

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 140

November 1984

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READING ON PHILIPPIANS

with J.N.Darby

Chapter 3: 10-21

One thing in Philippians is that all through the Epistle it takes up the whole course; we are looked at as going on to the other end of the wilderness. That passage in chapter 1 is a very striking instance of it: "I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ". Philippians is the path of the Christian governed by the Holy Ghost, and salvation is looked at at the end of the course, because it consists in being like Christ and with Christ. It looks at God's purpose at the end of the course.

Q. The soul sees that already in Christ?

Oh yes; and you get it too in other scriptures.

This wilderness journey that we have to go through is not necessary to redemption. The thief had no wilderness journey; the Lord said to him: "*Today* shalt thou be with me in Paradise". There is nothing for us to wait for. The wilderness journey is not part of the counsels of God; it is part of His ways with us, His counsel is to have us in glory with Himself, and His counsel is perfect. His ways are another thing.

In Colossians you get: "Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light"; but as a matter of fact there is the wilderness to go through. And so here eternal life is looked at as at the end of the journey; we are seen "waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body", Redemption is a finished, settled thing, but God puts us through the wilderness to know what is in our hearts, to humble us and prove us, as He did to Israel; here comes the testing. All the 'ifs' in Scripture are connected with the wilderness. There are no 'ifs' in Ephesians: there it is the counsels of God. You never read, If redemption is complete. There is no 'if' to that.

In John 14, we get: "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you". The Holy Ghost is in us then; so that is

where responsibility comes in. We are now to shew forth the life of Christ in our walk. Then you get the 'ifs'. In the wilderness everything is tested. There is no uncertainty as to the work; that is finished, and Christ is accepted and glorified; it is all settled. But now if you go on "to the end", "if you continue in the faith".

But besides this, there is the positive, certain promise of our being kept. It is constant, unceasing care and love that keeps us; though we *have* to be kept. Our state is tested. We have to get to the end; but we have the promise that He will keep us to it. "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation". "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand". But then it is *keeping* every day. As to that, it is not an accomplished work. So in Philippians, we get the apostle saying: "That I may win Christ", because he is looking on to the end.

Q. Is it necessary to go through Colossians and Ephesians to get Philippian experience?

There is no such thing as going through Ephesians. Ephesians is a settled thing; it is what is in God's mind. In Colossians the hope is "laid up in heaven". I have not got it. And in another place: "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel". The state is settled, but we are still on the road. We have the wisdom for the walk: "Filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that ye might walk worthy". And we have the strength for the walk: "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power". And then we give thanks to the Father: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light". Having delivered us from the power of darkness does not satisfy Him. He puts us in Christ in place of it.

All that is settled; it is all in the past tense. And then he comes to another point which introduces something else. "You that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled". This, too, is all settled; it is in the past tense. But then comes: "If ye continue in the faith grounded and

settled". There is the full promise that we shall be kept. I have no doubt that those who are saints, those who have life, will be kept to the end, but there comes the wilderness walk, the test as to whether the faith is real.

In Philippians you get the power of the Spirit of God, able to do everything. The apostle says: "Not having mine own righteousness" and "not as though I had already attained, either were already perfected"; he has not got the thing yet; but he starts as one thoroughly prepared and furnished. No one can go through Philippian experience who has not peace and deliverance. That is all a settled thing. I go through other experiences before my soul is clear as to redemption. And then comes out the responsibility of a Christian to manifest the life of Christ.

Our responsibilities flow from the place we are in. I do not expect you to behave to me as my children; but suppose for a moment you were my children, I should expect you to behave accordingly. The duty flows from the place you are in. It may be said, If I am saved it does not matter what I do! If you were a child in your senses you would not say such a thing to your father. We are to "walk as dear children".

But besides this, the wilderness is to humble us and prove us. The Israelites all rebelled.

We next get knowing Christ, "and the power of his resurrection". I have the power of the risen Man with which to walk through this world, and to have the fellowship of His sufferings, and to glorify Him. Paul was a prisoner at this time.

"If *by any means* I might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead". This implies no uncertainty as to our place in Christ. It refers to the way. You see the security that we already have in verse 12: "I am apprehended by Christ Jesus".

"Mark them which walk so as ye have us as an example".

They knew the Object that governed his path.

There are two things in a certain sense, but they go together. First: "That I may win Christ". Second: "The resurrection from among the dead". To be with Him, and to be like Him. The one looks at Christ as my object; the other looks at the state that enables me to be with Him.

It is "the power of his resurrection", the power of the risen Man in this world - Christ in us. Everything is governed by that power.

In 2 Corinthians 1 he says: "We had the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead". He had the sentence of death in himself as to his moral state, but he had the power of resurrection in his spirit. So here he can say: "Christ shall be magnified by my body, whether it be by life or by death. For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain". If they kill me I shall be with Him, that is all. The moment I have got hold of the power of the resurrection of Christ, I have got hold of what death cannot touch. The power is always in Christ. We must realise that; then we can go on.

Q. Is this power what we get in Ephesians?

In Philippians it is a constantly operating power. In Ephesians it is the power that "raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ". It does not say with Him. In Philippians it is on the way; "I press toward the mark"; that is what characterises the Epistle.

Q. It says in verse 12: "Not as though I were already perfect"; and in verse 15: "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect".

Perfect means like Christ in glory. Was he like that? No. But he was in Christ, who is in glory; and that is what the second means. This is the only possible perfection for the Christian. ("This one thing I do"; having not two objects, but one). Perfection is "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ". He had reached it, but he was running on to be like Christ in glory.

Q. So that the perfect man had to be perfected?

He knew himself in Christ, and of course that is perfection. Christ has gone into glory, having accomplished redemption, and if we are in Him we are in the place we have in Him, and that is the only perfection. Hebrews 5: 14 says: "Strong meat belongeth to them that are of *full age*" or *perfect*. That shews you what it means. And then it says, "Let us go on unto perfection".

There are two things in Christianity - three, in a certain sense. What God has done, as applied to what I am in Adam; all my sins cleared away; the old man gone; we died with Him. I have the perfect forgiveness of my sins; but that is not enough. There are other things: there is not what I am cleared from, but what I am brought into. It is not merely that I am forgiven, that all is cleared away; but there is the bringing me into the second Man in Christ there. I get this place; I know it; I have got hold of it. I have got it, but yet it is the thing I am running after.

Thus in Philippians we are put through the wilderness to get there.

Not that it is necessary, for He "hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light", and the Holy Ghost in us is "the earnest of our inheritance". We have redemption, but we have not got the state that brings us into it. We have it in our hearts.

Q. "As many as are perfect" does not include all Christians?

No; there are some babes. But we are never of full age if we take Christ as the model. We are of "full age" as to our faith; but we are "growing up into Him in all things", "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ". Of course we cannot actually be that until these poor bodies are changed; but Christ is risen, and He is in me, and I am going through this world in possession of this fact. I follow after if I may lay hold. Christ laid hold of him for that, and Christ alone had the capability of keeping him.

Q. Could he have learned what Christ laid hold of him for by seeing Him at the right hand of God? Yes.

Q. Is that Ephesian truth?

He had seen Christ in glory. It is not an uncertainty at all. John 14 is the effect of the presence of the Holy Ghost. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you". He does not say there the Father in me, but "I in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you". That is when the Comforter is come; and a person is not a proper Christian at all until sealed by the Comforter.

What I get first of all is I am saved in Christ; and afterwards comes the walk down here.

Paul was looking to be just like Christ down here.

Wonderful expression of the Spirit of God in a man!

"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (v 14). That word "high" should be "above". I have seen a glorified Christ; I have seen the Man who wrought redemption sitting at the right hand of God; and I am going to be like Him. It is God's calling above.

You measure everything by the object you have before you. If I were swimming for my life and I had a belt of gold on, I would throw it away. I judge of everything by my object. If a man of mind sees a man spending all in pleasure, 'Did you eve see such a fool?' he says. He judges by his object. So if Christ is the object, everything is measured by Him.

What facilitates our going through the wilderness is having death upon everything. But you cannot have death upon everything until you have the life of Christ.

Turn to Galatians 2: 20. There we get: "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me". I have got an object. I have got a life, and that is Christ; I have got an object, and that is Christ.

Q. "I live by the faith of the Son of God". Is that the faith Christ had in going through this world?

How could you have the faith Christ had? I live by faith in the Son of God; I know He has loved me and given Himself for me. There is

"faith in God", and there is "Christ dwelling in your hearts by faith".
"Faith of the Son of God" is the character of it.

Q. It is not faith that once possessed carries me through. I must have it fresh every morning like the manna?

Yes, every morning. In John 5 He "quickens whom he will". In John 6 I eat "the bread of life". If I do not eat I shall starve.

There is the danger very often of Christians stopping at knowing they are forgiven. They have peace with God, but nothing more except a general feeling of thankfulness. But I must have something before me; there must be going on.

Q. I do not quite understand that verse, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded". That applies to my state as responsible.

If I have got hold of this truth, I am going to be like Christ and with Him; well, I say, that is everything. Suppose it is suffering, I say, the more like Christ. I am pressing towards the mark. I am to be set upon going through the wilderness with this before me. But until I get to know Christ in glory, I cannot have Him as an object. I may know what He has done for me as a sinner, a blessed thing too, but I do not know this high calling. God has put me into the second Adam. I am to be like Him. My eyes see that, and I am pressing on. I know He is sitting there on the Father's throne until He has His own throne. In an ordinary way God puts us through the wilderness to be exercised and tested, only He is with us all the way.

Q. One going through the wilderness finds everything against him?

Everything except God. Yes, it is so. God only brings in refreshing by the way. Paul glories in tribulation because it works patience, the finest thing in the world, he says. And James says: "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing". There is no will in patience. Christ says: "I waited patiently for the Lord".

Two things go together. I have an object, and I want a state to enjoy that object. So I am looking and pursuing.

It is resurrection out of the dead. The Greek word is very strong. Resurrection out of, very specially here.

It is a blessed promise: "If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you", (v 15). It is a great comfort. I get the affections connected with Christ. I may see the world hanging about a person who may yet be desiring to walk uprightly. Having one mind is having one object. If you are following Christ with all your heart, and I am following Christ with all my heart, we are of one mind. But, he says, suppose any are not perfect. Then I say, I know I am forgiven, washed in the precious blood of Christ, and so on; and you know all these blessed truths, too; so you and I can walk together so far.

Q. It is like a man and a child walking together - purpose of heart?

Yes. "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?" If so, get up into the chariot.

How soon evil came in! "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things". The cross of Christ is what crucifies the world to me and me unto the world. We are total enemies to each other.

See Peter in Matthew 16: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven". Then it comes to the cross, and he cannot go on with that. Many take up Christ as a Saviour, but they will not take up their cross and follow Him. When Peter saw the cross was the necessary consequence of following Christ, he could not go on with Him at all.

Q. Would these people necessarily be unconverted?

I think so: their "end is destruction". They are like the world. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him". But though these have the characteristics of those who are not Christians, we cannot get away from the end of this word.

Q. May it not be said of some who know the Lord that they are "enemies of the cross of Christ"?

The flesh does not like the cross. The flesh is the same in me as in an unconverted person. If I am not going on with Christ I do not like the cross. Here it is the end which is characteristic. It says: "If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him". The Father has established a new world, and if I am going on with this world I am going on with the first man.

In Galatians 6 they were avoiding the cross lest they should suffer persecution. I have no doubt many who are walking in an easy-going way just now, would brighten up wonderfully if they had a little. In families perhaps you get it now.

Q. But that passage holds good: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"?

Oh yes; certainly.

There is life, and there is an object, and there is power for the walk.

We cannot go a step without Christ. Christ is the measure. I may have Christ for my object, really no other object. I may start on a journey to come to this place, and I may see some pretty flowers on my way, and may stop to look at them; but that does not make them my *object*. It is a distraction, and we have to guard against such.

When the object is really Christ, and if I am not intent upon it, I see a pleasing thing and then I stop. It is a distraction. I have no *intention* to stop.

In verse 17 "our conversation is in heaven", that is the whole Christian condition, "from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change this body of humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto his body of glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself".

That is whom we wait for. One has said, that he enjoyed the thought that for him all was packed up and gone before, and that he was on the way home.

This is the whole thing for us here: that we are going to be *with* Christ in glory and *like* Christ in glory; it is "that I may win Christ" and "that I might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead". Our "conversation", our living associations are in heaven; and we are looking for the Saviour to come from thence.

What characterised Christ here was obedience and love to the Father: "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me; but that the world may know that I love the Father".

Q. Was the love to us secondary?

In a sense it was, though it was perfect. But love to His Father was the great object. "Hereby perceive we love, because he laid down his life for us". "The Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me". The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, the effect of the Holy Ghost dwelling in us.

It is just this that keeps us in our daily walk. We have all got objects here, business or something; everything is calculated to distract us.

And we have to attend to these things. But I have no doubt, if Christ were our object, we should attend to everything perfectly.

The test of our affections is, Would you like Christ to come? Of course God's time is best; and we know that "the long suffering of God is salvation"; but, as to the state of your affections, would you like Him to come?

We cannot go a step without His presence. But we often forget the presence of God. If God was here visibly! It says: "He endured as seeing him who is invisible".

The pains He takes to persuade us of His love! - in its very perfection, too! And what a place He has brought us into! It is wonderful the perfectness of Christ! how exactly He was as He should be in everything He came across! And every step that He took was for our ensample.

From: Food for the Flock,

January 1885

LEANING

R.Taylor

**Genesis 32: 24-31; 49: 33 (from "he gathered"); 48: 8,10; Song of Songs 8: 5;
John 13: 23**

I read these scriptures, dear brethren, to seek to say a word about *leaning*. It is something that comes out in Jacob in a very fine way; the best days of Jacob were when he was leaning. You remember the word, the word of wisdom, to "lean not unto thine own intelligence; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will make plain thy paths", Prov 3: 5. We are slow to come to it, to lean. O, beloved, we have Somebody worth leaning on! That is what Jacob came to see, that there was somebody worth leaning on, and as I say, his best days were when he had learned to lean. He had spent a good deal of time living on his own understanding; he could have written a book about it, but he comes to a point where that will not do, to a point where he needs somebody to lean on. Have you ever felt that? Maybe you have been successful, made a lot of money; Jacob had.

He had a big family, he was able to meet every circumstance as it arose, but here is a circumstance that he could not meet; he did not know what to do. What do you do? Call up the lawyers? look and see what your rights are? see how you can work things out with your resources, your money, your accountants? No, beloved, you learn to lean on Somebody who is far more than that, One who is a Friend.

Jacob learns to lean; it says "And Jacob remained alone; and a man wrestled with him until the rising of the dawn". How will you do, beloved, in the swelling of the Jordan (see Jer 12: 5)? Perhaps you have run with the footmen; you have had friends who have thought the same as you, but how will you do in the swelling of the Jordan? This for Jacob was a real exercise and it will be so for you. Jacob remained alone - *alone*. He still had a large family and possessions, but what good were they? He was *alone*, alone with a man who was wrestling with him, who took no cognisance of his money or of his brains or his ability, but who says, Jacob, what are you going to do,

you are alone with me? Lean not unto thine own understanding. I do not want to speak unduly of critical times, I trust we will speak of something greater than that, but Jacob here is in a critical time and what does he do? He was alone; he did not have his bookcase, he did not have these other resources that he would have called on perhaps in earlier days; he had hardly before met a man that he could not match. Laban tried but Jacob could match him. Here he is alone, and a man wrestled with him. Dear brethren, here is a soul going through exercises with God and coming out victorious. As I said, his best days are ahead of him. He would not have thought that in this hour and maybe you do not think that at the moment, but, beloved, the best days were ahead of him, a man who was limping and the sun shining upon him. But here a man wrestled with him until the rising of the dawn. It says "he touched the joint of his thigh; and the joint of Jacob's thigh was dislocated as he wrestled with him".

To bring these exercises to ourselves it is God speaking to you, passing you through deep waters and yet allowing you to prevail. What a God He is! He could have brought up a lot against Jacob at this juncture; He could have told him the kind of man he had been, but He is touching the Spirit's work in Jacob, He is touching a work of God in his soul and God has allowed it to prevail. He does this in circumstances that you may be in. God allows you to get some power; maybe He helps you in the preaching, helps you to ask questions in the meeting; He helps you through these exercises and yet you are still leaning to your own understanding. God would bring you through things into the victory that you lean on Him; you learn to walk with a limp, but you learn to walk as leaning on Christ. God would help you. Jacob says "I will not let thee go except thou bless me". O, beloved, get the fruit of an exercise. There are many exercises - we speak feelingly - that we have all passed through that have been fruitless, they have left a limp perhaps without a Beloved to lean on. Well, Jacob says "I will not let thee go except thou bless me". And what does God do? He changes his name. O, what a light dawns into the soul when God says you are no longer Jacob, your

past history has forever gone - *gone*. His lawyers could never have done that; no advocate could do that for you. God brought him to this experience and said, All that you are as after Adam's order with your schemings are for ever gone, and He says, *Israel* is your name. He is going to walk as a prince. Limping, yes, but walking in the dignity of leaning upon somebody well known. Dear brethren, there is a need for dignity among us; there is a need for *Israel*. Jacob has gone; is he gone with you? "What things were gain to me these I counted... to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord", Phil 3: 7,8. In a few chapters after, Jacob no longer uses his wits or his own scheme of things but he has learnt to lean on somebody and he walks as a prince. Can we move through these things, beloved, in the princely dignity of our name being changed? Or do we revert again to other principles? Paul calls them beggarly principles, persons bringing them into the assembly of God, bringing in bondage. That is what the line of Jacob would have done, but God says *Israel* shall be thy name "for thou hast wrestled with God... and hast prevailed". God gives a reason for it; it is not only conferred in the grace of Christ but there is something of the Spirit's work coming out in him now. There is something that God has divinely wrought in the soul to be seen, and God says I name that as princely. Let it function, beloved. He "may still be limping but he is a prince of God. It says here (I like that verse) "And as he passed over Peniel, the sun rose upon him; and he limped upon his hip". "The sun rose upon him": O, think of the warmth of divine love coming into his soul! The sun must have risen upon millions of others that day but it says that it rose upon him. You get a sense of divine love in its warmth coming into your soul that you no longer want to walk as a Jacob, you no longer want to walk in those diverse ways of leaning to your own understanding, but "in all thy ways acknowledge him". At every step Jacob had to acknowledge Him, at every step he limped. O, but he leant heavily, he brought out those princely features in his movements. The Corinthians said of Paul that he was limping, that is what they would have drawn attention to: "his presence in the body weak, and his speech naught", 2 Cor 10: 10. But Paul said, Did it matter? The sun

was shining upon him. If you are in the sunshine and somebody else is in the shadow you feel for them. But you keep in the sunshine. The sun rose upon Jacob; his limp, his need of leaning did not hinder the sun shining, he felt it and enjoyed it all the more, the wealth and warmth of divine love coming in. There may have been some sore or tender parts, some parts that might not have been fully healed yet, but the sun shining on them brings its warmth and all its beneficent rays. There is Jacob, the sun rose upon him.

Now, dear brethren, have you known the experience? Maybe you have been alone, you have known the wrestling, you know what it is to have your name changed. God is ready to do it, He would do it today. Are you prepared to be finished with your own ideas, your own understanding, what you think about things, even what you think should be said in the ministry, what you think should be this or be that? Beloved, let us make way, as leaning, for the sun to shine upon us.

In these chapters that I refer to (I only speak of them briefly and simply) you see a man, a prince of God. At the end of his days he is seen still leaning, he worshipped leaning on the top of his staff. "The eyes of Israel were heavy from age": did that deceive him? Not a bit! He could still guide his hands intelligently, he still knew right from wrong, he still knew what seemed to be right that was not just it; he had insight. Here is a man who is with the Spirit of God and who has had his eyes opened; they were heavy from age; even Joseph here thought he knew better. O, do not despise what may be failing outwardly; do not despise outward circumstances that may not seem so powerful. Jacob here is still as much a prince as ever he was, I would say more than ever he was; he is here a prince of God.

Joseph said, Well, it really should be this. Dear brethren, we are very presumptuous at times, we think it should be this and it should be that. I do not speak disparagingly of Joseph one bit, but I speak to bring out the advantage of a man who had lost natural powers maybe, but who was in the power of the Spirit of God. It says that he guided his hands intelligently (see v 14); he says to Joseph "I know". Joseph thought he did not know. Israel says "I know, my son, I

know". There is a man who is leaning. How did he know? He did not see; you say he has not the advantage of youth, he does not have a quick mind. No, he did not even see, but he knew and guided his hands intelligently; he was a man that was leaning. O, beloved, if there is one thing we need it is dependence, dependence on Christ, dependence on the Spirit of God. What disasters have been wrought through persons leaning to their own understanding, and persons of ability bringing their own ideas in that seemed right! But it was not the divine touch. Here is a man who had lost his eyesight; his eyes were heavy from age, and it says again "he could not see"; but he guided his hands intelligently and he says "I know".

Do you know? The way to know, beloved, is through leaning. Jacob must have been told about this, he must have smelt the savour and odour of these sons; he had had that experience earlier in his history. He must have known, he did not see with his natural eyes but somebody must have told him - communion beloved, communion, dependence; leaning makes way for communion, makes way for speaking too, divine speaking in a local assembly.

Personalities may project themselves too much, but here is somebody who is leaning, he does not see but he is leaning and he guides his hands intelligently. I only speak of that to show the advantage. It is no disadvantage to have a limp, dear brethren, it is no disadvantage to have been through these experiences with God, it is a blessed asset. May we be helped to make the most of it - leaning. It speaks of him worshipping too, on the top of his staff. O, what a father he is! These next chapters bring out the wealth of a man who has been leaning. He is not here disposing exactly of what he had gained by his own power, he is not telling them what he had brought from Laban's land and what he had gained there. No, he says "the God that shepherded me... the Angel that redeemed me from all evil". He is a prince, he has something that has been handed down; he has acquired it in his own exercises and experiences with God as leaning, leaning on Him. Now may we be helped individually to lean, lean heavily, beloved, and, O, what a Man to lean on! the One who has changed your name, the One who has taken away all that stood against you and your offences and

your sins, the Priest that we were speaking of today in Hebrews 3.

What a One to lean on! The Word of God, the Apostle, the High Priest, is the One to lean on. "Mixed with faith", (Heb 4: 2) comes into the leaning. Jacob did not know the days that were ahead, but he was leaning and he guides his hands intelligently.

I refer to the Song to see there one who is leaning upon her Beloved. It would be speaking of things not exactly individually, but there is an exclamation here; "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, Leaning upon her beloved?" Is Christ not going to see the testimony through, dear brethren? Does He not say, at the close of Matthew's gospel, "I am with you all the days", chap 28: 20. It has been well said that the Lord is with us as we are with Him. "Leaning upon her beloved" - she is with Him. She comes up out of the wilderness. The assembly is not a wilderness creature; she is not native to the wilderness exactly, she is coming up. Is that the experience in your local company? Not only wilderness exercises, not only Romans, not only the experiences of Corinthians, but is there some experience in your local company of coming up? "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness... ?" She is able to meet all the responsibilities of the wilderness way; but somebody here sees something very beautiful: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, Leaning upon her beloved?" He is leading us, dear brethren, conducting upward. "I ascend" was His word to those few in John 20. Are you going to ascend with Him? They did. It says "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God" (v 17); there is the ascending line. The disciples came into something of that in John 20, they came up. They went to their homes, I suppose in despair, having looked into the tomb, but the word of God comes to them that He was risen and they begin to rise up.

It is not only wilderness exercises, dear brethren, it is not only times of sorrow, but there is a coming up - "Leaning upon her beloved". O, how He would lift us up as we lean! He is going that way; may we not miss His movements. The assembly, as I said, is not a creature of the wilderness, she belongs to another sphere

altogether, and He, the Beloved, is going there and she is leaning upon Him. There could be a reference in it too to the Spirit; the Spirit is with us in the wilderness exercises as the servant was with Rebecca. How she must have leaned on the resources in the camels and in the servant; she must have been drawing on that. But here there comes a point of leaving the wilderness. Are we ready to leave it, dear brethren? Righteously she is able to deal with the wilderness line of things, but as He comes in there is to be a change: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, Leaning upon her beloved?" - "Leaning". You will never come into the land in all its blessedness and all its features any other way, save us leaning upon the Beloved. What a title He has there! "I ascend to my Father": what a title He has in heaven! What a place belongs to Him in glory, the angels and principalities and authorities all giving way to Christ! He belongs there, and as His counterpart we belong there too. May we be helped to get free of the wilderness circumstances, to see that the service of God is not carried on in the wilderness, it is carried on as leaning, leaning on the Beloved. What wealth He is ready to bring us into! He is more ready to bring us into it than we are to lean on Him and follow Him where He goes. If you are leaning on something and it moves, you have to move or you will fall. Leaning on the Beloved: as He moves we would move under His touch. Has the wilderness such a hold that we cannot drag our feet from it? Have burdens become so heavy that we cannot arise as He moves? We have not been leaning on Him, dear brethren. There are exercises, burdens, to be carried and things to be done, but as He moves to rise we have to rise with Him. The test of righteousness in exercises is as we are ready to follow Christ as He moves. Are we leaning on Him so much that as He moves we move with Him? It says "I awoke thee under the apple tree; There thy mother brought thee forth; There she brought thee forth that bore thee". I do not know much about what this would mean but I think the Lord is reminding us of the divine work in the saints; the assembly is divine property. He would remind us of the power and the grace and the fruit of divine work: "the apple-tree among the trees of the wood", chap 2: 3. The work of God, the assembly, has a different origin; that

is the impression I get about the verse just now, that the assembly has an origin different from the wilderness. It is in the wilderness but it belongs somewhere else. "I awoke thee under the apple tree;... There she brought thee forth that bore thee". Beloved, the whole point of the assembly is to make much of Christ. She has her own shining, her own glory, but the glory the assembly has is not inherent, shall I say; the glories that it will ever have are conferred glories, reflecting the glory of Him who has it inherently - the apple tree. The apple tree is Christ in heaven, His own blossom, His own fruit, His own preciousness; the assembly is to augment that. In the wilderness can she point to Christ? In the settling of exercises and sorrows among us have the brethren been pointed to Christ? Are we leaning enough to bring Him in, to follow His movements? That is the impression I would leave, dear brethren, that the assembly belongs somewhere else. She has an origin outside of the wilderness altogether; you never saw an apple tree in the wilderness, she has an origin that is outside the wilderness sphere of things altogether, and as leaning on Christ He would bring us up - "Who is this...?" No wonder there is an exclamation! The angels will yet exclaim (I feel it very humbling), but the angels will yet exclaim as to the wisdom of things working in the assembly - she belongs somewhere else. The fruit of leaning on her Beloved is that the wisdom of Christ comes through in exercises. It is someone else who is being drawn attention to and not me. How many sorrows there have been through men projecting themselves, but leaning means that the right thing is said, the power and wisdom is there, but it is all the time directing to Christ.

Well, do not let us think, beloved, that leaning is only for times of crisis - very largely perhaps that is our experience - but John was one who was at table.. and he was leaning on the breast of Jesus.

It was a constant thing with John. It says about him: "Now there was at table one of his disciples in the bosom of Jesus", that is where he lived, it is where Jacob had learned to live. As I say, not only at times when difficulties are to be met but his constant pathway was that he was in the bosom of Jesus and leaning on His breast.

He was there to be referred to; he was a fine brother to be referred to, somebody who is leaning on the breast of Jesus. Peter was leaning too; at times, like the most of us, he had leaned to his own understanding, but he says that that is not going to do here, no; it says he made a sign to him; it shows how near he was to him. O the advantage of a brother like this, the advantage of drawing on him: "Simon Peter makes a sign"; he does not even speak. Are these brotherly links strong enough among us so that there is a freedom just to look, to make a sign? There is somebody nearer the Lord than I am, consciously known. He says "Lord, who is it?" He does not say he knew, he is still leaning. You ask somebody and they may answer quickly. John did not do that, he was still leaning, there was no pride with him. "But he, leaning on the breast of Jesus, says to him, Lord, who is it? " Beloved, may we ask questions leaning and prove the power and the resources that are available as we lean; let us lean heavily on Christ for His Name's sake.

MAIDSTONE

24 March 1984

THE CHILDREN'S WARNINGS

Children who have been to Cornwall will probably have heard of the dreaded Manacle Rocks near Dartmouth. A floating bell-buoy gives a continual warning of the danger to shipping of these cruel fangs just under the surface of the sea. Some years ago a liner outward bound for America struck these rocks at speed, shivered, slipped back into deeper water and sank with great loss of life. No notice had been taken of the bell because no one suspected danger, although the vessel was actually seven miles off her course. None of the ship's watch survived and no one knows the reason for the error. Let every reader young or old of this brief record be warned that, if unsaved, there are the rocks of judgment and eternal loss ahead even if they are not now seen. Believe on the Lord Jesus and the bells of warning will become the bells of joy.

The book of Ecclesiastes is also known as The Preacher because Solomon, the writer, gave himself that title seven times in it. It was written about one thousand years before the birth of Jesus, so that the good tidings preached therein is not the glorious gospel that we have, it is in the form of warnings and restraints. The first part of chapter twelve, especially, warns you to remember your Creator in the days of your youth. It would be a challenge to see if you can understand what is meant by each reference there to the human senses and powers in old age. Amongst these references, "the almond tree" seems to refer to grey hair, "the grinders" are the teeth and "the keepers of the house" are probably the nerves - and so on.

In God's care for His creatures and especially of those who believe, He has sometimes given warnings by angels and even by dreams so that His people should be saved from danger or guided. Amongst the great men of ancient time, Noah was warned 'by word of mouth' of the impending judgment of the world by flood. He acted upon the warning and built his great ship as a place of safety that would bear up all life within it upon the very waters of judgment. The risen Lord Jesus is salvation from sin and sins for all who believe in Him. Protective salvation now is in His assembly.

Do you enjoy present salvation?

J.C.Evershed