fact that there is what is according to Spirit. Just grasp that, and believe it! There it is; it is a fact. It says "and they that are according to Spirit, the things of the Spirit" (v 5); and then it goes on to say "But ye are not in flesh but in Spirit, if indeed God's Spirit dwell in you". You are entitled to take account of yourself in the light of this as according to Spirit. The flesh is done with, condemned in the cross of Christ; now your eye is on another Man, and the Spirit has liberty with you and you are entitled to view yourself as according to Spirit, and that sets you *free*. As you go through this chapter the liberty increases as a matter of fact; finally it will be that you get the light of sonship, and not only the light of it but the spirit of it. As believers we are sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus; that means the status of sonship, you are as much a son now as you ever will be, in mixed conditions maybe but it is by faith, and this chapter tells us that we have the spirit of adoption - the spirit of it. What a fine thing to have the spirit of things! because if you get the spirit of things you really have the thing itself. The full thing involving the redemption of the body awaits another day; Ephesians tells us that: "the redemption of the acquired possession", chap 1: 14. It will come; you will have a body of glory like His body of glory, according to the same image; but in the meantime we are so fully furnished, beloved brethren. By faith we are sons, but then God has given us the spirit of adoption: "For ye have not received a spirit of bondage again for fear, but ye have received a spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (v 15). Now you are free in the Spirit; this is what the Spirit is after, that we might be in liberty, in liberty with God and in liberty with one another.

The truth of sonship is developed further in other letters of Paul, but in this chapter you have the spirit of it and we can cry,

Abba, Father. I hope you do; it is not only the light of it but the practice of it. Turn your heart to God as Father; it is the liberty that the Spirit of God gives us. You say, It is too good to be true. It is good, and it is true: we can cry, Abba, Father. You say, They were the words that Jesus used; they were, but they are the words that we can use. O, let us use them, that is all. Let us not have the light of these things just in our hearts but put them into practice. In faith you grasp the truth; but *grasp it*, let it not become just light mentally to you; if you are presented with the truth grasp it in faith and act on it, and then you will find how wonderfully the Spirit will help you. If you do not put things into practice by faith the Spirit cannot help you. You say, You are limiting the Spirit. No, I am not doing that; I am just going by the principles of Scripture, and it is your responsibility to act on the principle of faith. This goes through from the first moment that you put your trust in Jesus in relation to your sins, to the most profound enjoyment that we can have in the assembly in the service of God; it is faith from beginning to end, and that means that you must act. The Spirit waits for that, but as soon as you do, you will find how wonderfully He will confirm what you do in faith.

That is why I read these Scriptures together; having the Spirit dwelling in you gives you wonderful liberty, you begin to enjoy things. You have the power to carry out your responsibility, not by way of energies of the flesh, but another law is operating, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. There are things that have been effected through Jesus Christ; nobody else can do that. That means there is one Man, God has one Man who can give effect to all His thoughts, and that is Jesus Christ; He stands alone in that. But when we come to the use of the name Christ Jesus we are brought into wonderful favour, what is in Christ Jesus. That is why it says "There is... no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus". Of course, there cannot be because there is nothing to condemn in Christ Jesus. If you have a place there in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation as far as you are concerned. There is a wonderful place up there, and the link with Christ up there is the Spirit down here, and that is a wonderful thing to enjoy. It goes right through; there is no failure, there is no

weakness connected with what is in Christ Jesus. The salvation which is in Christ Jesus goes through inviolate; as we are told in Timothy, in difficult times it remains the divine standard, and it is maintained by the presence of the Spirit in you, that is the enjoyment of it.

Now to come to Corinthians, Paul says "Do ye not know that ye are temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" Is that your view of the local company? Do you come into the meeting and sit down with the brethren and have a sense in your soul that the Spirit of God dwells in the local position characteristically? It is not that the local company is *the* temple of God; that requires the full thought of Ephesians, growing to Him, but the thing is there characteristically as we sit down. What a dignity it gives to the local company! You sit down just with two or three brethren; it does not require two or three hundred brethren; you just sit down in the presence of others and the Spirit of God is there characteristically, God's temple. It is not a question of gift, it is not a question of acquiring a great knowledge, but the Spirit of God dwells there and it is the place where the truth can be enquired into and we will get the answer. It depends very largely, beloved brethren, on how we regard one another, whether we come in and sit down and have a respect for every brother and sister and are glad to see one another. We are not thinking of their history, we are thinking of what each is in the divine mind, and that sets us free, and the Spirit is free, and we find the answer to everything that might come up in the local position. Then, of course, there is the warning that "If any one corrupt the temple of God, him shall God destroy". That is a very sobering thing. There are things that we have to take up sometimes - very rarely I would say - in assembly administration, because the normal administration of the assembly is blessing in the glad tidings; and the service of God is the prime function of the assembly. But there are things that come up, and when it comes to a question of any one corrupting the temple of God, God has things in hand and you are safe to leave it there: "him shall God destroy", because it is God's temple. We are reminded of that in the anointing, that God

really is coming into view. So it is wholesome to think of the assembly from that point of view, locally, that it is temple of God. How careful we would be then not to introduce anything amongst our brethren which is not in accordance with the presence of the Spirit of God, so that He can dwell there; that is the idea, that He dwells there. Let there be no disturbance locally that would hinder the normal operations of the Spirit of God in blessing. That is developed in this epistle, what the Spirit of God will do normally in the local assembly.

Now just to refer to the scripture in Ephesians, it is not now the Spirit dwelling, it is Christ dwelling. I suppose this is the fulness of blessing that attaches to the assembly. It brings in what is universal, but not universal just in the sense of what there is now. It says "that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts". You see, you are in the highest point of the service of God in Ephesians 3 and there faith is still needed. It encourages us all, I think, in the service of God when we feel we are not equal to things; and really when the richness and fulness of God's thoughts are brought into view you feel it is beyond you. Well, grasp them by faith, that is all; understand that they belong to you; that God, in bringing His thoughts into view, is thinking of you, and He expects you to grasp these thoughts and stand in relation to them in faith in your soul. What a time we would have in the service of God if every brother and sister in faith took this heavenly ground! Then it says "being rooted and founded in love". It is the Christ dwelling through faith in our hearts; it is not just your needs, or your blessing, nor your local company, nor is it simply the assembly universally, it is "the Christ", it is Christ in His relation to the whole pleasure of God universally. In fact in this section it brings in every family in heaven and on earth named of the Father. Think of the Man, the centre of the universe, holding everyone and everything in relation to God! That is the Christ, the great divine Operator, involving too, the assembly with Him. What a wonderful thing to lay hold of that, to make room in your heart for faith to operate so that the Spirit makes you equal for it! The Father's Spirit in this section would make you equal to the

position that divine purpose and love has designed for you. So it goes on to say: "being rooted and founded in love". After all, dear brethren, where would we be if love was not operating with us and in us. So you are rooted in love; that means that your roots are spreading out beyond your own locality, spreading out universally, thinking of all the saints, even if they are held in darkness at the moment. The roots would mean love spreading out to take account of the whole of the assembly; let us hold to the divine thought in its fulness and completeness and we will find there will be an expansion in our minds as to the greatness of what God is securing for Himself that we perhaps have never thought of. And then it says "and founded in love"; that is, your foundations go down.

So this passage speaks of apprehending with all the saints what is the breadth and length and *depth* and *height*. Ephesians brings in the depth. In Revelation you get the dimensions of the city, its breadth and length and height are equal, but in Ephesians, where the Christ is operating and you are with Him, you find you can penetrate into the depths. Why? Because Christ has been there; that involves that where He has been no one else has ever been. But there is an apprehension with the assembly that no other family, I think, will ever have, and it is contained in this section of Scripture when alongside Christ, when your heart is expanded, and you grasp it in faith and the Spirit comes to your aid; you get a view and an experience of things that you never thought was possible. Why? Because you are in the presence of God, God Himself, and the Father's Spirit. Is that not wonderful? The Father's Spirit - you could not have anything greater - is giving you strength to be equal to the position in which you are. You say, I am not equal to the position. You are! The Spirit will make you equal to it as alongside Christ because He is the centre of the moral universe. All that is spiritual centres in Christ, and as we are alongside Him what a wonderful place the assembly has! You can look out on the vast expanse of the divine domain in the universe, and the assembly will understand all the ways of God and His purposes in every family. You say, I do not understand that. No, all I can say is, I do not either, but I see it is

available to us as we grasp in faith what God gives to us in the ministry and put it into practice. That is what faith requires; just put it into practice and you will find that the presence of the Spirit is not a matter of light but is a matter of reality because He is God. O, how wonderful it is that the Spirit is here indwelling us and upon us! There is the anointing in a public way on the one hand but then indwelling us on the other to make us equal to all the divine thoughts that have been established in Christ. May God help us.

MAIDSTONE

23 April 1983

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S COURSE

D.L.Stewart

Acts 13: 23-25

This is the fifth time in the New Testament that the record is given of John's appreciation of Christ expressed in this way. It was as John was fulfilling his course. What a course was John's! Perhaps a few months of service, but the Lord Himself speaks of him as a burning and shining lamp. His course, his mission in life, his one objective, was to make way for Christ. We should each be challenged as to whether we are here with some sense of mission. Then as to our course locally, or otherwise, these months or years - has it been to make way for Christ? There was nothing whatever personal in John's outlook.

Isaiah spoke of John's mission and service in chapter 40, saying "every mountain and hill shall be brought low" (v 4). I used to think that it was brought down, but that is not exactly the thought. Brought low is to become available to make a way for Him who Himself is meek and lowly in heart. It is not just the mountains that are the obstacles but hills and perhaps little hills, which would have a bearing on us all. Then "the crooked shall be made straight". How essential these things are if the Lord is truly to have His way among us; and this has its application to us all, especially in our localities.

John is in the sense of One he speaks of as mightier and yet here in the footsteps of service. The sandal is not the luxurious shoe, according to the note in Matthew; it is the footwear of a servant, but what a servant! John with an appreciation of who was there is bowed in the light of the stoop which that sandal involved. There must be something in the fact that each of the gospel writers mentions as to John and the Lord's sandal. Mark, who has only a few verses on John the baptist but whose gospel bears peculiarly on service speaks of the "mightier than I... the thong of whose, sandal I am not fit to stoop down and unloose".

What an impression this must have made on Paul perhaps laying the basis in his soul for such a service as his was to be. Acts 13 is his first recorded public ministry and as he introduces Christ into his word he bases what he has to say on John's impression of the Saviour Jesus. How much depended on John's ministry, his course, so short as to time but so full of nothing but Christ! In Acts 1 the filling up of the twelve required one who was present in John's time as qualification for witness, and in Acts 19 the work at Ephesus culminating in the height of Paul's ministry had its moral beginning with John. So Paul or rather "Saul, who also is Paul" in this very chapter from which we read (v 9) accepts the being brought low in view of way being made for Christ in his service and in testimony.

How true it is that the testimony is Christ, and if John in his course was preparing the way of the Lord and preaching the bringing low of every obstacle he himself leads so well on this line. Almost his last words according to John's gospel are "He must increase and I must decrease", chap 3: 30. May we all in our own course be found somewhat on this line.

Substance of a word in

LONDON

1 February 1983

THE CHILDREN'S PEACE

There is a wonderful promise in prophecy that "All thy children shall be taught of Jehovah, and great shall be the peace of thy children". It is evident therefore that true peace depends on the knowledge of the Lord. Boys and girls of today will not have known the deep human feelings of relief felt when peace is proclaimed after wartime sufferings. These feelings are always mingled with both joy and grief for victors as well as for vanquished. Yet in God's ways many persons in wartime would have found in their souls a deep and lasting peace perhaps not otherwise known.

One such incident at the battle of Sedan concerned a Prussian officer who graciously asked a severely wounded infantryman if anything could be done to relieve his sufferings. But it was too late to help. The soldier's only request was to take the well worn Testament from his knapsack and read to him the words of the Lord Jesus, "Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you". About to pass from time into eternity the believer just felt the need to be confirmed in the peace of soul which had long been his joy. The words were read and the soldier said with failing voice, 'Thank you, Sir. Keep the Testament, it led me to Jesus, it will lead you as well'.

The wounded man fell asleep through Jesus. As for the officer much passed through his mind in a few moments of time. He thought of this bright light of testimony, of his reckless and infidel friends and of his mother whose hope had been in the Lord and whose death he could never forget. The answer to all this may be read in the fact that a small gravestone stands on the old battlefield of Sedan with the name and regiment of a Prussian soldier. It was set up and cared for by an officer high in command and bears a quotation from the Bible.

There is a well known 'peace' hymn (No.390) experienced and written by one of noble birth who surrendered much for the Lord. One line is 'Peace with God - the Lord is risen'. The hymn is a beautiful outpouring of a spirit in the joy of the peace that is promised

at the opening of almost every epistle in the New Testament. In the Revelation the source of peace is in One "who is, and who was, and who is to come". Is Christ Himself *your* peace?

J.C.Evershed