

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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CHRIST IN MOSES AND THE PROPHETS AND PSALMS

GROWTH

KINDLING WOOD

THE CHILDREN'S RICHES

CHRIST IN MOSES AND THE PROPHETS AND PSALMS

Luke 24: 44-53; Exodus 40: 34-38; Isaiah 53: 4-6; Psalm 45: 8-15

A.J.E.W. There is great interest in the Lord's pointed reference to the law of Moses and prophets and psalms, and it came to mind to inquire about that, why He should call attention to it as He is about to be carried up into heaven. The section is clear as to the moment of that great change having arrived. It says in verse 44: "while I was yet with you"; that is, He is about to part. In verse 51 it says "he was separated from them"; not only that He was carried up into heaven but He was separated from them, calling attention to the point in mind that the testimony here is being left with His lovers and He is about to assume His place on high. I think we should see that the reference to the law of Moses and prophets and psalms being fulfilled relates in a way to the glory of Christ in respect of what is left behind. We have the books of Moses which emphasise the ark, the ark being the central feature of the tabernacle, and the tabernacle form and its service, its priesthood, its levitical provisions all according to the pattern that was committed to Moses. This afforded a dwelling place for God Himself in the midst of wilderness circumstances; the glory came into it and the glory was in evidence in taking charge of the journeys that were made. We can see how the glory of Christ enters into that as we gain some sense of what the whole tabernacle system brings in, foreshadowing, as has often been pointed out, the glory that is yet to come and the place of the Lord Jesus in it.

The prophetic testimony is something that particularly meets, in divine feelings, adversities, distractions and departures that arise as the testimony is pursued. The feeling side is particularly in mind, and the readiness of the blessed God to answer to a turning in repentance and recognition of Himself. The dying of Jesus, the sufferings of the cross, the reality of His bearing judgment, the reality of His burial and the glory of His resurrection afford a basis, through prophetic testimony, for every condition not divinely approved to be met, and the divine feelings about everything to be disclosed. We

can see how the glory of Christ in His work of redemption becomes a great essential foundation point for the conditions that arise in the testimony to be met. The psalms likewise develop the side of deep feelings in relation to response, present response, response which is enriched by the diversity of experience through which lovers of God pass. Such response brings great enlargement and relief to spirit in getting a fresh view of Jesus in His glory. I think that may give us a basis of inquiry about the abundant divine furnishings for the course of the testimony here, and maybe draw us into the flow of divine feelings about all that arises in this time of the absence of Jesus.

C.F.D. I was struck by your reference to Moses' ministry and the place that the ark has as the central point, and all that it suggested and brought on to view anticipatively in Christ. Would you open that up a little more for us.

A.J.E.W. The need to hold the glory of His Person and every element of truth that relates to it is so distinct. The ark is as a type a very simple structure, not of great dimensions but of dimensions that suggest what is mysterious; the half dimensions, the half cubit, are distinctive in the setting of things there. There is something in Jesus which the mere human mind, outside of the Spirit, cannot penetrate in its divine glory. We need to keep in view in the testings and vicissitudes of the wilderness path the glory of the Person of Christ, to be held in our affections and regarded in our renewed minds in having to do with everything. We might say, He is not here; He was carried up into heaven, as it says in Luke 24, but He is still operating here, He is still working here, The reference to Moses reminds us how He works mediately, that is He has those that are under His hand, His ministers could we say, whom He uses to bring into view this wonderful matter of a sanctuary in which God will dwell in His glory. If we get a sense of that as entering into the present moment it strengthens us to face the vicissitudes of the wilderness, and to realise that God is bringing through something from the course of the wilderness path, under the guiding touch of a glorified Christ, that represents the skill, the power and the love. which mark His present activity in this time of the Spirit.

C.F.D. As to the ark and its dimensions, how distinctly the deity of Christ enters into that; the half dimensions that you have referred to suggest something over and beyond anything that we can measure in our own hearts or apprehension. The ark is overlaid with gold; Christ coming in as Man is able in all His greatness to sustain the full light and glory that relate to a divine Person.

A.J.E.W. Yes. Then there is the acacia-wood, this peculiarly durable wood; the humanity of Jesus withstood, though He was in manhood, everything that came against Him. I thought to reflect upon that would fortify us practically for the wilderness path.

J.A.P. In verse 20 of Exodus 40 it says "And he took and put the testimony into the ark, and put the staves in the ark, and put the mercy-seat above on the ark". Is that not very rich, touching the whole matter of redemption that Jesus accomplished for God's glory?

A.J.E.W. It is the prime thing in the setting up of the tabernacle. Verse 17 says "the tabernacle was set up". It begins with the ark and what is closely related to it. What is in question in the wilderness pathway for us is the glory of Christ. "For the cloud of Jehovah as on the tabernacle by day and fire was in it by night, before the eyes of all the house of Israel"; the glory is there. There is that which belongs to the day, the guiding of the cloud, and that which meets the night in the fire. It gives us an impression that the precious testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ and all that relates to Him in His glory is not just getting through but is going through in triumph under divine guiding and with all the resource that is suggested in an order of things in which God can dwell. There is a priestly service and a levitical carrying of all, according to the pattern that was committed to Moses to carry through. The testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ is not to be quenched; it is not to be hindered of what God has in mind in it despite the conditions that have come in.

A.B.P. Would one of the greatest moments in Moses' life be when he rejected the idea of God making of him a great nation, when he said "If thy presence do not go, bring us not up hence", Exod 33: 15?

A.J.E.W. That is a good point to quote. The scope of what we are inquiring about is so great that we could have read the whole book of Exodus for profit, but we just had to think of glory coming in at the end. What you say is really leading on to that.

A.B.P. Some of our brethren here may remember that Mr Taylor told us on one occasion he had a letter of inquiry about the measurements of the ark, raising the question why the half cubit is mentioned. He said, At first I did not think there was very much to it, but the more I pondered over it the glory of it seemed to enter my soul. I do not know if I am saying the exact words, but this left the impression of that which is inscrutable, indicating that while He came into manhood He never ceased to be what He was because of what He became.

A.J.E.W. It is good to quote that because the way our much-loved brother arrived at that is pretty much the way we have to arrive at it. Think of the Lord Jesus and the glory of His descent into manhood, never ceasing to be what He was, as you have quoted, by reason of what He became, the beloved Son of the Father as come into manhood but going back into heaven, going to the Father. We need to go over these things that Christ may be enshrined in active and enlightened affections. Though it involves His absence from us in the full personal, corporeal sense, yet our pathway here is in every way under the divine hand in glory that there may be an issue, a dwelling where God can be.

T.E.D. Does Luke writing to one man bear on what you are saying, that there is this testimony to be believed on by one man? Do we not see how it comes down to us individually in that way? I was impressed by the same thought with David, that he says in Psalm 132 "We heard of it at Ephratah, we found it in the fields of the wood" (v 6). Do we not come into that by exercise of heart in going through things especially taking account of such a feeling expression of the Lord's drawing attention to these three great sections of Scripture?

A.J.E.W. That is excellent to bring out because the wilderness is a place of going through things. The ark is the same ark that went into

Solomon's temple and reached an abiding place, the staves being withdrawn as if to show that everything has come to a glorious finality. We are on the way to it; let us see that we are on the way to it. And it is not a casual way, subject to diversion, nor is it a way that leads to departures from the path that have to be rectified. The divine way is clear, the divine glory is constantly present, day and night, to intimate that the way is there as we just follow it. But it does involve, as you are suggesting, going through things. So how much they did go through according to the book of Numbers and what they went through was often, alas, not to the credit of the people. Much that we go through is not to our credit, but God is carrying something through triumphantly. We cannot claim any part in the victory; it is His, it is Christ's, it is the fruit of the Spirit's activity, the divine thoughts converging on the full end and yet providing everything needed that we may arrive at what is in His heart.

G.D.P. In John's gospel it says, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" (chap 1: 14), and then we can contemplate His glory. Is that in line with what you have been saying?

A.J.E.W. Very much. "The Word became flesh", four words in the English language, but what they convey is stupendous. Everything depends on it. As you follow through the history of the ark, the ark itself is really the key to the whole situation. As the ark is recovered in David's day and eventually brought into its place in the house, something is arrived at that God can come into in a fresh touch of glory. There is glory here in the wilderness as the tabernacle is instituted. I wonder if we get a sense of the divine feelings as to something under the eye of God that was according to a pattern which He had committed to His beloved servant. Now the Lord Jesus is carrying things through according to a divine pattern; the skill of His activity shows that. Whilst sometimes Moses is clearly a type of Christ as Mediator, what comes into expression in Moses very distinctly is the ministerial idea. So that the Lord is working through those who under His hand and in the Spirit minister His mind. The working of things down here, in view of the knowledge of God being increased among us, is very largely by way of what we

speaking of as ministry, and I think Moses' time in respect of the tabernacle stands for that.

L.McF. In Luke we have what is tangible not what has come into expression beyond death in the forty days. Should this impress us with what through grace we are related to?

A.J.E.W. So you get what is tangible in the woman of Luke 7. She was not of much account to the Pharisee in whose house she was, but the Lord calls attention to her. He does not call attention to a mere abstract idea, He calls attention to something tangible with that woman. You might say she was a bad case in certain respects, but the Lord is reaching something with such. That is the kind of indication that Luke, so closely following the Pauline character of things, gives to us, something tangible. What is in this hall today is tangible; thank God it is tangible!

C.G. In Numbers 10: 33 it says "And they set forward from the mountain of Jehovah and went three days' journey (and the ark of the covenant of Jehovah went before them in the three days' journey) to search out a resting-place for them". We have the starting point here, the mountain of Jehovah; later we have the length of the journey to find a resting place. What would you say as to the mountain of Jehovah being the starting place for the movements of the ark?

A.J.E.W. That is a very relevant quotation, showing how these features run right through the Mosaic history. There is a great field of study for us in this, bearing in mind the glory of what the tabernacle itself represents. The glory of it is brought out often in references in the epistle to the Hebrews. It is very interesting how Hebrews 9 gives us in the first few verses the arrangement of the tabernacle, the glory of it; then there is the very nearest spot to God Himself in what is beyond the veil; all that is opened up to us and the service that is related to it.

A.B.P. Would it be right to say that the power from on high would relate to the glory filling the tabernacle as well as the glory filling the house? One would be testimonial and the other would be Godward.

A.J.E.W. I think it is good to express it that way. As you are indicating, it is divine glory anyway, but the divine glory comes in in different sets of circumstances. There is a glory that is in evidence in the realities of the wilderness course, and a glory when all is established in the land and the house built, again according to pattern.

A.B.P. In both those cases the glory indicated the divine presence.

A.J.E.W. Exactly. How could we get through without some sense in our souls of the divine presence among His beloved people?

G.H. Reference was made to John's gospel: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we have contemplated his glory...)"; I suppose "dwelt" (or, in the footnote, 'tabernacled') would involve nearness. As we have this sense of nearness does it promote contemplation?

A.J.E.W. How available the Lord is to us in love, specially on the line of contemplation! Contemplation, I feel for myself, is something of which we are often short. It is good to read, it is right to read (I long to be able to read more), but when you are reading and get a fresh view of Christ, stop and just contemplate, get it into your soul on the basis of contemplation, not just into your mind on the basis of reading but right down into your soul on the basis of contemplation.

That gives you what answers to the ark, that is that Christ in the glory of His Person is determining everything.

G.H. Would contemplation involve pondering?

A.J.E.W. That is greatly needed that we may be affected inwardly by these things and affected in a lasting sense. It is not that something is lodged for the moment in the mind, to be lost eventually when something else may seem to smother it; contemplation leads to something resulting which, to use a word already mentioned, is tangible; it is spiritual experience and the fruits of it in the soul.

A.B.P. Ministry is masculine and the reception of it is feminine; the retaining of it, carrying the exercise ultimately results in fresh new life.

A.J.E.W. That seems to link us with the final scripture; you have the virgins there. Those virgins are very suggestive of the working of what is active in feminine affection, and appreciation of what the feminine side is to Christ.

A.B.P. I am glad you refer to that, because the great thing that gave God the moral basis to deliver Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah was the element of the virgin (or 'unconquered') daughter of Zion the daughter of Jerusalem. One title evidently related to formation in relation to appreciation of divine purpose, the other possibly the product of good administration (see Isa 37: 22).

A.J.E.W. That helps us in what we are saying. We should now look at Isaiah 53 a little, and the feeling side which the prophets represent. How much we need how much we experience profitably the word of the prophet. It is a most effective means that the Lord has to bring things about. But it is not just the word there is an element suggested in the prophets of deep-rooted sympathy with God in respect of everything that intrudes upon His presence and glory. We need to have that side developed among us, and Isaiah, the evangelical prophet, is one who brings out that feeling side of things very fully. Ezekiel gives us the suffering side. Jeremiah gives us too the lamenting side, the deep feelings that enter into the departures from God that had come in. Do we feel the departures? We are very accustomed, perhaps, to seeing and hearing of departures, not only in the sense of some going away, but the departures in Christendom as a whole. Do we feel them and see what part we have had in them - because we have had part in them. God would promote our feelings in this connection, that we might be the more fully and feelingly with Him in the rejection of what is not of Himself, and the appropriation of what relates to His glory among His beloved people here.

C.F.D. Would it stimulate in us the spirit of what is protective? Israel were led out by a prophet and by a prophet they were preserved (see Hos 12: 13). Is that involved in what you are saying?

A.J.E.W. It is indeed. But go on as to what is protective because it is so important.

C.F.D. The enemy is extremely active, active on all fronts, and this should just stir up amongst us individually and locally the great desire to protect and to preserve what is so pleasurable to God. The enemy has an objective in all that he is doing, and if he can rob God as to His service he has gained his objective. But would the prophetic spirit in us be protective, coming forward to preserve what is for God"? Preserving - "by a prophet was he preserved" - would involve that there was an active side to what was prophetic which would step in when the enemy showed himself.

A.J.E.W. That is of the greatest importance and to be protective involves some appreciation of what the prophets have to protect. If we have some view of the Person of Christ, and look on in our outlook to Paul and the assembly - the continuation of Christ here in character - you get an impression of what is deeply precious in God's sight, and you love it. Your love for Him and for what is His according to His mind stirs your heart to protect it, so that it may not be infringed or damaged in any way. This is something for us to think about; if we are going to be truly prophetic in service we need to understand what is being protected, and what is in the divine mind in the positive sense. That gives us the deepest impulse to guard, in the Jealousy of affection for Christ as it belongs in the assembly, what is precious to Him there.

C.M. Would the cherubim represent that which is protective?

A.J.E.W. Quite so. The cherubim are over the mercyseat, and the thought of protection is very, very close to what is suggestive of the divine intervention in Christ and the glory of the One in whom He did intervene. It is very significant that the cherubim are there right over the mercy-seat and the ark, as if the protection must be particularly concentrated on anything that infringes in our hearts and minds the glory of the Person of Christ. The history of what we speak of as the revival shows that, right back in 1848 or thereabouts, the glory of the Person of Christ was under vicious attack. There were those, thank

God, who came forward in prophetic power to stand against the attack and discerned its subtlety, and refused its workings. We have cause to be thankful for that right down to this time, nearly a century and a half later. That is an instance of the enemy's attack.

A.B.P. The tree of life was guarded by the cherubim. Then at the cross: "this man has done nothing amiss" (Luke 23: 41), showing the amazing development of the work of God in the malefactor who had a judgment of good government and bad government. He said "we receive the just recompense of what we have done; but this man has done nothing amiss". The protection is like the wings of the cherubim spread over the ark. Then the centurion said "Truly this man was Son of God", Mark 15: 39. I just thought that the whole principle of protection we have been referring to always was in God's thought, that creatures should be firstly concerned about the protection of His rights.

A.J.E.W. Quite so.

C.G. In the section we are reading it says several things: Jesus was wounded, bruised, and chastised; stripes are mentioned. It is interesting to note that the reason is given in each case; "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed". So much is covered in that one verse.

A.J.E.W. In suggesting that passage I thought particularly of the feeling side in Isaiah, and also the reminder of the sufferings of Christ. It keeps the heart tender to have the sufferings of Christ in mind. The instruction that the Spirit has given us about the cost of all that is going forward for God's pleasure in suffering is to be recognised by us. The cost to us of any kind of part in what is for God's pleasure should remind us of the sufferings of Jesus too. We are in the midst of a world that is full of human hardness, harshness and violence, and the reverential contemplation of the sufferings of Jesus is intended to develop a depth of priestly and prophetic feeling, so that we might not in our own day misrepresent the divine feelings about the departures that, alas, have come in. Hades' gates

shall not prevail, and yet hades' gates are at work and we have to feel it, feel it with God and act in protective, prophetic ways to meet what the enemy would seek to-do.

T.E.D. The verse you read in Luke says "Then he opened their understanding to understand the scriptures". Is there something in that that we need to take account of - that we need our understanding opened? What would help us to have hearts and minds that understand things?

A.J.E.W. The Spirit had not yet come. The Lord speaks of it as something that was imminent, but the Spirit had not yet come. The Spirit would give us in divine grace and instruction the capacity to understand things. But it has impressed me today that this reference by the Lord really conveys to us the urgency of having that understanding. It is as if He would say, I want you to understand the Scriptures immediately; the Spirit will come in due time, and you are to wait for Him, but it is immediately necessary that the Scriptures, with all their reflection of the glory of Christ, are to be understood.

So He opens their understanding at this point. If my understanding is right, the coming of the Spirit would be the answer to the situation right down the dispensation to where we are. The Lord is saying, It is urgent that you understand the Scriptures. Of course, as you are suggesting, that is still the case.

A.B.P. In Peter's service in bringing forward the Scriptures, not only about Judas but also elsewhere, light was shed upon the whole matter. His preaching and then his teaching the people is based on Scripture. It shows how wonderfully his understanding had been opened; it immediately appeared.

A.J.E.W. That is an important point, that we covet and seek from God the understanding of the Scriptures. We value the ministry of the word, but it stands based on Scripture, and if I speak a word it must be based on Scripture. The word may be of value in the way of elucidation or enlargement in the Spirit's instruction, but it must be based on Scripture.

O.L.L. Do you think we need real love for Jesus? If we have real love for Jesus we will give Him the first place. We would have nothing to do with the world in regard to what is not of Himself.

A.J.E.W. Amen, I would say to that. But what chapter of Scripture is better calculated to awaken love for Jesus than the fifty-third of Isaiah? Do you not think so?

O.L.L. Yes. And too, the Lord says, "If ye love me keep my commandments", John 14: 15.

A.J.E.W. Very good.

A.R.S. Isaiah is a very feeling prophet, a man with deep feeling, and yet on the other hand he is very buoyant. What do you make of that?

A.J.E.W. That buoyant side would bring us perhaps to the Psalms. They furnish a very wide field of inquiry and of experience, but it is the way the Lord brings out something of positive fragrance. The course of wilderness experience is very real, but as the priestly touch of grace in the Lord Jesus is proved there is an outcome, and the outcome is buoyant. The Psalms often give us, right down to the end of the book, the suggestion of buoyancy even as the fruit of experience that is very deep. The reference at the end of Psalm 51 to whole burnt-offering, after relating the depths of experience through which David came at a most critical time, is just an indication of how the Spirit of God is leading us to what would minister to God in fragrance in the buoyant response in the assembly of those who love Him.

C.F.D. Does that come in where you began to read: "Myrrh and aloes, cassia, are all thy garments; out of ivory palaces..."? It is interesting that the Spirit of God puts myrrh first, as if the suffering side is peculiarly productive; the ivory palaces might involve the death of Christ. It all brings on a line of things which is really pleasurable to God; "have made thee glad", it says. Is this the way it works?

A.J.E.W. It is indeed. That is just why this passage was selected. The whole character and environment of it have a touch of glory.

We have the king's palace and "the king's daughter within", a spiritually suggestive reference. As the note indicates, that is within the royal apartments. The assembly's place is in the greatest nearness to Christ, and the reality of union is really, I suppose, in view here. It is not specifically referred to, but you think of the bride in the royal apartments. Of course the One who governs the royal apartments is glorious; it says, "My heart is welling forth with a good matter: I say what I have composed touching the king". This is a song of the Beloved, a beautiful reference. I scarcely know of any passage of Scripture that appeals more as to the level and character of what relates to Christ and to the assembly responsive to Himself.

J.A.P. Does it involve intense concern - "Hearken, daughter, and see, and incline thine ear; and forget thine own people and thy father's house" - that moving with the saints involves that we are coming out of the world and natural relationships. We have to hearken; all of us have had to hearken, and move. Then it says "the king will desire thy beauty". Is it singleness of eye for Christ?

A.J.E.W. There is that which is to be for God. It is never that situations are unrighteously covered, but there are things that in the divine presence, the presence of the glory of the King, can be rightly forgotten. They have been covered. What we had in Isaiah 53 would indicate that those are finished matters; the basis is in the work of the Lord Jesus for every matter to be concluded righteously and finished, and on that basis we go forward forgetting. Paul speaks of "forgetting the things behind", Phil 3: 13. There is much that is behind and sometimes it is like a lead weight to us, we pull it along and it just holds us up all the time, but God would say, Have done with the things that are behind. Be before God that they be righteously concluded, He would give a sense of that; and then move on to the divine objective.

C.G. Myrrh is linked with garments in verse 8. Song of Songs 5: 5 reads: "I rose up to open to my beloved; And my hands dropped with myrrh, And my fingers with liquid myrrh, Upon the handles of the

lock". What would be suggested in liquid myrrh linked with the hands and the fingers, whereas in this passage it is linked with garments?

A.J.E.W. The fragrance all suggests that a moment of joyous and holy response is in view. The Song of Songs enlarges many of these thoughts to us in a very rich way. Although it is the Song of Songs which is Solomon's, it has a certain character as a psalm. Quite likely the Song of Songs would also be in the Lord's mind when He spoke of the psalms in Luke 24; it is suggestive of a great area responsive to Christ and to God.

L.McF. We were speaking of forgetting; now the side of remembrance is before us in the Supper. Do you think it is to be affecting us even now?

A.J.E.W. That is good to bring in because the forgetting side is necessary, but we are not left with an empty heart and an empty mind by the forgetting, we have someone glorious to remember and the gain of that remembrance is to continue. I feel searched often these days as to carrying forward the gain and experience of what we enjoy at the Lord's supper. I believe it is vital to the buoyant spirit of the psalms. The Lord skilfully interweaves it with the experiences through which we pass and reminds us of how He came in on the Lord's day, and showing us that it meets some element for our own experience. The Lord would make His supper a peculiarly operative thing in our affections as we find grace through the Spirit's help to carry forward what the Lord leaves among us as He comes in. That again, to use your own word, is substantial.

G.D.P. Is it right to think that Psalm 45 suggests happy dwelling conditions where the divine presence is felt, the persons themselves entering into it.

A.J.E.W. What more surpassingly happy conditions could we know than the presence of God, in perfect peace, and enjoyment of an unchanging love which has undertaken everything for us, and shall undertake everything for us until we are in final conditions where God shall be all in all. We are on the way to that, and that is the

point of this reading this morning. The Lord left His disciples behind, He was separated from them, He went into heaven and they were left here. They were abundantly furnished; even as He left them He furnished them, and in due course the Spirit would come and there would be divine power to carry forward everything for the heart of Christ and everything due to God. What a subject of feasting this can be!

A.B.P. Are we not in an extension, if we may speak of it as such, of the day of grace, God being slow to enter into judgment? In the meantime, since the times are in His hand and Jesus as a Man is at His right hand, He is thinking for Him and what will satisfy His heart, that He might see of the fruit of the travail of His soul and have present satisfaction. Do you think the ministry that we are getting in relation to the things you have been bringing before us would be the expression of the Father's feelings for an adequate answer to the love of Christ?

A.J.E.W. It is very affecting to think of it that way. We go back to the fact that the servant in Genesis 24 was sent out by the father. It was his consideration for his beloved son, and the substantial fruit of his mission was immediately presented to the son.

A.B.P. "I will make him a helpmate", Gen 2: 18.

A.J.E.W. Quite so. We could fitly close on the buoyant note of this Psalm, so full of love and touches of glory as it is; the king's palace, wonderful suggestion, lifts us above what is commonplace into the area related to royal dignities, and that is the character of enjoyment that the God who loves us delights to open up. We are left in the wilderness for the time, but we have Christ in view in the way in which He is presented in the law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms. We are divinely furnished.

Rem. Verse 11 - "And the king will desire thy beauty" - brings before us the thought of the Lord having desires towards us.

A.J.E.W. How deep these desires are! That just gives a touch, as you are suggesting, of the depth of His desires towards His own, the longings of His own heart. Alas, how often we have lost sight of this,

but the deep desires of the Lord Jesus are there in the infinite perfection of His affections in glorious manhood. His desires are towards the assembly.

Rem. Towards the assembly collectively, and would it be right to say also towards us as individuals? The Lord has thoughts for each one of us and those desires look on to the assembly being in glory with Him.

A.J.E.W So that the beloved apostle who writes so much concerning the assembly speaks thus of His love, love, the love of "the Son of God who has loved me and given himself for me" Gal 2: 20.

PLAINFIELD

23 October 1982

Key to initials

(all local unless otherwise stated)

C.F.Dadd; T.E.Druckenmiller; C.Greenidge; R.C.Hesterman;
R.N.Hesterman; G.Hesterman, C.Maynard, New York;
S.E.Hesterman; O.L.Linton, New York; A.B.Parker New York;
L.Macfarlane New York; G.D.Pfingst; J.A.Petersen; A.R.Stevens
New York; A.J.E.Welch, London

GROWTH

A.J.E Welch

1 John 2 13-27

I have been impressed with the way in which John the disciple whom Jesus loved, from his writing manifestly an outstanding and seasoned lover of Jesus, writes to fathers, young men and little children. He takes feeling account of every stage of growth; he brings out the truth in a way that is particularly calculated to have a direct and abiding effect upon us, whether we be fathers, young men or little children. One of the affecting things about this passage is that the most is said to the little children. How tenderly considerate God is of the little children! I would love to convey something to the little children as well as to the young men and the fathers, because what is set out in this remarkable passage has its bearing upon our stature, our growth. In due time the little children are to become young men, and in due time the young men are to become fathers. How those elements dear brethren, are needed among us! We have to begin to take on divine things; we have quickly to learn to cast aside what belongs to the subtle and corrupt activity of an enemy that is set against every element of God's work in men; we have to learn that even as little children.

But you will notice how affectionately the beloved writer, a seasoned lover of Christ, is not bringing forward his apostolic office but manifestly speaking as one who had long been in the presence of Jesus, and even since His going to the Father had been long in the course of the testimony, not so far as the history goes in public prominence, but no doubt in secret. The outcome of it all in John is that seasoned character of things, a love that had been tested and that survived, a love that would embrace the full scope of what God was doing and is yet doing for the satisfaction of His own heart. I would love to follow just a little in the steps of John, the beloved writer. It seems he would never seek prominence but was there when the need arose, faithfully and fully answering to the need as it

arose, a man of distinctive personality evident both in himself and in his writings. It is of note that they correspond, what the man is and what his writings are; you are thankful when that is so, that what a man is and what he sets forth correspond. We see that in John in a most affecting way. What a standby in days of departure are men like the beloved apostle John! We note with interest that he writes to 'children' in verse 12: "I write to you, children"; the term is one of deep affection and embraces all the saints irrespective of their growth. If you study the notes in the New Translation you will see how that is commented upon. "I write to you, children"; he is thinking of all the saints, some would be fathers, some would be little children, but he is not selecting among them in relation to the working of his affections as he writes, he loves them all, like Jesus.

But then he singles out these three points of growth. He comes to the finish of that in verse 27 where we ceased reading and in verse 28 he says, "And now, children, abide in him"; that again is said to all in the reality of affection that is working towards all the saints. In a kind of parenthesis between those two references to his love for all the saints we have the special touches of instruction, encouragement and warning that are needed at different points of growth.

Now the point in respect of the fathers is very fine but yet very challenging. I have the feeling as I speak of these things that the beloved sisters may wonder where they fit into this. They do fit into it. John takes up things having the responsible side in mind, necessarily. There are features to be answered to substantially and instruction to be conveyed and received and to become effective.

How needed that is that instruction is received and becomes effective; we are put under charge. We have been reminded elsewhere of that, the acceptance of responsibility in respect of divine things so that there may be increase and growth among the beloved people of God, in which each one of us has a part. Let not the beloved older sisters, with their seasoned affections for Christ, feel left out in any sense of what I trust I may under the Lord convey in these few minutes. John makes much of persons, God's work in

persons. He reflects the divine feelings in that. There are matters of principle and matters of teaching that may be set out in the most skilful way, and the Spirit is able for that, as we prove it. But John would say - the Lord would say - I love to find these features in persons; to use a word that our brother used in the reading, substantial in persons. That is what the Spirit of God is working at, and that is what Satan is working against. What is said of the fathers is said twice: "because ye have known him that is from the beginning". That is all that is said to the fathers. It conveys - and the thought is not mine - that the fathers are really full of Christ, so much so that in the course of their exercise in the presence of God every other consideration has been made subservient to Christ.

What a wonderful objective that is! How often we find things mixed up; we examine our own objectives and we find sometimes, do we not? that some things have become an objective to a far greater degree than we realised. The fathers have reached Christ, and what affects the fathers in every connection is Christ. What belongs to flesh, what belongs to the earthly side of things, not necessarily corrupt basically in character but earthly in character, may affect us, and how deeply sometimes it does affect us! I have been very much impressed in thinking of the Pauline reference to persons minding earthly things (see Phil 3: 19) in contrast to the commonwealth which is in the heavens. Dear brethren, let us not lose ground in these times, let us not fail in growth by minding earthly things. The Spirit of God helps us in detail by calling attention to this thing or that thing and reminding us what it is in relation to the divine thoughts; we come to a conclusion sometimes and say, That is just minding earthly things, that does not belong to the fathers. As we get up in years a bit we of necessity are made to realise that our time here is not much longer; none of the time can be wasted. We may look back and realise how much has been wasted. But the great point with the fathers is just Jesus, just Christ, just the beloved Son of God. Whatever name in glory you may attach to that Person, the fathers are cleaving to Christ, and in everything that affects them, that governs their way, that governs their speaking, that governs their part in assembly things. Everything would just be governed by

one great matter and that is Christ, the Person of Jesus. As I said, that is most attractive, but a very deep challenge to some of us who are older and getting older. The process of getting old goes on very fast and we cannot afford to lose any time.

Then we have the young men, and the writer accredits the young men in a particular way; he says "ye have overcome the wicked one". I would understand that to mean that in coming into the Christian pathway and being found within the range of John's writing there has been with them an element of overcoming; they have confessed Christ in adverse circumstances, they have sacrificed in His interests, maybe they have left a trade union, moved in faith in respect of some such thing. They have overcome the wicked one. The wicked one would detain them in something which would in its character and outcome prove dishonouring to the Lord Jesus. He accredits them with having overcome the wicked one.

But he makes it plain that young manhood is a singularly significant time. This would be so in the feminine as well as the masculine sense; the stage of growth that is contemplated here is most significant in reference to the testimony. The energy of young manhood is to be directed into channels that glorify Christ. The energy of young manhood, as Scripture from time to time would indicate, is something that God delights to use. It might be diverted into other things, but it is needed, greatly needed for the testimony in these times - the energy of young manhood committed to the Lord Jesus and His interests. I want to strengthen and to encourage and stimulate the young brothers and the young sisters to realise what a vital part they have in a testimony so glorious, about to reach its completion; they have a vital part being what they are. He goes on to say: "Love not the world, nor the things in the world". I have heard it said (and I am sure it is right) that very often the principal danger is not the world as a corrupt system but the things that are in the world. They may not be marked by total corruption, they may be such as could in righteousness be undertaken, but, dear brethren, we are not to love them. That will govern our outlook upon them and our action in reference to them. There are many things which may come under

this heading that particularly affect us when we are young men, at this stage of growth. It may be a certain element of keenness to pursue a business; I am not unacquainted with that in a certain sense. It may be that something is taken up of which the world speaks as a hobby. Is that going to divert me from Christ? Is that going to hinder me from a part in His interests? Is that going to hinder me from getting to the prayer meeting and other meetings?

Above all, is it going to hinder me in being rightly at the Supper.

These challenges have to be faced and they particularly affect the young men. "Love not the world, nor the things in the world". John goes on to show something that has often been helpfully commented on, that the love of the world stands over against all that we are given to know in the Father, God the Father. Would you not like to be in the Father's affections without anything that might hinder them getting right home to your heart? Would you not like to be free in the Father's presence with the sense that He has rendered you fit to be there, and that nothing on your side is hindering your being there in liberty and power? Would you not like to be in the Father's presence a thoroughly delivered person, coming through the divine instruction that we have in the epistle to the Romans, which leads in chapter 8 to that wonderful cry "Abba, Father"? Would you not like to be in the flow of that? Is the world to stand in the way of our being in the flow of that? Let us get a just sense of values, seeing what this thing is and what another thing is; carry the values into the presence of God and see whether they are His values or whether they are the values that flesh attaches. It is a very keen exercise. I would seek grace not to allow myself to be outside of it. Get into God's presence and get the sense of values that belongs in the sanctuary, come out from God's presence and bring it into expression, as another person taking on the features that the Spirit of God through John would cherish for young manhood. What a sense of joy it brings into the soul to be found answering to an appeal like this: "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world is passing, and its lust, but he that does the will of God abides for eternity". It is good to be reminded in such direct terms: "the world is passing"; Christ is not

passing, God's world is not passing, His beloved Son is the centre of it, the centre of a scene that is to go through, where you have a place. Are you going to forsake what properly belongs for the time to the place that divine love has designed in grace for you, and turn aside to something which partakes of the features that are set out here? John is very direct to the young men. As young men we need directness, we need a straight word; John is giving it to us. There are many other things that may cross our path that may stand in conflict with the word; we need the word to be the more direct and definite that we may get the point of it and move on. So John addresses himself to young men in a very searching and yet always stimulating way. That is how the truth of God is applied, it searches but it always asserts the glory of Christ and stimulates us to be with Him, and in character like Him as here in the assembly in the time of His absence.

The children, as I remarked, are very feelingly provided for. "Little children, it is the last hour". I commend that word to the very younger ones here: "it is the last hour". It is as if he would say, Do not lose any time. May be it has been in your mind to make a confession of the Lord Jesus; make it, it is the last hour. Maybe it has been in your mind to seek your place in relation to the fellowship of God's Son; seek it quickly, it is the last hour. Let nothing stand in the way. We may not in one sense be little children and still need such an exhortation, but the teaching to the little children may, as we read through it, strike a chord in our own souls, even though we belong or should belong to a greater stage of growth - "it is the last hour". The apostle, truly a lover of the saints, is saying, I am going to make it easy for the little children by making the truth very simple and plain: "Little children, it is the last hour". You could not have anything simpler or plainer than that. Heed it, beloved young person whoever you may be, just heed it in the realisation that the Lord is about to come. Would you not love to think that you are committed to Him before He comes, that He finds you, when He comes, as a committed person? Would you not like to be in that? I would just commend to you the simple appeal of this word of John's. He goes

on to speak of antichrist and of antichrists in the plural, warning us that the enemy in the most subtle forms is active in our time. A brother used the expression that Satan is proceeding through every line of attack; that is the truth at the moment, whatever avenue he finds he is going into. In itself, though a negative indication, that is an indication that the Lord is soon coming; we are facing the last vicious thrusts of a vanquished foe against what is so precious to his vanquisher, even Jesus. So heed these things; let us all heed them realising that it is the last hour, and that the spirit of antichrist is working in certain quarters against what is precious to His heart.

And that is what John is saying to us. But he says to the little children "ye have the unction from the holy one, and ye know all things". What a precious and needed reference to the blessed Holy Spirit! the *Holy* Spirit: the title, I suppose, which is most used of that glorious Person. "Ye have the unction from the holy one", a most precious gift, a most protective gift able to alert you at once to what is contrary to Christ. It is not something you read or something that a brother may say, valuable as those things may be; the unction from the Holy One springs up within you, and if I could put it simply, raises as need comes a danger signal; That thing is not right. What a wonderful thing it is to have One who is Himself a divine Person, a Person of the Godhead active in behalf of Christ and of the Father and active in you and in me, having directly and personally to do with us. Apart from any knowledge we may have, or apart from any knowledge we may be acquiring, the Spirit in us brings a holy urge, might I say, in respect of something that is presented to us. What a resource! It is perfection of resource in the sense of meeting the power of evil. "Greater is he that is in you", the same apostle says else where, "than he that is in the world", 1 John 4: 4. The little children, and all of us with them, are placed in a setting of very great advantage if we will but avail ourselves of it. It raises the question how much we have reference in inward soul history to the Holy Spirit dwelling within us and with us. How much are we in living touch with the Holy Spirit? I would say that to the youngest one here who has submitted to the Lord Jesus and has received the Spirit; you are abundantly furnished of God to detect every element of evil that may

raise its head because the One who indwells you is the Holy Spirit. Himself a Person of the Godhead, He shares in the fullest sense the wealth of divine feelings and can spring up in your own soul and indicate to you the character of something that may be afoot. So John develops this; he speaks further on of the unction: "the unction which ye have received from him abides in you, and ye have not need that any one should teach you; but as the same unction teaches you as to all things, and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, ye shall abide in him". Oh the blessedness of abiding in Christ, abiding in the Father, having the sense of a place in the divine affections, a place that is cherished of the Father and the Son peculiarly as you are responsive in what belongs to that place. Cast aside what the enemy would seek to assert. Beloved little children, I would say to such here, the enemy of your souls, the enemy of Christ, will be quick to seize any point of attack in you and use it against the glory of your Saviour; I would urge you just to keep near to the Spirit of God, to His present voice, but especially in this setting here to the urgings of the Spirit in your soul which are very, very real. It is a wonderful thing, I have often marvelled at it - I can very humbly say I have proved it very often - that as something presents itself to your vision, your mind, the Spirit immediately alerts you, That is not of God. And that is to be decisive.

There is much said to the little children here. But what I wanted to press particularly is this point of the unction, and then what is said in verse 24: "let that which ye have heard from the beginning abide in you". The idea of progress in human affairs is something that tends quite easily to get hold of us in some sense. There is growth in God's work in us; there is growth of stature as we take on the preciousness of divine truth, but there is no development in respect of the truth itself, it is what we have heard from the beginning. It may be applied in fresh circumstances, but it is the truth and it stands and it is what can be asserted to have been from the beginning. The Scripture will support it. Let us not be taken in by the idea of development, of improvement, of modernisation. I have even heard that word used: We need to have a more modern approach to this. It

is a question of what we have heard from the beginning. Divine truth does not change. It may penetrate into circumstances which may seem now in its application in particular cases, but the truth itself does not change. Jesus is the truth He does not change; the Spirit is the truth, it is said in this letter (see chap 5: 6) and He does not change. Let us see that we cling to what we have heard from the beginning. It will help these little children as they are able to read. How much there is to read in Scripture which goes right back to the very beginning of what we are speaking of, and of what the Spirit has said to us. It may often refer closely to our own time, but in any case let us see to it that it is what we have heard from the beginning.

John says "if what ye have heard from the beginning abides in you, ye also shall abide in the Son and in the Father", having in mind not only a place in their affections but a conscious place in their affections: you go on through the day and through the week knowing that the Father loves you, knowing that the Son loves you. To a young person that is crucial. Young persons, the little children that are spoken of here, are very responsive to affection of which they have assurance. That is what is in mind in this passage, abiding in the Father and in the Son, that you have a place, and consciously have it and enjoy it, in the Father's affections and the affections of Jesus, His beloved Son.

Well, there are these features of the truth concerning which we need to exhort one another. They are features we need to exemplify, because that is very much in mind, particularly as to the fathers, but there are the different stages of growth. The Spirit of God can apply Himself to every stage of growth. Divine love is the resource in every stage of growth. But the Spirit sees to it that there is that which particularly meets my case and your case, the case of the young people, the case of the older ones, that they may in very truth come to light as having Christ their all and qualifying in that sense under John's finest designation - fathers. We long for them.

Paul could say in a different setting in respect of Corinth: "not many fathers", 1 Cor 4: 15. But there is a very great weight of appeal in that, that in every locality represented here, including my own, there

may be the evidence of true fatherhood in the sense in which John writes.

May it be so. May these things help us, that whatever stature we have come to we may grow and reach more into stature which is more developed than we have had hitherto. May God assure us of this and help us in it. For His Name's sake.

PLAINFIELD

23 October 1982

KINDLING WOOD

N.T.Meek

Nehemiah 13: 30,31; Acts 28: 1-6.; 2 Timothy 1: 3-6

Doubtless it is an exercise with every godly person that the testimony as we know it should continue. A good many persons have been lost, as we say, to the testimony, though we have to speak carefully because we must not think that the testimony is completely confined to us. In fact it is a sorrowful thing, hardly a right thing, to speak of 'us', because it immediately tends to bring in a sectarian thought. But I suppose we could rightly say that many in our own day have departed from the recovery which the Lord initiated early in the last century. We might well ask ourselves the question as to how the recovery is to continue. This is a very real question, a very pertinent one, and it could be, of course, that the Lord is going to come very soon and there will not be the need of another generation. Nevertheless, in the glad tidings God's hand is stretched out, and while it is stretched out the Lord will remain where He is. As we seek to preach we give thanks for the fact that God's hand is stretched out in mercy. Yet in another sense we know that, whilst that hand is being stretched out, the year of the Lord is running on. As we look round our localities, almost without exception, we cannot but ask the question as to how things will continue. As for the time of the Lord's coming it is in other hands, it is not for us to decide that, but it is for us to do what we can to ensure the continuance of the testimony as we know it and as we are privileged to have our part in it.

I have read about kindling wood, not structural wood, but wood that burns, wood that has to be replaced. We have often spoken about the wood-offering in Nehemiah, the only book in which it is found, I think. It is not in Moses' prescriptions but it comes into this recovery book. And we find that some committed themselves to bringing the wood-offering. There is the altar and the wood and the offering. The altar was essential and the offering was essential, but

the wood also was essential, because if no wood had been brought the offering would have remained as it was. It may have been in order, it may have been an excellent bullock, it may have been there in all its parts, but if the wood had not been ignited and if there had not been wood there to ignite, then the offering would not have been consummated. When the wood was ignited, then the fragrance of the offering ascended. You see, beloved, what an important element it is. It is like our thanksgivings; we may have impressions, we may have something very rich, maybe something we have read, something we have pondered, it may be something that we have really made our own and therefore we are entitled to bring it, but we need also to bring the wood, otherwise the fragrance is missing.

And we may ask ourselves, what is the wood? What is it that makes the offering so fragrant, makes it acceptable, causes it to rise to God's nostrils? What is the wood? It is wood that is expendable, it is not wood that abides, it is not the temple wood that is encased in gold, it is wood which has to be constantly renewed. I think it relates in some way to the feelings, the emotions, the fervency, the zeal, the reality of expression that must go with the presentation of Christ.

How easy it is for us to sink back into a form of words. Persons in denominations, as we say, who pick up the hymn book we use, say they do not find a hymn book like it that contains such choice words, that has such rich expressions, especially in service Godward. We have become so used to it that we may, alas, tend to take it for granted. But these choice expressions do not really ascend very far unless there is fire with them - feeling. We have the privilege in our day to bring our own offering and dress it; but unless we also put the wood there, unless there is the emotion there, we fall back into the state of mere profession.

So it is to be continually brought, continually renewed, the fire was never to go out; that meant that the saints were to bring it, bring it and bring it, and constantly renew it. How is it maintained? Where do we find this wood? I ask myself, where do you find it? Sometimes you do feel on fire, I hope you do. Sometimes when you hear the gospel preached you really feel on fire, your love for Christ is

burning. You sing Daniel Otsing's hymn (No 131) and you can hardly feel anything else but on fire; you would be a pretty hard, cold creature if you did not feel on fire when you sang that hymn. How is it maintained? We are not always singing hymns, not always hearing gospel preachings; it must be in the secret of our own links with Jesus in entering into His presence, developing those secret links and appreciation of Him, so that they are constantly being renewed. You come out with wood for kindling, come out with feeling, beloved. How much it is needed in all our gatherings! Not mere sentiment, not human sentiment; that is obnoxious to God, but real feeling. Think of what feelings were in the Lord's utterances when He was here. "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened", Luke 12: 50. How feelingly He would say that! It was no mere academic matter to Him. "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer", Luke 22: 15. How did He say it? Let us think about these things. We should enter into the spirit of the Scriptures and the spirit of the Lord's words in ministry, as well as into what He actually said. The Lord would have spoken with feeling, the desire would have been evident; commensurately with His words the reality of emotion and feeling would be there. Let us not be afraid of it. In fact I would rather say, let us cultivate it, let us cultivate this idea of bringing what can catch fire, that is the wood, what can really move the saints, and move God too. That is the greater thing, to be able to minister to God. Unless the wood is aflame the offering remains there. Sometimes you get up and you feel you take part more or less because you have to, no one else is doing it. How cold we can get, beloved! Let us learn to get into the Lord's presence. If there is no one with you sing a hymn to yourself. It is going to warm you, it is going to affect your emotions. I suppose that is one feature that God has created in us, that hymns do affect our emotions. May it always be so, that we sing not only with understanding, but "I will sing with the spirit", as Paul says, 1 Cor 14: 15. I do not think that just means that he sang with the Holy Spirit's help, but he sang with feeling, with fire in his soul, in his bosom. How one likes to hear a good address that keeps smouldering in your heart! Or a good preaching, how you love it and keep going

back to it and relighting the fire, as it were. Well, may God develop the ability to speak to one another in this way, to speak like Paul did, it says he "so spake that a great multitude... believed", Acts 14: 1.

I read about him in the Acts, and here the fire is not Godward, it is for man. They have all been shipwrecked. Paul was pretty much a worn out kind of man, I think. What I mean by that is, he was always an active man, from his conversion onwards you can see that, that Paul always went heart and soul into what he did, and he spent himself. I suppose when he lay down, unless he prayed, or thought about the brethren, that he went to sleep straightaway, because he spent himself. "The sleep of a labouring man is sweet", Eccles 5: 12 (A.V.). If you looked at Paul, probably his frame was quite emaciated, his energy spent. He was that kind of person, preaching, testifying, shepherding; always spending himself, burning away. Here they have been shipwrecked on the island, they have had a very unfortunate incident and have just about reached land and they are all cold and it is raining. Luke is very touching, is he not? You say it is not very spiritual to tell us it was raining on the day of the shipwreck. It is, there is something in it, you have to picture the thing. I tend to read the Scriptures much too academically. They did not have lifeboats or lifebelts in those days, but they made it; they came on bits of wood, spars, furniture, a bit of the forecastle perhaps. They made it and came to land all dripping wet. You can just imagine them coming out of the water and struggling up the rocks or beach and the rain making it worse. There are few things more miserable, to my mind, than being in pouring rain at the sea. The country looks far better in the rain than the sea does. Beloved, we should think about these things for they actually happened; we have not had it happen to us actually but we should enter into the spirit of it.

The barbarians have lit the fire. Perhaps we would hardly give them credit for it. It shows, I think, that we do not want to write off anybody. You say it was just natural kindness. Well, yes, but it is something that is of God, some element that has remained in mankind that is of God. But Paul, weak, his body characteristically

spent, goes round and gathers sticks; he wants to keep the fire going, he wants the testimony to continue, he wants persons to get thoroughly dry and warm. I suppose they all got round this fire; it tells you how many they were, two hundred and seventy-six (see chap 27: 37). It comes down to the last figure, does it not? It shows that the Spirit counts every one. You do not want any one to be lost, you do not want it to be two hundred and seventy-five, you want it to be the two hundred and seventy-six. And you want to make and keep them warm. And Paul gathers sticks and puts them on the fire. By the viper's action you can see that the enemy is against this.

Beloved, if there is one thing that has happened since Mr Taylor's time it is that the enemy has been seeking to weaken and to stop the recovery, and he is against this idea of keeping the brethren warm and the testimony continuing. If there is a fire maintained, even if every one is cold and wet, they will stay around. But someone has to keep the fire going, someone has to make the meetings worth while coming to so that when you go home you say, O, it was a good warm up tonight! Beloved, it is easy to get too routine. We have meetings regularly, and thank God for that, but let us remember that every one is supposed to be special and is supposed to leave us moved and warmed. It is not the south wind that is warming here, it is the fire, and someone is putting on the fire, really someone is spending himself; that is what is happening. That is how Paul lived, he spent himself, did he not? Are we not measured by it, beloved? We think we do a little bit, we think we keep things going in our way, but really we are a long way behind, a very long way behind. But the Lord would encourage us to bring this wood, bring it and put it on the fire, show that what you say you mean. It is that kind of thing, I think. May we always be preserved in keeping to the truth, but with it let us also make sure that we are not lacking in emotion that is appropriate to the truth.

Where I read in Timothy Paul counts the generations. He says, in grandmother's time it was all right, that generation was all right.

And in mother's time things were held. Now, he says, Timothy it is your time. It seems to me we are now about six generations on from

the beginning of the recovery. I do not know just how much you count for a generation; I suppose it could be about twenty five years. So you go back six twenty fives, a hundred and fifty years, around 1830. The recovery was then under way, burning, burning brightly, too, I would say. They brought the wood in those days, I have no doubt they did. One old brother, they tell me, walked from Banbury to Quemerford for the meetings, sixty something miles I made it on the map, and he walked it. That disclosed a yearning to be at the meetings, did it not? What do you think he added to the Quemerford meeting? Maybe he never took audible part, but his presence there would have added some fire to that meeting, maybe it would have set some other brethren alight who only lived up the road. These are simple things, dear brethren. It is now about six generations, I suppose. Will it continue? This is really the question that Paul is asking Timothy. He says, I am persuaded, Timothy, it dwelt in thee also, only it seems to be flickering a bit. How often we know this, beloved, in our own experience, there is no blaze, it is dying. Would that we could touch each other in such a way as to revive it. He says "I put thee in mind to rekindle the gift of God which is in thee".

You have some gift, I judge from one point of view that every one has a gift. I know there are distinct gifts but I think every one has a gift, you have something. After all, if you get close to somebody you may warm them.

I think we have known that. I can remember brothers who visited me when I have been a bit low. You never forget these things. Most of the addresses we hear we forget, most of the preachings we forget, most of the detail of the morning meetings we forget. Thank God, they mean something at the time, but what you never forget is when someone drew near to you, when they did not have to come, when they called on you with the object of cheering you up. That is in principle like someone bringing the wood, not exactly for an offering to God but bringing this kindling wood.

Well, beloved, let us carry on this kind of service so that the recovery does not die out, because it is the only way, it seems to me, by which things can continue, otherwise we fall into Laodicea, into

lukewarmness and a form of words. Mr Bellett said something about Laodicea which I do not know that I have digested; he said that the lukewarmness of Laodicea was almost worse than the mixture in Sardis - a very striking thing that! In Sardis there were a few names which had not defiled their garments. That means that most of them had. We have to watch mixture in our meetings, mixture with the world. Sardis is Protestantism, gone into the world, just a few names kept clear but most of them gone. How the Lord feels that! But Mr Bellett said He feels indifference even more. Laodicea is the lack of heart for Christ, lack of warmth, lack of heat. So Paul says to Timothy here, Rekindle it. "I put thee in mind to rekindle". You do it Timothy, and when you get this letter go up to your room and ask the Lord to give you something to do; start catching on fire again and catching on fire those who are going to follow you, those who are going to hear you. As I said, beloved, most addresses are forgotten, some of them get into books but most of them are forgotten, but the spirit of a meeting is not forgotten and that is the kind of thing that is involved in this kindling wood.

Well, may the Lord strengthen us. Sometimes we feel a bit cold ourselves and we do not feel that things are going too well, we feel that we are just getting into a routine; let us get into the Lord's presence, contemplate perhaps His sufferings. If there is anything in us of God at all it will begin to burn. When the Lord went with those two to Emmaus He began to get the kindling wood alight, it began to burn. May the Lord help us in it; may we be exercised ourselves to do it too, not only in relation to God's holy service that the offering might go up in all its fragrance, no part of it being missed, but also by warming the brethren, seeking to bring in warmth especially where things are chilly, where there has been a disaster, or a near disaster, or where persons may be feeling the rigours and the sorrows of things. May we bring it in beloved, may it not be missing. And in ourselves, in our own soul's exercises, may we know what it is. We sometimes sing that hymn - we will sing it again - about those 'Who tasted Thy love, and whose hearts were on fire-' (No.194). May we know it for His Name's sake.

SUNBURY

22 October 1983

THE CHILDREN'S RICHES

I remember as a boy being puzzled when a poor, aged believer told me that she was rich enough to employ two footmen to wait upon her. On enquiry she said that one was named 'Goodness' and the other 'Mercy', and that they were following her all the days of her life! From this and from the witness of many another saint we learn what is the true wealth of believers on the Lord Jesus who have access by the Holy Spirit to the "unsearchable riches of the Christ". These very words give a sense of wealth, how much more than the glad tidings that the substance belongs to us.

As regards this world's riches a man of God once said that the only advantage he could see in having great wealth was that more could be surrendered for the sake of the Lord. Another, on inheriting a fortune called together the elders of his local assembly for advice because he was 'in financial embarrassment'. The wise man, Solomon, said of wealth that it makes to itself wings and flies away.

Little would he know that, centuries later, many of the priceless treasures of Egyptian tombs would vanish into dust on being brought into display. In any case nothing can be taken through the Custom House of death. But spiritual enrichment is eternal.

It may be that few believers are tested with great wealth but we should all be acquiring "the riches of salvation, wisdom and knowledge", and have the fear of God for our treasure. As is often said, salvation is not only freedom from judgment but is the enjoyment of all that our Saviour has won by the sacrifice of Himself in abiding love for us. Also He has been made wisdom to us so that we can test every thought and deed by the perfect standard which we have in Him as a Model. True knowledge is what Moses acquired when he learned to value the reproach of the Christ as greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt - vast as they must have been.

The fear of God is not a feeling of dread but the recognition of Him in all your ways and He will direct your life's pathway. Is this

your treasure?

J.C.Evershed