

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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LIBERTY

A.P.Devenish

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These first three scriptures speak about the prison, and the fourth, Timotheus being set at liberty. We could profitably consider what these persons represent about whom we have read, and see that the truth that they embodied, that was expressed in them, should be set free amongst us. Someone has said that Peter in prison in Jerusalem represented the truth being in prison; that is, in a certain sense there was decline in Jerusalem and what was official perhaps rested in. What Peter had come into the gain of in chapter 10 was hindered in its expression. How the Lord helped this remarkable man to get an apprehension in his affections of the universal and heavenly character of the assembly: "a certain vessel descending as a great sheet, bound by the four corners and let down to the earth" (Acts 10: 11), and the tender solicitude and interest of heaven in view of his coming into the full current of the Spirit's operations, securing a place in his affections for the truth of the assembly in its universal and heavenly character. Jerusalem had not kept pace with the current of the Spirit's operations and in a certain sense Peter in prison would suggest that what he had come into the gain of, what he was now the embodiment of, was imprisoned. So it would raise exercises with us as to whether we are in the current of the present operations of the Spirit of God and whether we have made room in our affections for what heaven is engaged with. We might well hinder the expression of the truth amongst us. Mr Taylor said that the truth of the Supper has been brought out of captivity. Think of how it was and is held as a mere formal ritual in the systems of men but how the Lord brought the truth of the Supper out of captivity, putting it in a suitable setting so that we can enjoy that wonderful truth as we assemble in view of what the Lord says: "this do in remembrance of me", 1 Cor 11: 24.

No doubt what is suggested in Jerusalem is distance. What is angelic is referred to, and unbelief: while they were praying, they were amazed when Peter was delivered. These two great features may characterise us and hinder the truth that is seen in Peter being experienced and enjoyed by us - unbelief and distance. Rhoda is referred to, she came to listen. Heaven is distinguishing a young person. You may say there were a lot of distinguished persons in Jerusalem, the twelve were there. One would not speak against them at all, but Jerusalem had not kept pace with the movements of the Spirit. It is not one of the twelve that is distinguished in this chapter, it is a little maid by name Rhoda. The fact that it gives her name shows that heaven is distinguishing what shines in her - a character or state of soul that is impressionable to the current operations of the Spirit- and through her all that Peter represents comes into the company. Would you not like to be like that? They said "you are mad". She was persecuted, but she maintained that it was so. She is faithful to her conviction, and through her Peter was received and all that he represents as the product of the tender interest of heaven which brought into his affections, over against the Jewish prejudice that marked him, the precious light and truth of the heavenly and spiritual and universal character of the assembly. I just speak of this first because it illustrates what is in mind, that the truth may not be imprisoned because of unbelief, or by maintaining what Jerusalem represents now (see Gal 4: 25). The Lord would look on from Jerusalem. The metropolitan idea was no longer in Jerusalem, it was in heaven. And how were the saints to be helped in Jerusalem? Not by a distinguished apostle but by a little maid who represents a characteristically impressionable person without any prejudices. A child has no prejudices; a child-like character is impressionable. All that Peter embodies as going right back to his spiritual beginnings, all that was gathered up in that remarkable vessel, was let in to the assembly in Jerusalem by a little maid. So it may not be the most distinguished brother or sister in the locality. May all of us desire, whoever we are, the character of this little maid, of a little child. The Lord says "I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth, that thou hast hid these things from the

wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes", Matt 11: 25. That is not babes in the sense of immaturity. Babes at Corinth, babes in Christ were immature persons, but babes in Matthew 11 are persons that were impressionable: "hast revealed them to babes". It is that character, unsophisticated, unprejudiced, that can receive impressions of Christ. One would suggest that we see how the truth is to be enjoyed; and we may think about unbelief and distance, dear brethren, how they hinder the enjoyment of the truth of the assembly.

Angels were linked generally with how God operated in the previous dispensation. The coming in of Jesus involved nearness. The time of the assembly involves nearness, nearness of God to men. How God came near to men in Jesus, how he overcame their prejudices. And then nearness between the brethren, nearness not distance, not unbelief. Do we come together in faith that the Lord will do something in our midst? Or is it just another occasion of a pleasant exchange of knowledge of the truth that we have accumulated. Do we experience the fact that the Lord would come in and effect something in our hearts? Peter was given the keys of the kingdom of the heavens - a remarkable commission! But then we have to be brought into sympathy with God, into sympathy with the Spirit in His current operations so that in his affections there should be room made for the truth of the assembly. Peter says "Report these things to James and to the brethren"; that is, he would desire to bring to them the light and enjoyment of his experience. Then it says he went out and went to another place, as if to suggest that he is moving now in the current of Paul's economy of local assemblies. It brings forward the tremendous need of recognising that every local assembly is in direct relation to heaven and the need not in any sense to operate against that. He went to another place. I think as we go on in this book, to Antioch in the next chapter, you get a suggestion of reaching the centre of operations. But that is to be experienced in every place, that every locality has its own direct relations with heaven, and in every matter that arises the locality is adequately furnished to arrive at a conclusion which is according to God.

In the scripture in Genesis Joseph and what he spiritually represents was in prison, and the cup-bearer remembers an experience he had had while he was in prison with him: "I remember my offences this day". What shines in Joseph is the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of revelation. Earlier in his history, as a young man (he was a remarkable young man), when in circumstances of temptation he says "how should I do this great wickedness and sin against God?", Gen 39: 9. So you can see that the truth is embodied in persons. It says he fled and he left his garment in her hands; it was really a testimony to her of his righteousness. He would not take what belonged to another. He did not succumb, he did not give way. There was in him what could not be corrupted. That is a great thing for many who are younger, and all of us, to think about, as the world in its attractiveness tempts us, that we may be preserved as having some impression of the holiness of God. "How should I do this great wickedness and sin against God?". So in a sense there may be imprisoned in each of us what is characteristic of God's work; I may not allow it to come into expression. I may give way to temptation, I may be overcome. But I think that by the Spirit we are to allow what characterises God's work in our hearts to come into full expression. This is more than just abiding by the rules. Young people say, Perhaps I must not do this because my parents would not approve or the brethren would not approve. But this is more than that. I would not say that it would not be right for young persons to speak that way: I think it would. We are thankful for any restraint that there may be. It speaks about the "colt bound to the door without at the crossway" (see Mark 11: 4). Thank God for any restraint that there is. This is something that springs from the heart. "How should I do this great wickedness and sin against God?". And then he flees. It is well to flee. Paul says to Timothy "but youthful lusts flee", 2 Tim 2: 22. But Joseph left that testimony. Then what really comes out in Joseph is his ability to reveal secrets. He is the sustainer of life but he is the revealer of secrets. You may say that in him was the spirit of wisdom and of revelation. Paul speaks about that to the Ephesians: "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of him", chap 1: 17. Pharaoh had a dream and Joseph's wisdom

was not available; he was in prison. How often that has been the case in the history of the testimony. Pharaoh tried to get an answer. He called the scribes and the sages. We may have some sages among us and some scribes, but the one who could answer was in prison and the Lord brought it home to the cup-bearer that he had offended, that there was one who was able to reveal secrets. Through his confession and acknowledgement of how Joseph had helped him, Joseph becomes available to reveal the secret of Pharaoh's dreams. I make an application of this, that what Joseph embodies and what is so needed at the moment, what the sages, men that were distinguished as wise men of Egypt and the scribes, could not answer Joseph could. So the cup-bearer through repentance, the acknowledgement of his offences, makes available the wisdom of Joseph. Paul says "he has been made to us wisdom from God", 1 Cor 1: 30. Is there someone in our localities who, through repentance and the acknowledgement of having offended in forgetting the true Joseph, that is the Lord, carrying on his service without Him, can now be the means of making available the wisdom that is in Him? Maybe he is still in prison. Maybe human wisdom is holding Joseph in prison. It says "Jews indeed ask for signs and Greeks seek wisdom", 1 Cor 1: 22. Maybe we are looking for some remarkable intervention, some sign, thinking that things will all be solved if there is some remarkable intervention from heaven; more likely it is the activity of the human mind, what the Greeks represent. But it is effectively shutting out Joseph. And one would just suggest to the brethren that we consider that the cup-bearer through repentance is the means of Joseph's wisdom becoming available in order that what was needed, what Pharaoh needed, the interpretation of his dreams, might be answered. One after another all the sages would have to say we were not able for it; we are not able to answer the questions; we are not able to solve the difficult problems; we are not able to reveal the secret of Pharaoh's dream. But there is One who is able. He is a great resource in order that we might have every matter resolved to the glory of God. We go on in this wonderful book and see Joseph's extraordinary administration. Beloved brethren, if we would just let the Lord in, that the prison

doors might be opened through a repentant man in your locality, we will find what a fine administration there will be. There will be no lack of food, no need, no unresolved questions. Would you not like to give a lead in this? Not a lead in how well you can solve the matter because you have had so many years in the testimony, so much experience, are so spiritual. It is a repentant man that brings in Joseph.

I refer now to Judges. Samson is in prison. He represents remarkable latent power based on Nazariteship, Nazariteship meaning, I think, our personal devotion to Christ. But then he gives away his secret. They ploughed with his heifer. That is what he says: "If ye had not ploughed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle", chap 14: 8. What does that mean? Samson is a remarkably powerful man, he had remarkable strength to effect things for God, but he had a vulnerable side; and we all have a vulnerable side. The Philistine, Satan through the Philistine, would be seeking to overcome Samson and he succeeded. You have ploughed with my heifer is suggestive of what is vulnerable in us what can be affected by influence and sap our strength. He was grinding in the prison because he had given way to Delilah's influence. So it is very important that the truth is held in balance in our souls, that the feminine is protected by the masculine and that the masculine, the side of government is rightly influenced, government according to God. Take Pilate's wife. There he was on the judgment seat and she sought to influence him in a right way; she said "have nothing to do with that righteous man", Matt 27: 19. It says she suffered in a dream because of him. So the truth is to be held in balance. There is what is masculine which would involve what is protective, rule and government in view of protection. The feminine side is soft and impressionable, vulnerable therefore and needing to be protected. You have 'ploughed with my heifer' would mean that they had taken advantage of the vulnerability that they recognised was there and hence had sapped his strength. So he is grinding in the prison house. But then he comes out. It says the hair of his head began to grow. That was one feature of his Nazariteship,

that no razor should come on his head, meaning I suppose that he would not be conformed to this world. "Be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind", Rom 12: 2. So here the hair began to grow on his head, life was coming into evidence apparently unnoticed. But then you see him coming out in power. So he says "let loose of me". Every little bit of influence, everything that would have held him, he would be free from in view of this remarkable expression of strength. It says he bowed with *might*. He is one of the most remarkable types of the Lord Jesus going into death. He bowed with might, not in weakness, and the whole house of the Philistines was brought down through his death. I just suggest that we want to see that this feature of power and strength linked with Samson is not sapped through influence. It may be personal influence, it may be the influence of special affinities. How many ways Satan is active to undermine the testimony going forward in spiritual power! How many ways he gets at us because we have a vulnerable side! The Lord may help us to protect the local assembly, protect the assembly as a feminine vessel. How much good government and strong government is needed to protect what may be vulnerable to the attack and influence of the enemy. Samson's power, therefore, and the overthrow of the Philistine for the deliverance of God's people, came into expression, mighty expression, in the readiness to accept death. Power for deliverance will come in through persons being prepared to die for the overthrow of the Philistine.

One would just close with Timothy. It is very interesting that Timothy is said to be set at liberty: "our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he should come soon, I will see you", as if Timothy brings Paul. Timothy, as has been said, is a representative man that goes through to the end. Paul speaks so well of him: "my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who shall put you in mind of my ways as they are in Christ", 1 Cor 4: 17. He also says "For I have no one like-minded who will care with genuine feeling how ye get on" (Phil 2: 20), and goes on to say: "all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ". So is Timothy at liberty? Perhaps he was in

prison literally. But is he at liberty? If he is he will bring Paul with him. What does that mean? How could you limit what we would enjoy in our local assemblies as we are together - Paul's intelligence in the mystery, his unfolding of the truth of the assembly, sonship revealed in him. Is Timothy at liberty? He is a representative man. Paul entrusted things to him. He says "Keep, by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us, the good deposit entrusted", 2 Tim 1: 14. Is Timothy at liberty? It says "with whom, if he should come soon, I will see you". One would suggest that what characterised Timothy is what should characterise us, and if there is one brother or one sister that sets out what Timothy represents as a beloved and faithful child who cares with genuine feeling how the saints get on, in a certain sense they will bring Paul with them. All that Paul unfolds in his ministry, the two great services that were committed to him - the glad tidings and the mystery - all becomes available to the brethren as we are characterised by the features that marked Timotheus - beloved and faithful child who will put you in mind of my ways. As Timothy was at Corinth what would they say? It is the same spirit, the same ways as we saw in Paul. One desires that these applications may be acceptable, that the brethren may see what is in mind, that these wonderful truths embodied in such persons may be set free amongst us. May it be so, in the Name of the Lord Jesus.

GLASGOW

15 December 1984

DIVINE EXPOSURE LEADING TO BLESSING

R.S.Renton

Psalm 73: 17-25; Genesis 11: 1-3; 12: 1-3, 7; John 4: 16-30

I want to speak of divine exposure and to indicate that, when God exposes, He has the greatest thoughts in mind for us in blessing; and I would say, the readier we are for the exposure, the greater the blessing would be. Mr Stoney said, The more we are detected, the more we are protected. I use these passages of Scripture to indicate some results from exposure. In the first, in Psalm 73, the end is composure; in the second, in Genesis 12, God Himself is the *proposer*, and in John 4 the Lord is the *discloser*.

Now in regard of divine exposure I want to establish from other Scriptures that when God exposes He has blessing in mind. The heartlessness of the world was fully unmasked to the younger son in Luke 15 when he was destitute and hungry and would have eaten the food the swine were eating: but no one would give to him. It was not until this fact was brought home to him that he thought of the father's house of plenty. He no doubt little realised the reception and the welcome which awaited him and the full blessing which was to follow, for the father's eyes saw the distance, his feet covered the distance but his love removed the distance. The father fell on his neck and covered him with kisses and told the bondmen to bring out the best robe and clothe him in it, to put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet, to bring the fatted calf and kill it, and the word is: "let us eat and make merry" (v 23). What infinite blessing! Do you think the younger son would ever desire to revert to the swine troughs? As the world is truly exposed to the man, what a contrast to the best robe, the fatted calf, the ring, the shoes, the embrace of the father and the kisses! I say again, when God exposes, He has the greatest thoughts in mind for us.

Paul in writing to the Colossian saints exposes their danger. The footnote says 'implying real present danger more than possibility'. He says: "See that there be no one who shall lead you

away as a prey through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the teaching of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ", chap 2: 8. That is the exposure of which they were in real danger. Then he adds: "For in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in him" (vv 9, 10). The exposure is the danger of philosophy and vain deceit, but O! the wonderful thought, dear brethren, that in that glorious Man where He is, the blessing is that we are "complete in him". We do not require to go outside of Christ for anything.

Could anything exceed the blessings of this fact? O to get our eyes on the glory of Jesus, for it thrills our hearts and transforms our outlook! I will quote one more passage to substantiate what has already been said. In Ephesians we read: "But all things having their true character exposed by the light are made manifest; for that which makes everything manifest is light. Wherefore he says, Wake up, thou that sleepest, and arise up from among the dead, and the Christ shall shine upon thee", chap 5: 13,14. We need to wake up in order that the Christ may shine upon us. The glory is before us, for Christ is in glory and soon we shall be with Him and like Him. We sang in our opening hymn:

'Lord, we wait for Thine appearing;
'Even so', Thy people say' (No.388)

We sing it from the depths of our souls and spirits. As we wake up, there will be the full realisation of the shining from that place of ineffable bliss where Christ is, and this will be our present portion.

Now I come to this well-known Psalm 73. In the previous Psalm Solomon is on the throne and consequently David has nothing more to ask. But in this Psalm, which is written by Asaph, the leader in the service of song, he is distressed because of what he sees around him, and maybe there is someone here, maybe some young person, who cannot understand why wicked men are allowed to continue and apparently prosper. He says, for instance: "For I was envious at the arrogant, seeing the prosperity of the wicked. For they have no pangs in their death, and their body is well

nourished; They have not the hardships of mankind, neither are they plagued like other men" (vv 3-5). You see, he has a wrong outlook. Then in verse 13 he says: "Truly have I purified my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency". His outlook is warped, he is oppressed and distressed with his mind in a ferment, but there comes about with him a wonderful change. When does the change come? "Until I went into the sanctuaries of God; then understood I their end". Beloved brethren, I may have little experience of it, but I can tell you, as the world and wicked men are exposed, and you go into the presence of God, O the transformation! You may go in dejected, but you come out with your face shining and composed. Young people we are in a treacherous world, and I would ask you with all the affection I can muster, never neglect to pray. In Matthew 6 Jesus says: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who sees in secret will render it to thee" (v 6).

How delightful to heaven to see a believer entering into the presence of God! In our Psalm it is not only the sanctuary but the sanctuaries, which would mean for us the holiest. This is our privilege, dear brethren. Have you a sanctuary? Have you a place where you can go, secluded and no one knows? It may be father does not know, nor mother, but you go in there, and if you are warped in your outlook, distressed at school or in business by the wickedness of man, you go into your chamber and you find that Jesus is there. What a joyous comfort to know that when we enter our chamber to pray without anyone knowing or seeing us, the Father knows and sees in secret. The holiest is not a place. Heaven is a place, and we have been taught that the holiest is a state. I can see Asaph, all his turmoil, his ferment, his disillusionment now gone. He is composed, for he says: "then understood I their end". He has been into the sanctuaries, he has been into the presence of God, and he knows something now of the expulsive power of a new object, as Mr Stoney has said. This is an object which is outside ourselves. He says: "Thou wilt guide me by thy counsel, and after the glory, thou wilt receive me". He is now

calm in his spirit after being in the presence of God - wonderful experience! The glory fills his soul in transforming power. In verse 25 he exclaims: "Whom have I in the heavens? and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee". He now has his eye on Jesus, and this is the sure way to be found in power, in dignity and in triumph.

In Genesis 11 we have men combining together and with one purpose, systematically and definitely to be independent of God. We have not far to look to see such things transpiring in our day, men combining together and putting themselves into bundles. We have this independent move in these men in Genesis 11, and "they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and dwelt there. And they said one to another, Come on, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar": Brick, you see, is man made with no character or permanent durability. Babel is not built of stone or rock, and I wonder if all our brethren here have a proper assessment of what the world really is. I heard someone say that it is like a beautiful building from the outside and you are enamoured as you see the facade, but when you open the door expecting to find something palatial you find the place is empty. Dear brethren, you find that is just the world. Now morally this was exposed to Abram. I repeat in chapter 11: "And they had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar", but in Genesis 12: "And Jehovah had said to Abram, Go out of thy land, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, to the land that I will shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed". We have the complete exposure in chapter 11, but in chapter 12 we have God proposing wonderful things to Abram. In Hebrews 11 we read: "By faith Abraham, being called, obeyed to go out into the place which he was to receive for an inheritance, and went out, not knowing where he was going" (v.8). He implicitly trusted God. He had seen the folly of men in their ambition and independency, combining together to build a city and a tower the top of which would

reach to the heavens, but according to Hebrews "he waited for the city which has foundations, of which God is the artificer and constructor" (v 10). Stephen says in Acts: "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia", chap 7: 2. O that the God of glory would allure our hearts from this shoddy, empty world and fill them with that world where Christ is the glorious sun and centre. Abraham waited for the city which has foundations; he had seen the mock of the brick and the asphalt and he looked on to that world of which we sang. He is waiting, and we too are longing for that world when Christ will be publicly vindicated. The Spirit and the bride are already saying, Come - one voice, one word, one intonation. So God says, Leave your land, your country and see my world. Mr Raven said that the whole burden of Scripture is Christ and the world to come. So God proposes very wonderful things.

Now to finish in John 4. The Lord says just a few words. He speaks of the living water. He says to the woman: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that says to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" (v 10). The woman says to Him in verse 15; "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst nor come here to draw". That was a natural desire for she thought if she had this which the Lord was suggesting to her she would not need to come to the well to draw. Then we read: "Jesus says to her, Go, call thy husband, and come here. The woman answered and said, I have not a husband. Jesus says to her, Thou hast well said, I have not a husband: this thou hast spoken truly". If there is one thing I would advocate it is being honest in the presence of God. This woman was honest. She might have said, Alright, I will go and call my husband, but he was not her husband and she was honest about it. You may think you can hide things from the brethren but you cannot hide from the Lord Jesus, so why not be open and sincere in His presence for He knows anyway. She says to Him: "I have not a husband". This is the exposure taking place. Jesus says to her: "Thou hast well said, I have not a husband; for thou hast had five husbands". What a history! In what

the Lord said to her she recognises that he was a prophet and it is a wholesome experience to get into the presence of the Lord when we immediately recognise that He is the prophet. The whole moral history of this woman came before her in a flash. I am told that when a man is drowning all his past flashes before him. She was searched in the presence of the Lord Jesus but she accepts the searching and the Lord discloses wonderful things to her. He says to her: "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when ye shall neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what; we worship what we know, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for also the Father seeks such as his worshippers. God is a spirit; and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth". We might not have thought that the Lord Jesus would disclose to this woman such precious things about the Father, but as she fully accepts the exposure the Lord was free to disclose what the Father seeks, as He says: "for also the Father seeks such as his worshippers". What disclosures, beloved brethren, as we go into the presence of Jesus as the prophet! He will indicate to us what might be a stumbling block. Would that not be a good thing? What matters now, as was said in the reading, is our formation in the divine nature and the increase of affection for Jesus. We spoke of nearness to Jesus: such was the privilege of John the writer, for he came as near to Jesus as he possibly could - he was in His bosom and on His breast - and when it came to a critical moment Peter says, You ask the Lord, He will tell you. Would you not like to be in that position, to be so near to Jesus that divine secrets would be revealed to you? The woman, a disreputable person, became a luminous one. How quickly the Lord can act with us! It does not require a long drawn out process: "the Father seeks such as his worshippers". The Father, dear brethren, is looking for spiritual quality amongst us and this is indicated to this woman when the Lord says: "seeks such as his worshippers".

Then in verse 28 "The woman then left her waterpot" for she herself was now the containing vessel. And she says in verse 29: "Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?" She now becomes evangelical and, beloved brethren, will you bear a word of exhortation? We could be more evangelical. We are often reminded that the rapture is very, very near and I would raise the question, what is our attitude in view of the imminence of the rapture? Why should we allow an opportunity to pass without witnessing for our Saviour? Oh, for more evangelical fervour! Young people, and older brethren too, let us never be ashamed of the glad tidings. As I have already said, she becomes not only luminous but influential for it says: "They went out of the city and came to him".

I trust what has been said will be of interest and beneficial, and I repeat what was indicated at the beginning: when there is divine exposure, God has the greatest thoughts in mind for us. May the Lord bless the word, for His Name's sake.

GRIMSBY

21 September 1984

DOXOLOGIES AT THE END

C.J.H.Davidson

**2 Peter 1: 13-19; 3: 17,18; 2 Timothy 4: 5-8,18; Revelation 1: 5 (latter part),6;
22: 20,21**

Before I embark on these scriptures, there is one thing that the Lord would have me mention relative to what we were speaking of at the end of the reading and that bears upon baptism - household baptism with little children in it. It has been rightly said that if you knew for certain that a tiny babe was not going to live you would not baptise it. We are baptised to live down here to the glory of God. We are

baptised to turn our backs on the world and we are baptised to "the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit", Matt. 28: 19. That preposition is very interesting: 'eis' in the original, 'to' in our translation. It involves motion towards the object presented (see notes to Matt 21: 1 and 2 Tim 1: 12). So our baptism is not only the rejection of the world and the flesh, but it is to the Name, and we are moving towards the glory.

Now, baptism of the Spirit is a different thing from baptism of little children, or baptism of persons who have never been baptised. Think of what Paul says - the beauty of the assembly position - baptised by one Spirit into one body (see 1 Cor 12: 13). That is exclusive to the persons indwelt by the Spirit who have been baptised by the one Spirit into the one body. I just make that remark because sometimes we are not altogether clear as to the impact of baptism, but it looks on to the end. In the figure it is the water of death in household baptism, and it is the life-giving water of the Spirit in our being baptised into one body, and we are of the assembly as baptised into one body. So we have the end before us in all that God has done. He has had the end before Him and that blessed Man at the time of His greatest sorrow says "the things concerning me have an end", Luke 22: 37. O what an end that was, beloved! The beginning - the multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and the shepherds heard them. But we read of no angels speaking at the cross, at the end. O how solemn! The Lord did that work which no one else could do and He did it alone. Paul did a great work, Peter did a great work, but it was not like what Christ has done. According to that scripture in Luke, He says, that it might be fulfilled what is written must be accomplished in Me, He was reckoned with the lawless. O what darkness that is! That is men's reckoning of Christ and it has never been reversed to this day. Do not have truck with this world beloved young people, and older people too. It is a world that reckoned Christ to be among the lawless. He who had done the will of God all His days they would have buried in a common criminal's grave; but God stepped in there

and said: My Son is going to be with the rich in His death. And so He was. What an end!

Then I think of the end in the book of Numbers, a wicked man speaking of what God was doing with His people Israel. He says "Let my soul die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his", chap 23: 10. And it was not. Balaam the son of Beor died by the sword and he is even now awaiting the judgment of God. O beloved, let us consider our end! Scripture says "teach us to number our days, that we may acquire a wise heart", Ps 90: 12.

Now I refer to these three beloved men. Death has come in with all three, but we never read of the death of John. It is most remarkable that the word went forth among the disciples, erroneously, when the Lord spoke of John, that this disciple shall not die, but he has died. But the impact of the end on all three of these beloved men was that they broke out in a doxology to glorify God. O beloved, let us get our eyes off the muddles and imperfections that we may find with one another and get our souls set at liberty to magnify God. We all ought to have a doxology of praise to God. Peter had it. He was to die the barbaric death of crucifixion and he chose, according to history, that it should be upside down, that he might not die like his Master. And he says it is "the putting off of my tabernacle". It is as easy in his view as putting a garment away, taking it off and putting it away. What a man! What a lover of Jesus he was brought to be! The Lord knew he had attachment to Him. The Lord knows that you, young people, have attachment to Christ; and you older ones - uncommitted persons are here - you know what I mean. The Lord has said in the simplest possible language, language that a young person, a child could understand: "this do in remembrance of me", 1 Cor 11: 24. Are you going to approach the end without having done it? I do not understand that. O the blessedness of going this way, even in suffering, with a doxology in your heart! And Peter says, as he faces the end, I want you all to remember, not me, but what I have said to you about the glory of Christ; and I would like that the brethren should remember today what is said about the glory of one Man. There is only One.

Spiritual personalities we can enjoy and be thankful for but all of them put together only direct the gaze rightly to Christ Himself; and so Peter says "eyewitnesses of his majesty". I remember a child of brethren at Ealing being taken up by his parents to see the king's procession at the opening of Parliament so that that child might have some impression of majesty. I would rather get it from this scripture and remember it, because this is something that happened on earth but the glory came down from heaven. I am thankful for the monarchy in this country. But absolute monarchy in Christ is God's ideal and all other forms of government will pass away before the storm of God's judgment upon a world that says 'No' to Christ. We do not say that, beloved. We want to be in keeping with the vision of Peter on the mount. It is only a little while to wait for the actuality of our vision for we shall see it and we shall be with Him when He comes. O the blessedness of a man going to martyrdom but with his heart full of the glory of Christ! I think there is something splendid about it. It makes me ashamed of myself, but Paul says you are not to be ashamed, you are to take your place as a man in the ranks of those who justify the name of Christ. A woman can do it. Frances Ridley Havergal did it when she wrote that lovely hymn, 'Thou art coming, O my Saviour, Thou art coming O my King'; and she says 'O the joy to see Thee reigning, Thee our own beloved Lord', and then 'vindicated and enthroned'. That is what we are looking for. We love the appearing, not the rapture. Christ loves the rapture, because then He receives His bride, the assembly, to Himself. But we love His appearing because where He has been dishonoured among men He is going to be admired in all those that believe.

So all these things then being to be dissolved, Peter would set us free from every earthly prospect and ambition; and then he says, We wait for the time when Christ will be displayed, and at the end of his letter he wants us to be preserved from falling from our own steadfastness. God would help us in these shaking days by His Spirit to be steadfast. You have to face the difficulties but do not be dismayed or discouraged by them and do not, whatever you do, say, There is no point in going on, I am going back. Ah! to whom will you

go? Will you go to the world? If you are a believer you will never come into judgment, but O the horror of being taken out of a world just ready for judgment! I want to be out of it now. The sooner the better, the believer says. Peter is a very affectionate man; he is not a critic of the brethren. There are critics but I do not think they suit the divine thought. Peter says "Ye ... beloved". You say, was there nothing wrong with those to whom Peter was writing? There may have been much, but he writes according to the love of God, as it is said elsewhere by God Himself: "from me to them" (Rom 11: 27). That is the new covenant. What a place we have! What a place Israel will have in the coming day in the heart of God: "from me to them". So Peter closes with growing in grace. That is what we have been at, beloved, in these last two days together, growth according to the knowledge of God, but in grace. And then he says: "and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen".

Now that doxology does not go as far as Paul's doxology in 2 Timothy which I have read to you. Peter is the great kingdom man - the millennial man if you wish - and he takes his ascription up to the day of eternity in keeping with the ministry the Lord had given him. He had the keys of the kingdom, and while he knew no doubt what Paul would say about the ages of ages he keeps himself to his ministry and he says "glory ... to the day of eternity". Will there be glory after that? Of course there will. Revelation 21 shows that, the eternal day and God sitting on the throne, Christ sitting on the throne and everything completed for God's purpose and pleasure and then the end. Then comes the end, as Paul would say.

So, moving on to Paul's language, he was going to martyrdom as well. Both those men suffered as martyrs of Jesus at Rome. You know that system; it is changing its face, what they call oecumenically at the present time and trying to be friendly to everybody and have everybody in, but the blood of the martyrs of Jesus remains in that system and God will have to say to it. I think of those women, converted as we are, up in the Solway Firth; they chained six of them to posts when the tide came in and slowly they

were drowned - martyrs of Jesus. There are believers among the Catholics, I know that. One of them said to a local sister, I love the Lord Jesus too. That is fine; he got that from the work of the Spirit within him giving honour to that name, because no one can say it who has not received the Spirit: "Lord Jesus", 1 Cor 12: 3. But of the system let us take account as God does of the end. But Paul suffered. As a Roman citizen he was entitled to be beheaded and he was beheaded, he was not crucified like Peter, but the same love for the same blessed One, Jesus, burned in his soul as I trust it will burn in the hearts of everyone here. There will be no going back; if the Lord says "Will ye also go away" (John 6: 67) as He has done, there will be no going back if you answer to the love of that Man. So the beauty is there in chapter 4, he was being poured out. That is a reference to the libation, the strong drink of God's sacrifices that was poured on the sacrifices in Israel of old. God says "in the sanctuary shall the drink-offering of strong drink be poured out to Jehovah", Num 28: 7. Do you think God does not love to be stimulated? He loves to be stimulated, that there should be an answer welling up in your hearts now to the ministry of Christ. He says, He is My Beloved, He is all I ever wanted and you are praising Him, and it is like the strong drink of My sacrifices. And Paul was being poured out finally. He says in Philippians that he was being poured out on the sacrifice and ministration of their faith. Is there faith here? There is faith in this room, and you can think of a servant like Paul adding to what there was among the brethren and stimulating God because the brethren were going on sacrificing for Him. Then he says "The Lord shall deliver me from every wicked work". You say, What Paul, you are going to be beheaded in Rome, was that not a wicked work? Ah! he would say, God is over and above that and the very act they will do to me puts me into the presence of my Saviour. Make no mistake, Paul is not in heaven yet; Scripture never speaks of the departed going to heaven until the resurrection and the rapture takes place, and then we shall all enter heaven together following Christ. When we die we do not go into heaven and then come out again and then go back again. That is not the truth. There is a portion with Christ. Mr Taylor was asked what happened to Moses and Elijah

after the mount of transfiguration when they appeared in glory with Jesus transfigured before them. He said, They are in a department of God. Very remarkable to think of! Christ is not limited corporeally; He could not be. He presides everywhere, He is the omnipresent God, and He has His departments. He said to a dying man: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise", Luke 23: 43. Where is paradise? Paradise is in the presence of Christ. And you cannot limit Him to a bodily form and say that that is the limit. There is no limit to the person of Christ and He has the keys of death and of hades, the place of the departed, whether good or evil. But the glory before Paul was not that of being unclothed; he said he did not want to be unclothed, he is waiting to be clothed upon with a building from God eternal in the heavens. What a marvellous thing it is that Paul is waiting (two thousand years nearly) and we the living who remain are waiting, and when the assembling shout is heard the dead are raised incorruptible and we shall be changed and in an instant we all enter heaven together. How marvellous the truth is as in Jesus! So Paul says: "The Lord shall deliver me ... and shall preserve me for his heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory for the ages of ages". We touched a little on the ages from which God extracts His own work and puts it down in heavenly glory. There are many abodes up there, but one place is prepared by Christ for us of the assembly. We have been baptised by one Spirit into one body.

Now what of John? History tells us that he died at Ephesus an old man of 92. Scripture does not tell us that but it does give us the doxology of that man when he wrote his last letter to the brethren. For the Revelation is a letter, it is an epistle. You may not have thought of it as that but it is a letter and it ends like a letter. Very few people can say the last word in Scripture immediately off hand, but it is very interesting: "the saints", and the letter is concluded divinely and beautifully; having begun in chapter 1 with his doxology, the glory goes right through. The morning star of Peter appears again in John's writing in the lips of Jesus himself: "I ... am the bright and morning star", chap 22: 16. That lovely doxology in the beginning of Revelation is thrilling because, whereas Paul says historically, rightly,

"the Son of God, who has loved me" (Gal 2: 20) - He loved him when he was unlovable and so with us we have been loved when we were unlovable - John says "to him who loves us", and that love, like John himself in spirit, abides until the Lord comes. The Lord says, What if he abides until I come? So John says He is still loving. He is loving today in 1984 as much as He did in Mr Darby's time, and as much as He did in Peter's, John's, and Paul's time. He says "washed us from our sins ... and made us a kingdom". That bears upon the deliverance because we need to be washed but we need to be delivered and made a kingdom so as to come under the moral sway of God. "To him be the glory and the might to the ages of ages". John is alongside Paul. Mr Darby said, in ministering Paul do not forget John. Well, I do not; it is too lovely. He gives us the actual words of Jesus; they are not doctrine, they are the actual words of Jesus and He calls Himself by that blessed but simple name "I Jesus". And then at the end: "He that testifies these things says" - no angel says this, no apostle says this, but Jesus says it Himself - "Yea, I come quickly". We had this afternoon all the promises of God in that man: "Yea"; and He says that to us today: "Yea, I come quickly". Is there to be a full answer as a result of these days together? There should be an Amen; that should be the answer, to the whole of it: "Come Lord Jesus". May the grace that the apostle desired to be with us be with us in this place and in every gathering represented here.

GRIMSBY

22 September 1984

THE CHILDREN'S TREASURE

The Lord Jesus spoke of our being rich towards God which is something that believers, young and old, should strive after. In the thousand-year reign of Christ over the earth Israel's treasure will be the fear of the Lord. So is it for us now. It means that we refer everything to Him but not that we are afraid of Him although He is so holy. He has proved His love for us in the giving of His Son. The shed blood of Jesus is the cost of just one child's redemption and cannot be compared with even the most precious things of the world such as silver and gold. Yet gold forms part of the riches of this world. How strange that it is dug up from the earth and then buried again in vaults elsewhere! Mostly it does not pass with its value from one to another whereas the true riches of faith are kept in circulation. The deep mine from which faith comes is the Word of God and it is won by hearkening so that it may be used and enjoyed and the substance passed on to enlighten and encourage others.

If we were to come into possession of great riches the first question would be how to deal with them. In any case it is good to ponder the way in which God has used His! For one thing His rich *mercy* has been displayed in giving His well-beloved Son for needy sinners. Scripture tells us too of "the surpassing riches of his *kindness* in Christ Jesus". This is enjoyed now through the Spirit given to the obedient believer and the display of it will be in the ages to come. Then the riches of His *goodness* leads the sinner to repentance. This is very remarkable because we might have thought that He would use a hammer-blow to reach the conscience. If He should also do that it would still be His goodness so that the sinner should not continue his course. But His goodness is accompanied by forbearance and longsuffering. Let all take the advice given by Elihu to Job and "reconcile thyself now with him and be at peace". A wellknown hymn says 'He has waited for thee long'. Is He still waiting for you?

J.C.Evershed