

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 135

June 1984

Contents

"OUR PASSOVER, CHRIST"

PEACE

THE CHILDREN'S NEEDS

"OUR PASSOVER, CHRIST"

1 Corinthians 5: 6-8; Exodus 12: 1 -11, 14-18, 25-28; 2 Chronicles 34: 29-31; 35: 1-4

R.T. I wondered if thinking of Christ as our passover may serve for a strengthening of our affections and binding together. The passover and the feast of unleavened bread were very early in the experience of the children of Israel; they were also foundational. It says "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months". There are many things in our lives that we may have and tend to leave. I think that was so as to the passover and its import, something that was given and tended to be neglected. It is noticeable how frequently it is referred to in Scripture and how, when it is freshly revived, the strengthening of the saints is noticeable. It is seen particularly in Chronicles. But the apostles, too, bring it very fully into their teaching. I think that John alludes to the idea of the passover when he speaks of John the baptist, saying "Behold the Lamb of God", and "He must increase, but I must decrease". That was primarily in my mind in suggesting this and I think would be the experience of Exodus 12. There is room made in the affections of the saints for Christ, and the continuance of that is in the eating of the unleavened bread.

The passage in Corinthians shows how Paul brings it in, as he says: "Your boasting is not good". Who could boast in the presence of a Lamb who has borne so much? Who could boast if our affections were nourished on One who for us has borne the judgment of God against sin? But as contemplating that One who bore that judgment, as feeding on that One who was our passover, there is the corresponding eating of unleavened bread to make room for Him so that the flesh which would exalt itself is negated to make room for another Man. Peter speaks of Him "as of a lamb without blemish and without spot", and refers to "the blood of Christ" (1 Pet 1: 19), and I think he is alluding to the passover. I only referred to Corinthians to show how it is brought into our time in its spiritual import.

I thought, without going into the detail, that Exodus 12 may nourish our affections. The chapter has far more in it than we can ever compass, but there is a certain sense of the saints being drawn together; indeed, as has often been referred to, it says "Speak unto all the assembly", that is, the congregation looked at as a moral whole, and I think that binding together comes through feeding on and thinking of Christ our passover. As to the details of the chapter, the Lord's hand may be over what we speak of, but let us think of Christ here as our passover, the One who has borne what was due to me, so that there may be a new constitution, new relationships, and a unity of the people as bound together with Him as the centre.

E.P. The expression "our passover" gathers up the affections of all the saints, does it not?

R.T. Yes, "For also our passover, Christ": that name stands by itself between the two commas there. It became a feast of the Jews, it became very formalised with many things introduced into it, but, as you say, it immediately arrests our affections: "our passover, Christ". He who alone could bear that judgment has borne it, but how well do we know Him? That lamb being in the house those four days would be to draw our affections to that holy, spotless, sinless One.

A.J.E.W. I was struck as we read it with the touch of finality; "our passover, Christ, has been sacrificed", as if that establishes a glorious, final basis for every condition of things to be met and met in a way that becomes the God whose heart is really disclosed in this. Although the setting is different it reminded me a little of the one sacrifice that is referred to in Hebrews. Does that comfort us?

R.T. Yes, I think that is good; the thing is finalised in Him and that One is to be a nourisher for our affections. It is to silence the boasting and what may have come in. In the Old Testament how often the reviving of the passover met the state and the condition that had come in, and created almost, you may say, a new set of living affections that bound the saints together in a forward movement. So that the finality you speak of, "our passover, Christ",

has met the line that caused bondage in Egypt in view of forward movement.

D.J.H. Sacrifice has in view what is for God, does it not? There is what we feed upon but, as you say, it is very reassuring that everything has been met to God's entire satisfaction and a people has been secured for God.

R.T. Yes, that One who has met it is to be the food of my soul for a constitution which would negate the boasting and would be done with the enlarging old leaven side of things, a constitution which appreciates Him and exclaims "Behold the lamb of God", John 1: 36. Would that we had affections that could go out like that! They would be developed as feeding on that spotless One. .

E.C.B. The passover was God's initiative, was it not? Moses would have delivered the people by a very different way, but chapter 12 is God's initiative to deliver the people.

R.T. Yes, and it was complete. It is simple in its way, but how complete! It is judgment on the world but the children of God spared by the blood of that Lamb. It is not without instruction that the lamb that was to be the means of their deliverance was there four days, then it was sacrificed, then it was eaten. May the details of that come into our souls so that we see the beauty of the One who bore the judgment, His ability to bear it and what it cost Him; all that would come into our souls in the eating of it. Not only was He crucified but Paul speaks to the Corinthians of Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor 2: 2) - the public side of the matter. But "our passover Christ" sacrificed, I think brings in the feelings and the holy worth of the Person who there met the judgment of God.

E.M.W. This is of sin-offering character but it is not consumed, it is roast with fire. I was thinking about your reference to food. Certain sin-offerings had to be consumed outside the camp but others were available as food to build up, do you think, a spiritual constitution in us?

R.T. That was in my mind. The roasting with fire before the eating would bring that home to us, that that Person is there to be fed on,

and it speaks of it being whole, does it not? It says later in the chapter: "neither shall ye break a bone thereof" (v 46). It brings before us the Lord in His perfections, in His beauties; and do you not think that feeding on Him would bind us together in relation to Him and in relation to the forward movement away from the world and its influences?

E.M.W. So would our thoughts and affections also be adjusted, not by academic means, or even by principles, but by feeding on Him as roast with fire?

R.T. I am sure that is of all moment, because it was just what happened throughout Israel's history and it has happened throughout the course of the testimony, that the mind of man has intruded. Paul says "Your boasting is not good". That was the mind of man. As was said just now, Moses could not have thought about this. What a divine plan, simple in its essence, but how it draws out our affections, that a lamb, a lamb that was well known in the house for four days, - Jesus as in the gospels - was going to meet everything that was required for us to be clear for ever from the principles and the ways of Egypt.

J.M. The four days to which you refer would have been a period in which that lamb would have been very much in the affections of the members of that household. And then the roasting with fire, the severity of that, brings a further sense of feeling into our spirits, do you think?

R.T. What this Lamb endured is tremendous. There is His death, bearing the judgment of God. Was that not enough? Well, if I was to feed on that it required the roasting. It is not only that Christ's blood was shed, what that means, the abandonment, what Christ bore in meeting and bearing the judgment of God, but the roasting with fire is something added that we may feed on it. It is not boiled, there are other offerings that are boiled, but I think that all such words are used to bring home to us the intensity of suffering, the depth of suffering, that Christ bore on our account. Now is that attractive to us? In those four days they would see its head, they would see its

legs, they would see how it moved intelligently, they would see how it walked, they would see its propensities. We see that in the gospels, Jesus who bore the judgment on our account.

J.M. Is not the place that Christ has in the affections of the saints the answer to a good deal amongst us? It is not exactly the knowledge of the truth but the place that He has, His moral beauties and qualities, and particularly in His suffering?

R.T. Well, if the truth as it is spoken about does not lead me to Christ it has lost its point. There could be more of these exclamations among us that John made, such as "Behold the lamb of God". As we speak about the Scriptures we can become very formal, but who could be formal with this very type, a lamb in its movements, Jesus of the gospels, the way that He was there, in their houses, touching their infirmities, healing their diseases, and yet that same One bore the judgment of God against sin that I may be free and be built up in relation to the divine system.

E.C.M. Is there not a point in Luke's gospel in the way the Lord brings in the passover before introducing the Supper? He says "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer", chap 22: 15.

R.T. Yes, I think if we look at the gospels we can see the close connection between the passover and the Supper. The passover is not the Supper; the Supper is the love of Christ in a different setting of things. The passover is Christ sacrificed as meeting all that I was, meeting all the sinful side of things, clearing the ground. The Supper is once a week, the passover is day by day leading up to the Supper. I think the passover would speak about the conditions underlying the Supper.

C.G.H. Would the four days indicate a contemplation of the lamb in all its aspects, a kind of universal apprehension of that precious lamb that was to be sacrificed for them?

R.T. Well, there is much could be read into it; I think simply it endeared itself in those four days in the household and its intrinsic worth was brought out. And that One who had endeared Himself

was the One who made it possible for us to be free from Egypt and all its principles in view of serving God in the liberty and joy of the divine system.

P.M. Is it a wonderful moment when I realise that the perfect Man in every detail was sacrificed in order that I who could never please God might be set up in service towards Him?

R.T. Well, He did it; we could never have done it. At this point in the history it seemed that they could never get out of Egypt, never get free; it seemed that they were going to be trammelled for ever with bondage and all that it meant when this lamb comes in. That is true about Christ, is it not? We were ensnared in the world and its principles till He came in, the Lamb of God's providing; the Lamb so precious to Him has come in and has borne that judgment and He has made a way, not only for us to be free from the judgment of God, but to be free from all that lay under judgment in view of having a part in serving Him.

H.A.H. I have often wondered that it says later on that He brought them out "With a powerful hand and with a stretched-out arm", Ps 136: 12. Is it like Isaiah 53: "to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed"? What is disclosed is what really answers to the passover in the detail of the sufferings of Jesus. Is that right?

R.T. Yes. The people take on a different character in this chapter. As we have remarked, it says "Speak unto all the assembly", and it speaks of them coming out in their hosts and of them worshipping. I think these things could be traced to the appropriating of Christ, the feeding on this roast lamb, and the keeping of the feast of unleavened bread. These things bring the saints into a new position, a new dignity, a new standing and new characteristics.

R.E.T. Would it help us to understand the title 'Christ' in a fuller way?

R.T. Well, many things could be read into it; "our passover, Christ". It is what is provided. He is the One who has met everything for God, the new order of man that has come in in Christ. And that is in this lamb here. In Christ you see somebody who was so different in all His ways.

R.E.T. You can understand Paul building up his ministry round the divine titles in that way, can you not?

R.T. It is a very wide subject, but here we are speaking of something that has come into small surroundings, but so different, so holy and precious. It is to be our food and precious to our souls.

E.C.B. Could you say more as to how we might, as it were, be spending the four days? In this scripture the lamb is in the house, and I wonder whether there is not scope for more conversation about Christ in our houses so that we become more engaged with Him.

R.T. We feel very tested about that. But if we felt the awfulness of Egypt, what bondage these people had gone through for a long time, the bondage of Egypt, the tyranny they were under, here is a way out. It all depends on this Lamb, and here it is in the house. We do not have a deep enough judgment about what we have been freed from. The world and its principles come into our conversation, our lives, far more than it should, but the antidote to that is that there is One here in these simple movements who is to be the theme of our conversation. What was the point of talking about Egypt when it was finished? The bondage is for ever terminated. What is before the soul now is a whole new system.

W.J.R.B. Is that why the judgments come in? They were to be signs to the children of Israel.

R.T. Well they were, and yet the bondage increased as they went on. But here for us is One who has come in from God's side, come in in His preciousness to end the tyranny that we may be free to move into God's thoughts.

A.J.E.W. It is very interesting how provision is made for a small house: "If the household be too small". The answer to that is in the neighbour. I was thinking of the point of how we spend those four days. It would bind us together if in small circumstances we looked to our neighbour. That might apply in many different ways, but God provides in that sense for the appropriation of Christ in such a manner that we are bound ever closer in the appreciation of Him.

R.T. Yes; I think the reference to the neighbour here is very striking. It is "let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it". It is not only your neighbour but "let him and his neighbour next unto his house" as if it emphasises the proximity that is to be among us, that together we can share this. There were many households but in its application there was only one Lamb. There was only one Lamb whose blood could be shed; there was only one topic of conversation, if you like. There were many lambs, many houses, but the same theme was to be in every household; is that what you are thinking?

E.C.B. Yes. There are, as it were, different stages here. There are the four days which, as you are suggesting, involve our occupation with Christ personally. Now four such days is something to be gone in for and it needs our care through the whole of the four days. Then we come to its being killed, then to its being eaten. Is there not more room for our contemplating Jesus as He was, so that we get a greater sense of what His sacrifice and death was?

R.T. Unless we know that it was such a One who bore the judgment we will never be clear and free; as was said at the outset, we will never understand the finality of the judgment. But we see that it was One who endeared Himself to us, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; it was He who bore the judgment.

S.D.K.R. It may be in a different setting, but as to endearing Himself, there is the word of Nathan to David about the lamb which the poor man had and was nourishing; "and it grew up with him, and together with his children: it ate of his morsel, and drank of his own cup, and slept in his bosom", 2 Sam 12: 3. I wondered whether that was part of the endearing.

R.T. Nathan is using God's word there to bring home things to David and I think this passage would bring home to us the immensity of God's judgment against sin, against Egypt, against all that we were under. The finality of His work has been that we might be cleared. These things are to grow in our souls. This was to be a beginning to

them and it was to be continued, and the forgetting of it brought in many sorrows with them and has done with us; but the reiterating of it, the reviving of it, the finding of the book of Moses in the days of recovery seem to create new feelings and new affections among the saints in binding them together.

E.C.M. Do we need our affections to be nourished day by day on the love of the One who bore the judgment? Do you think that enters into keeping the passover?

R.T. Yes. So there was what was sacrificed and then there was what was eaten and the accompaniments of the eating. But the eating of it, its head with its legs and with its inwards, the appropriating of these features, was meant to create new inwards in us. It was meant to end the boasting and to bring in the sincerity and truth.

D.E.R. Is it not assuring that Israel's salvation did not come from their appreciation of the paschal lamb but from God's appreciation of it? It is "when I see the blood, I will pass over you".

R.T. That was true as to the blood, but for the forward movement it required eating, and it required faith, too, as to God's word. Had an Israelite not taken that lamb he would never have been saved. Had an Israelite not had that lamb in the house these days and contemplated it he would never have been passed over, would he? So there is what involves our souls, there is what involves our feelings and inward emotions bound up with being clear of Egypt and the world and these principles.

E.P. Then it is significant that in verse 21 Moses says "Seize and take yourselves lambs for your families, and kill the passover". They were to do it. Would that be the entering substantially into what was perfect in the sacrifice of Christ?

R.T. Yes; so there can be no admixture in the feeding on Christ. Things have become so mixed, so disrupted, but there is the feeding and there is the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs: "And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; with bitter herbs shall they eat it". There is the feeding on Christ, the

extolling of that One in His preciousness and in His worth, and there is the feeling in me of how unworthy I am, but there is also being produced the resolve to be committed to the way that He went.

C.C.I. Philip's preaching Jesus to the eunuch was relative to the lamb whose judgment was taken away. The result is that they both of them went down into the water in relation to baptism. Do you think that the preaching of Jesus would have that great effect in the going down process that we all need to take to get ourselves out of public view?

R.T. Yes indeed; this is, as you say, the going down process. They were to eat it roast with fire and unleavened bread and with bitter herbs. There is plenty of room for the exaltation of Christ and in that there would be the deflating, there would be the end to the boasting. "So that let us celebrate the feast... with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth".

J.M. The roast with fire would emphasise the holy judgment of God upon the whole system of sin; do you think that feeding upon that judgment as borne by Christ in its severity would free us from that system in our own souls, particularly what Egypt represents? You have stressed the power for moving out; do we need to encourage one another on that line?

R.T. Had they apprehended this - well, you bring it to us, had we apprehended it - how should we ever have longed for Egypt again? They would never have longed for the fleshpots of Egypt had the import of this been impressed on their souls. What a change it would have been in the wilderness journey! We look back on our own journeys: how much has come in and caused us sorrow. Had we apprehended this Lamb roast with fire and eaten it with these bitter herbs, many things would never have been introduced, would they? Worldly ways come in; let us get back to feeding on Christ, let us get back to being nourished with this Lamb that is roast and let us keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

E.M.W. Do you think that feeding on the holy sufferings of Christ delivers us inwardly in our affections from Egypt, whereas the Red

Sea sets us free publicly? We may be separate positionally but not set free in our affections, hence we would be, as you have already said, lusting after the things of Egypt.

R.T. So there is divine order in these things; this was the first one. As you said, there is the public side, but this is a very wonderful chapter, that God had six hundred thousand people who moved out like one man. They were strengthened in relation to Christ, they were spared from the judgment by that blood, but they were strengthened together to walk out in rank. A great dignity comes upon the people in this chapter. It is not the sons of Jacob here; there is a dignity and a unifying of the saints as they are nourished and set together in relation to Christ and His sufferings, I think that the sufferings of Christ are not spoken about nearly enough among us. But we need holiness, we need respect, we need feelings, to speak about the sufferings of Christ.

V.H.B. Do we need to contemplate what it cost the Father and cost the Son that we might be redeemed? We will never comprehend it but we can apprehend it. We need to have before us what it meant to God to make His own Son sin; as it says: "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him", 2 Cor 5: 21.

R.T. That is very beautiful; I think these four days would show us that. It was a lamb like that, 'So perfect... pure in all Thy ways', as the hymn says (No.313). Only One like that could meet God's judgment against sin. But that was the One who did it in order that I might be free. That same One, His sufferings and the way He went, is to nourish my affections so that I am held more in relation to God and His system.

C.J.H.D. It affects me that the gospel of a recovered man, Mark, is the one that uses the expression, "when they slew the passover", Mark 14: 12. It does not say 'when the passover was to be slain', but "when they slew the passover". I was thinking of what a neighbour Timothy was to that man when Paul says "Take Mark, and bring him

with thyself", 2 Tim 4: 11. They would be travelling, feeding on the unleavened bread, would they not?

R.T. Yes, very fine! Think of this scene again; there must have been thousands of Israelite houses in Egypt at that time all doing the same thing at the same time with the same objective. That could be among us, that we are all feeding together on that same holy precious One and the same object before us, that He might increase and I might decrease, in view of escaping all that is coming on Egypt. Do we know what is coming on the world? Have we some sense of what is yet going to fall on this very world that we may be going in for?

J.M. As to the reference, "Speak unto all the assembly of Israel", and the footnote as to the corporate person before God, do you think that working through these exercises would not only give us power for deliverance from Egypt in our affections but some sense of the assembly as a reality so that we come into it on a moral basis?

R.T. What God thought about it! "He who, yea, has not spared his own Son" (Rom 8: 32), such a One, that this corporate person may come into expression. That would draw us into the dignity and blessedness of it. This feeding is to make it good constitutionally in our souls. We long for unity. I think that the unity that comes in in this chapter, enduring unity, is a unity in affection, a binding together of the hearts of the saints. We have seen other attempts at unity, we have seen attempts at trying to have conformity to bring about unity; it will not work. You may get a thousand people saying the same thing, and in their affections they could be so different one from another. But I think this chapter unites the saints as one in a unity in affection, a drawing out of the hearts towards this precious Lamb in all its holy worth; and that sets the people together in a positive way.

R.E.T. Would that help us in regard to the love of God, bringing a unity as knowing God in a more intimate way?

R.T. Yes, the love of God lies behind all His ways. There is a tremendous concentration in this passage on the suffering way that the Lamb has gone that we may be freed from the principles that

mark the world and be bound together in movements in relation to God.

W.H.S. Is there point in the fact that in the Revelation, before the seals are opened, John sees a Lamb standing as slain, and then there is the ascription "Worthy is the Lamb" and then "To him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, blessing, and honour", (chap 5: 6, 12, 13) before those judgments come in upon the scene?

R.T. Well, there are several different ways of looking at the Lamb, and the scripture you refer to brings out the deity of the One who came into these small conditions, these circumstances of humiliation. But we should think more of these sufferings, sufferings that He alone could endure and did endure, and feed on that and the unleavened bread which goes along with it, so that there should be no allowance in me of what He has ended, in view of the saints being set and knit together in life in relation to God.

C.G.H. Peter says in exhorting the saints: "for Christ indeed has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God", 1 Pet 3: 18. What a great work that was!

R.T. Yes; and it goes on in that section: "being put to death in flesh". That is what this feeding was to bring about, the ending in me of that kind of condition. As we have said, the murmurings of the wilderness would never have arisen, and the diversions in our pathways would never have arisen, had there been the nearness to the suffering One and the preciousness of Him enshrined in our hearts.

E.C.B. In John 13 John no longer connects the passover with the Jews, but we have Jesus departing out of the world to the Father, part with Him and our loving one another. Is John looking at it from the point of view of Christ our passover?

R.T. It is very interesting in John that the passover almost becomes a point of reference as to time. It speaks about "six days before the passover", then it speaks about certain things after the passover, as if it was a point that John regulated things in relation to, and I think that should affect us. But this was to be for them a "beginning of

months". It was not something that was started and left, it was a beginning and it was something that was carried all the way through, was it not?

E.C.B. In the end of John 11 he refers to the passover of the Jews; in chapter 12 it is "six days before the passover", in chapter 13 "before the... passover", as if John has dropped the Jewish idea and is now connecting it with us.

R.T. Well, the passover, the feast of the Jews, had become obnoxious to God and things may become academic with us, as was said earlier. But affection for Christ would preserve the real thing. I think the sufferings of Christ would make an impressionable state that would take on the ministry, that would take on the truth, would take on what the Lord may be saying to us.

F.C.M. Peter says "he that has suffered in the flesh has done with sin", 1 Pet 4: 2. Would not the contemplation of the sufferings of Christ make me prepared to suffer in the flesh, so that the sin that causes trouble ceases and the assembly as a moral whole therefore comes into practical evidence?

R.T. That is a very fine objective to have. I suppose we would all subscribe to it: and I think we should. May this meeting help us to be more committed to it. What you are saying causes a certain suffering, does it not? That would be the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. It involves that our motives are different. What are our motives? God searches them, does He not?

R.W.F. Would feeding on the passover mean that our tastes are changed? There was the occasion afterwards when the children of Israel lusted after the fish and cucumbers and melons and leeks and onions and garlic, but do you think that feeding on all the ingredients, if I might so say, of the passover would change our tastes, touching our motives, as you said?

R.T. Well, we have to keep at it, and that may come to what we were saying earlier, how much are these things the subject of our conversations? We very quickly would revert to Egypt's food. We very quickly lose our taste but let us keep the feast; Paul says, Let

us keep it. This kind of condition needs to be nourished if Egypt's food is to be kept out. We need the positive feeding and the enjoyment of this kind of food along with the unleavened bread if these other principles are to be shut out.

V.E.W. There is a beautiful result here in that the people bowed their heads and worshipped.

R.T. I think it shows the unity that marked them. It says "the people bowed their heads and worshipped", and they "went away, and did as Jehovah had commanded Moses and Aaron; so did they". The worship is an inward binding together in unity of affection.

P.M. Is the feeding on the head and the legs and the inwards intended to affect our whole being in every department of life?

R.T. Yes. We are so apt to be fragmentary in our thinking and in our feeding. I think what you say would bring the Person in all His holy worth and perfection before us - its head, with its legs and with its inwards. You see there the motives; you see there the beauty and perfection of that walk, the devotion of it; you see there in the head His intelligence and His committal to the will of God. Now these things, as fed upon, come to characterise the person. That is the way it would work. The feeding, the appropriating, the loving, would give character to our movements.

E.C.M. Would you say a word on verse 14: "this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall celebrate it as a feast to Jehovah". I was thinking of the reference to the feast to Jehovah.

R.T. It stands at the threshold of the service of God; it is not the Lord's supper. But what you say is brought in in Leviticus 23 - the sabbath and this feast and the set feasts. If God is to have His portion the basis of it is that my soul is drawn out to the One who bore God's judgment on my account.

E.C.M. I have often been challenged in dwelling on the passover as to whether it has become a real feast, whether we are really feasting on the love of Christ and on the Person of Christ.

R.T. Yes, the worth of that Person and His sufferings, what He endured, what He went through. I think it is meant to grow in our souls in the keeping of the feast, what He endured that we may be free of the man so offensive to God.

E.C.B. Do you think the word in verse 14 just referred to might suggest to us that the more we apprehend what this is to God the more it will become meaningful to ourselves?

R.T. Yes, I think it would draw us into the divine system, that God has done this and He has set this at the very threshold of things, that we may come into His house, that we may come into serving Him in the liberty and the joy of being free from Egypt and all its trammels. They could never have had the service of God in Egypt, and where there are worldly influences the service of God is held up, but the passover comes in to free us entirely from that. You will be My people, My possession - what we are to Him is the fruit of contemplating and feeding on this sacrifice.

D.J.H. None of it was to remain until the morning. Does that mean that these impressions are always to be fresh with us, maintained in that way?

R.T. There is a tremendous urgency brought into this chapter that would help us as to the complacency that so easily settles upon us. There is an absolute need of this being fulfilled in its detail if they were going to be clear of Egypt. As you say, let none of it remain until the morning. There is an occasion here to be seized on, is there not? - an opportunity for something that is never going to be again in the same way, and the sense of that is to give urgency to me as to coming into these divine thoughts that God is setting out.

J.M. Is not the service of God the divine objective: "Let my son go, that he may serve me", Exod 4: 23? In the reference in Josiah it goes on to that: "according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon", as though this is not only the beginning of months initially but the beginning of recovery.

R.T. Yes. The scripture in Chronicles is very full. I did not intend to go into it in detail but just to call attention to what you said, that what

they found was the words of Moses and the words of David and Solomon. Certain things that were basic had been forgotten, certain things that were fundamental had been passed over; these things can be very true of us, dear brethren, in our own circumstances. Certain fundamental things can be, if not forgotten, not carried forward or emphasised enough. In this revival what happens is that they found the words of Moses, the authority of what God had brought in, and the blessedness of that caused repentance to work in them, the king rent his clothes. Something had come in that was not suitable; he says, I am finished with it, I am going to make way for the word of God that has come in through Moses. And I think that makes way for the word of God that has come in through David. The liberty and joy of the service is to go forward.

E.C.M. It is interesting that in the recovery under Hezekiah he keeps it in the second month, but Josiah kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. He goes back to the inauguration of it under Moses.

R.T. Yes. Well, God in His grace made provision that it could be held in the second month. I think we should be set for the best.

E.C.M. I thought that was a feature in Josiah, that the recovery reached a greater height. God would get a richer portion.

R.T. Grace and mercy come in as to us in the circumstances that we are in, but let us have God's ideals before us. And as the book was found the king rent his garments; he says, what has marked me before has been wrong and I am finished with it. The king comes into his place, and the reference here is to the holy ark. I think it is the only such reference in Scripture. What getting back (I use that expression guardedly) to Christ and His suffering love enthroned in our affections brings about is, He must increase, - a fresh allusion to the ark that never had been before. And how precious it is! "Put the holy ark in the house that Solomon the son of David, king of Israel built; ye have not to carry it upon your shoulders". We may go on with formalities but the holy ark is Christ enthroned in the affections;

we have finished with formalities. He now is the Leader, He now is the One in whom all our affections are joined and knit together.

C.J.H.D. Do you think Paul uses a strong word: 'celebrating'? We cannot do that exactly individually. The passover had a start in the households in Egypt, but do not we have to get back to the divine thought of the divine pleasure in the celebrating of the feast?

R.T. Yes, it is "our passover, Christ". It is one; there were many lambs in the type but in the antitype we are set together. What a theme it would be to have the sufferings of Christ before us collectively, to be speaking together about them! I think there is nothing that would draw our souls, nothing that would cause us to be ashamed of what may have come in, like speaking together over the sufferings of Jesus.

D.J.H. It says of this passover that there was none like it since the days of Samuel the prophet. Does that show the importance of the prophetic word and is this the direction in which the prophetic word would bring us?

R.T. Yes, and I think the reason for there being none like it was that everybody was in their right place. We have not time to go over that; the chapter is very full. In the verses we read the king was in his place, and then we have the holy ark in its place, then we have the priests in their place and the singers in their place; we have persons set in their right place. No envy, no strife, no aspiring as to who is to be the greatest, in the celebration of the passover, everybody is in their true place and that true place is to be joined in one voice in praise to our God. Well, may it be stimulated among us, for His name's sake.

LONDON

21 January 1984

Key to initials

(all local unless otherwise stated)

E.C.Burr; V.H.Browne; W.J.R.Brodie, Ealing; C.J.H.Davidson,
Dorking; R.W.Flowerdew; C.G.Hitchcock; D.J.Hutson; H.A.Hutson;
C.C.Ikin, Southend; E.C.Muggleton, Croydon; F.C.Mutton,
Redbridge; J.Mitchell, Bexley; P.Martin, Colchester; E.Palmer;
D.E.Remmington, St.Albans; S.D.K.Roberts, Croydon;
W.H.Shephard, Bedford; R.E.Turner, St.Albans; R.Taylor, Barnet;
A.J.E.Welch; E.M.Walkinshaw, Gillingham; V.E.Wraighte, Gillingham

PEACE

R.Taylor

Colossians 1: 17-22; 3: 12-15; Ephesians 2: 14-22; 3: 1; 4: 1-4 (to one Spirit);

Luke 10: 5,6; Matthew 5: 9

I have read rather extensively, dear brethren, that Scripture may have its own voice to our spirits at this time. The scriptures that we have read have said far more than ever I would be able to or could say in this time, or any time. Scriptures have their own voice, and may they have a voice to us on this occasion. "What says the scripture?", Gal 4: 30. They say more than I can say, but I read them as having an impression to speak about peace. The psalmist did not find it too easy a thing to speak about. He says when I speak about peace "they are for war", Ps 120: 7. And brethren, it is not always that we are peaceful, it is not always that we are able to speak about things peacefully. You speak about peace and someone says, O yes, but there must be righteousness. You speak about peace and somebody says it is not peace at any price. Of course it is not. But, beloved, peace has been made. That is where I start, that peace has been made. We all get help as coming into the enjoyment of it, but the starting point is that peace has been made. There will be conflict but it is only done rightly with peace in the heart. If there is not peace in the soul in going into the conflict it will never secure the divine end.

It says in the first passage that we read that He has made peace; He has made it, it did not exist before. There can be all kinds of agreements, all kinds of legislation, to try to bring about peace, but the only peace is the peace He has made. It says He has made peace: "having made peace by the blood of his cross". What a Person He is who made it! O, that I could have a tongue to speak about Him! The passage brings Him forward, the Person who is before all; there is the righteousness for peace, beloved, the glory and worth of the Person who has made it. "He is the head of the

body", "he is before all", whether thrones or lordships or whatever, before the very creation; He was before all these things. He has come in in His own body and by His own service in love He has made peace. "In him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell"; what a dwelling place! There was never a spot on earth before where there was peace in which God could rest. God looked down from the heavens on the children of men; what did He see? Sin. As He looked down on Christ, "in him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell". God had peace on earth then as never before. What came in in Adam had continued - unrest, strife, murder, war, jealousies. "In him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell". Think of the occasion of His baptism. John says he beheld the Spirit descending in bodily form as a dove and abiding upon Him. God had found peace on earth. God had found in Him all that He ever had looked for, found there a dwelling place where He could open the heavens upon a Man in whom all the Fulness was pleased to dwell. That is what God found in Him, and He was pleased to dwell there.

Then it says "and by him to reconcile all things to itself, having made peace by the blood of his cross - by him". O, the heart of God! "By him to reconcile all things to itself". Peace has come in to effect reconciliation. The distance that existed between God and man, the distance that existed between man and his brother, Christ has come in, God has come in, may I say, in Him "to reconcile all things to itself, having made peace by the blood of his cross". There could be no other way for peace to be made. That is not peace at any price, beloved, that is not peace at the sacrifice of righteousness; what sufferings (we have spoken of them already) entered into these words: "making peace by the blood of his cross". I say again, may it be food for our souls, may it bring with it that He has established peace that is never to be broken; never to be broken, because it speaks in the passage about presenting persons "holy and unblamable, and irreproachable before it". That is the kind of peace that He has made, not a graded peace, not a peace that can possibly lose its value, not a pact that can be broken by the whim of

a man or the press of a button, but it says He has made it "by the blood of his cross... to present you holy and unblamable and irreproachable before it". Beloved, He has made it; that is the point that we must start from. We sometimes speak as if peace was something that was to be worked up to, but it says it is to be pursued. It says pursuing righteousness, faith, love and peace; we are to pursue all of them together. It is not that I pursue righteousness one day, faith the next day and eventually arrive at peace. No. Peace has been made. We work from the standpoint of what He has done. Righteousness is pursued, so are faith and love and peace together. If in that pursuing peace is not touched, perhaps your righteousness is not right. Perhaps it is unrighteous if peace is not coming in. It says pursuing righteousness, faith, love and peace. The fruit of the Spirit is what? "Love, joy, peace", Gal 5: 22. These are things in the kingdom, that is what the kingdom of God is: "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit", Rom 14: 17.

I only referred to the passage in Colossians to bring out that peace has been made. In Ephesians 2 it has not only been made but He is it. It says that "He is our peace". O, how blessed to have it in such a Person! Do you know Him thus, beloved? King of righteousness, King of Salem, King of peace (see Heb 7: 2): is that how you know the Saviour? You say, in all those exercises in my life there are many sorrows to be borne. The Prince of peace will be with you as you are with Him - King of righteousness, Prince of peace. "This Melchisedec": it alludes to His Person, to that One in whom the Fulness was pleased to dwell, that He is my peace. "*He* is our peace, who has made both one". It is not only His work; His work has made it, blessed fact to go back to time and time again, that He has made it by the blood of His cross. The sacrifice that we have spoken of entered into the making of it, but the Person is our peace; the Person. Not only do I know His work, blessed, glorious fact, but do I know the Person whose work it is? "He is our peace". Do I do things, beloved, under His impulse, under His control, as coming from His presence? "*He* is our peace, who has made both

one". There is His work, but the Person who did the work is our peace. My peace is in Him, the peace that I can enjoy is through knowing Him, it is through being with Him. It says He has annulled all the things that come in to disturb my peace, He has slain the enmity; and then it says "he has preached the glad tidings of peace to you who were afar off". How far away you were! "To you who were afar off" - the apostle puts that first - "the glad tidings of peace to you, who were afar off, and the glad tidings of peace to those who were nigh". It is one Person. Whatever the difficulty, no matter how great the distance, however much these things may have marked us, that we were strangers, that we were foreigners, it says "he is our peace". The work has brought us together; through Him we have access by one Spirit, we are no longer strangers and foreigners, we have peace. How peace is needed that strangership, foreign principles, accents, whatever they are, may be gone! He is our peace, all that may have marked us is gone, and we are brought into the great household of God. This passage is very full, as all the Scriptures are - the ones I have read perhaps, in a particular way - but it says "ye are no longer strangers and foreigners". Mr Darby could speak about that: 'Stranger thou', he says, 'in courts above!' (hymn 76). We are no strangers there, beloved. 'He, who to His rest shall greet thee, Greet thee with a well-known love'. What banishes the feelings of strangership that we may well have? What banished the feelings of strangership that the younger son was even carrying with him to the father's house? Ah, it was the embrace of the father's love. What peace! "He is our peace". The One in whom the Fulness was pleased to dwell, the Son of the Father's love who had made peace by the blood of His cross, He is the Father's object and He is to be my object. There is the peace that He brings in. So we come into that wonderful company that is enjoying it, where all enmity has been met, met by Him. We "are fellowcitizens of the saints". The apostles: what a company we are brought into! "Jesus Christ himself being the corner-stone". So I only refer to these passages that, as I said at the outset, they may have their own voice, their own authority over us. Paul there in prison is speaking about peace because he knew Christ to be his peace. He had a

chain, the limitations that a prison brings, perhaps limitations of food, not able to move very far, what limitations he was in, and he is speaking about Christ: "he is our peace". O what refreshment! Paul speaks about persons refreshing him, but I think that those persons who visited Paul in the prison were far more refreshed. They saw a man who was enjoying peace, a man who could rise, as these scriptures speak about, above the limitations in the circumstances, to let his heart expand in the peace of Christ.

But then he is speaking about the conditions that we are in. He says "I Paul, prisoner of the Christ Jesus", "I, the prisoner in the Lord". What could he speak about peace? Well, he says, "I... exhort you therefore to walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love; using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace". He does not say 'of love'; "using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace". Peace, dear brethren, is to be pursued. It is to be enjoyed in my soul, it is also to be an objective. "Keep", he says, "the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace". Peace is something that should be more before us. Yes, exercises have to be met, but they are met in peace. If any actions that I do are done with a ruffled spirit, if any actions of mine are not done in this meekness and lowliness, they are not done rightly. Actions, beloved, flow out from a man who is enjoying peace and we have to use diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit. What is it? Something that the Spirit has established which I can never disturb, but I may for the moment cause these ruffles, I may again bring in these distances, I may for the moment engage the saints with something short of what they should be engaged with. Keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. Mr Taylor, When asked about keeping the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace, said, if a meeting goes on too long and somebody says it is time we went home, that is keeping the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. The spirits of the saints become ruffled, he said, if things are being said that should not be said; it is wisdom that may say it is time we should go home.

That is an example of keeping the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. May we be pursuing it, may we have the peace of Christ. Paul says in Colossians in the second scripture I read: "let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts". It does not just take place once a week. It is not only when you are feeling, perhaps, in better form, but it says, let it preside. The other scriptures we read are full, leading up to these verses I am speaking of in some more detail. It says "let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts". Preside: that what you do is done in love, that what we do has peace before us. "Let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts, to which also ye have been called in one body, and be thankful". It is not without meaning that each time the Lord came in in John He says "Peace". Were there not exercises to be faced? Was there not a doubting Thomas, as we call him, on one of these occasions? Was it the first thing the Lord did as He came in to say, Thomas, you come here? No, the first thing as He came in was He said "Peace". I leave that having its own authority and meaning.

But then He says elsewhere in the gospel "I leave peace with you; I give my peace to you", John 14: 27. "My peace". O, what a peace His was, beloved! That peace was a confidence in God. That is what peace is. The Lord in prayer says "Father... let thy will be done as in heaven so upon the earth", Matt 6: 10. That conveys something of His peace, confidence in the will of God, and confidence that that will will prevail. It may not be manifest immediately as you are in these exercises, but "my peace" is known in the midst of sorrows, in the midst of exercises. What exercises Christ knew, Pharisees, all fled from Him, no comforters at all, and yet He could say, Thy will be done. His peace was that He trusted His Father. Do we, beloved? Our own energies, our own weapons of warfare, will never effect the divine pleasure. Can we have confidence that God's will will prevail? Can we rest in peace that it will? Not carelessly by any means, certainly not unrighteously, but can we rest in confidence that the will of God will prevail? Think of Christ on the cross; troubled, yes, sorrow, what exercises in His soul, and yet He was in peace. How else could He have said "Father,

forgive them, for they know not what they do", Luke 23: 24? He said it as a Man who was enjoying peace. He says "I give my peace to you", what I have enjoyed in the sufferings of the way I leave with you. Does it attract our hearts so that we want it, beloved? As I said, I think Christ's peace was a peace that could rest complacently in the will of God. There may be things to be said, it may be right and just that matters are raised, but, beloved, do not pursue the warfare. If things have to be done they can be said and left in the *conscious* sense of peace with the brethren. Paul could leave them in peace; he could raise exercises, could raise matter that had to be raised; then he could say "Peace to the brethren" (Eph 6: 23) in the confidence that the will of God will prevail.

I only refer to Luke to speak about a son of peace. It is an essential part of every local company that there is a son of peace in it. There is hardly a right representation of the local assembly if there is not a son of peace in it. You could draw that from the way the Lord speaks. He is sending out the disciples; bringing it to our time He is giving ministry; the Lord gives a word of ministry, He gives a word to a locality, His own word, and He says that when they go into a place "first say, Peace to this house. And if a son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it; but if not it shall turn to you again". The Lord may give a word of ministry and we do not get the gain of it. He says that if there is a son of peace there the word will have its own effect. That is virtually what He is saying. They were not to contend and argue, they were not to do this, or do that, to try and establish the point; they were not to stay a week and hope that they could ram home something into these persons; no. The word of the ministry comes; if there is a son of peace there it will have its own fruits in its due time. May there be an exercise that there is a son of peace, a heart that is ready to receive a word; it may be a hard word but peace can still be enjoyed.

I close with that reference in Matthew which I think is very beautiful. "Blessed", not now a son of peace: "Blessed the peace-makers". Would you have called them that? "Blessed the peace-makers, for they shall be called sons of God". I read that to allude to

dignity. "Blessed the peace-makers". It is greater than a son of peace in some ways, it is a son of God, it is sonship in expression. That is the way the Lord speaks about it; "Blessed the peace-makers". Men give more medals for fighting battles but the Lord gives a peace-maker the highest title that can be conferred. "Blessed the peace-makers, for they shall be called sons of God". There is need of dignity, beloved, to be brought into our occasions, there is a need of royalty. We are all "God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus", Gal 3: 26. A son of God brings in peace. He does not bring in trouble. As I have said, he may raise exercises, but they are raised in peace - a peace-maker. A son of God can extend the influence and the atmosphere of peace among the brethren. It is royalty, and there is need of more royalty. These baser things that are of the flesh: what warfare and conflict they entail! May the dignity, the blessedness of sonship, lay hold of us; may this be a feature - sonship in expression. Not a way I would have thought about describing sonship, not a way that I would have thought exactly, but when you think of it, royalty, dignity would bring in peace. That is the Lord coming in in John 20: "Peace". All the apostles raise exercises in their epistles. It would be interesting to look and see how Paul closes certain ones with the blessing of peace. Galatians: would you have expected it there? Corinthians: would you have expected it there? I leave these things to be thought about. But where there are exercises, where there are matters to be gone through, if there is not a sense of peace coming into the times among the brethren, beloved, there is something wrong. There is a need for sonship coming into expression. May we, beloved, join with the psalmist and pray and seek the peace of Jerusalem, for His Name's sake.

LONDON

21 January 1984

THE CHILDREN'S NEEDS

It is good to remember that God is the preserver of all mankind and especially of those who believe. His ways, however, are not always to be traced and understood but are ever in the wisdom of love. Many wellmeaning people speak of 'providence' but this is not a guide for faith. It is something impersonal, whereas the Lord Jesus spoke of our Father who is in the heavens and who knows all things that we need before we ask Him. Often He may cause us to need something, and thus make us come and speak to Him so that He may speak to us - which is a much greater thing!

Our Father is always ready to listen to His children, but in asking for guidance in a difficulty much depends upon our real desire. One of the kings of Judah took the place of a child in prayer at a time when a great army came against Jerusalem. He said, "neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee". His concern was for the honour of Jehovah and for His service. Then, taking the courage of faith on hearing the word of a prophet, he did a remarkable thing. He sent out his armed men, but in front of them all were singing men who praised God in holy splendour saying, "Give thanks to Jehovah; for his loving-kindness endureth for ever". As the song began the enemies were scattered and turned upon one another. This all led to a deeper knowledge of God and to responsive worship on the part of the whole nation.

Right through the centuries of Christian history God has allowed believers, young as well as older, to undergo deep trials and even to face death itself in witness for Him and for the name of the Lord Jesus. It even seems sometimes as if they had no help from Him, but Jesus only was forsaken in His sufferings. Always, I am sure, God has given to His witnesses some secret comfort. At times there have been tokens of His care in unexpected ways of relief. One persecuted saint was sustained for quite a time in hiding by a hen laying an egg every day in the place where he was. Another hunted Christian was kept hidden by a spider weaving its beautiful web over the small entrance to his hiding-place. These were no doubt answers to prayer. Can you think of some distinct answers to prayer in your life?

J.C.Evershed