

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 155

February 1986

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ENGAGEMENT WITH THE LORD HIMSELF

"DO YE KNOW WHAT I HAVE DONE TO YOU"

"JESUS HIMSELF DRAWING NIGH"

THE CHILDREN GROWING UP

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ENGAGEMENT WITH THE LORD HIMSELF

Matthew 17: 1-9; Philippians 2: 5-11

R.T. I felt a fresh sense this morning of being engaged with the Lord by Himself and am encouraged to suggest this line of things from the hymn and the prayer that we have had. We are brought into wonderful privileges. We have been brought into an area of wonderful blessing, and these blessings rightly fill our hearts, but I believe there is a need, if we are to get the gain of the dispensation, of looking at the Lord by Himself and holding Him in our hearts, because even in the midst of privilege it is all to make much of Him.

If we taste and know the relationship of brethren, the whole purpose is that He might be seen to be the Firstborn among many brethren.

If we touch the privilege of sonship, the glory in it is that He may be seen as the beloved Son. We have it by adoption; He alone has sonship in His own right.

I thought we might just look at these passages and see Him by Himself, in His glory and in His movements in descending love. I believe He would endear Himself to our hearts as we look at Him like this and the way He went: no other could go that way, and there is a glory that belongs to Him as a man that no one else will ever share.

There is some suggestion of that when He says "Tell the vision to no one, until the Son of man be risen up from among the dead", a secret that they were to carry in their hearts, I believe to strengthen them. You can think of how this secret in the hearts of these three disciples would strengthen them amidst all the opposition and all the indefiniteness as to His person, the secret in their souls of the Father's voice, that "This is my beloved Son". After this voice "they saw no one but Jesus alone". Certain things are repeated in each of the gospels. Mark says they saw "Jesus alone with themselves" (chap 9: 8); Luke says that "Jesus was found alone", (chap 9: 36). It was just some impression of that in my mind that made me suggest these scriptures, trusting that the Spirit may use them to magnify Christ's own uniqueness among us.

E.O. Correspondingly, do you think that the Lord standing in the midst gives us the opportunity to be occupied with Him in His beauty and attractiveness?

R.T. Yes: He comes in to be worshipped. The first reaction of affectionate hearts as the Lord comes in would be that our hearts would rise to worship. There is much that He brings with Him, there is much that He unfolds, but I think as He comes, as He is apprehended, the first rising up of spiritual feeling would be "Arise, anoint him; for this is he", 1 Sam 16: 12.

E.P. Would the fact that they go into this high mountain apart convey the idea that they were to be there without distraction from anything around?

R.T. You feel the need of that in assembly service. 'Christ, its unmingled Object, fills the heart' (hymn 247). We would seek to make room for that, would we not? We know our minds, we know how quickly we are like Peter and speak and bring in other things, not meaning to detract from His glory at all, but they do. As you say, there is the need for being apart, for this state of soul being with us, that we may have an apprehension of Jesus alone.

E.C.B. Have you any suggestion as to how we might the better arrive at this? One notices that a brother will set on something about the glory of Christ and within a few minutes the brethren are talking about themselves, and for that matter, their deficiencies. What would help us in this engagement with Him?

R.T. I think sensitiveness to the Spirit. What you say I feel, because we are so slow to get beyond ourselves; but the Father here is very jealous about it. It did not seem a bad thing. There were not many better men than Moses or Elias, were there? It would have passed muster with most. They would say, That was a good word that Peter gave. But the Father would have no rival. He says "This is my beloved Son". But as to your question, affection for Him is one thing, but I think we are very much cast on the Spirit to be able to get beyond ourselves and see His face shining as the sun.

E.C.B. Do you think that in John 16, when Jesus says "He shall glorify me" (v 14), the Spirit is on the same line as the Father is here?

R.T. I think so, and also in John 1 at His baptism, as we sometimes sing to the Spirit: 'Thou didst descend in love to mark Him out' (hymn 300). John would say there was no other man upon whom the Spirit descended in bodily form. You can see that divine Persons are very active to distinguish Christ in His manhood, as having a manhood and a glory in which no other ever shares, His face shining as the sun, His garments white as the light – as Mark says, "such as fuller on earth could not whiten them". Something belongs to Christ uniquely. When we think of the Lord our feelings should move adoringly at the mention of His name.

C.B. John was no doubt contemplating Him. Peter was speaking, and what he said was all right at first, but John would contemplate that Person, bringing out those glorious, beautiful features in his testimony.

R.T. Yes. John the baptist says "Behold the Lamb of God". That conveys some impression of somebody standing back, admiringly looking at Him: "looking at Jesus as he walked, he says, Behold the Lamb of God", John 1: 36. The question raised needs to be thought about, and I think it is something we need to make room for in our minds, that the Spirit may have free way to allow us to get beyond ourselves to see His glory. The fact is that we will the better enjoy what we come into as we see it all in relation to Him.

R.W.F. Do we need to accustom ourselves to what is elevated? It is a high mountain apart. Under the influence of Christ and with the help of the Spirit we might be encouraged to find ourselves more familiar with what is elevated. Christ has Himself stooped, has He not? as in John 8 and Philippians 2. He has descended, but He has ascended. Do you think, as has been stressed in the past, that we could do well to enter into the heavenly, to enjoy what is elevated, so that we see Christ more clearly?

R.T. Yes, what they saw here was a touch, you may say, of Him being in His own home. Those disciples in John who abode with Him that day would get some impression like this, too. There was a physical movement here to a high mountain apart. For us it would convey that it requires some exercise on our part, closing some doors, that we may touch an area of things where the Father is free and the Spirit is free to show us Christ in His own glory.

H.A.H. The Baptist's first reference would be more on our side, but the verse you quote would be like "Jesus alone", would it not? I wondered whether Mary had the experience of Jesus alone, that in His word "Touch me not" He is indicating that it is to be Himself absolutely, apart from His work and apart from ourselves altogether, as was said.

R.T. Yes, the work is so glorious because of the One who did the work. The work is precious to our hearts, and without it we would not have come into anything, but it all reflects the glory of the One who did the work. I think the transfiguration comes in the gospels for that very reason, to show that the Man who died was a Man who was distinguished by heaven. In a sense it enhances the sufferings. These men knew that He was not there as a malefactor. He was there as One who had been distinguished by the Father's voice as His beloved Son. That was the Man that went to the cross.

W.J.R.B. There would be some reason why it has been emphasised that it is the Lord's supper.

R.T. Yes, it brings out the distinctive place that Christ is to have as we come together. He will lead us onward; He will lead us into heavenly relationships. He leads us to the Father, but as you say, it is the Lord's supper. We come together in relation to Him.

E.P. In resurrection He says to His own "I myself". It is remarkable that He should use those two words.

R.T. Yes, there is to be no rival, there is to be no other object for our affections. I think that in these days, when there is so much that would becloud His Person, there is a need for us to have a fresh sense of His distinctiveness. "This" (emphatic) "is my beloved Son,

in whom I have found my delight". Moses or Elias, or anybody else, could never fill that position.

E.C.B. In Luke it says that they spoke of His departure. Does that bear on what you said just now, that these three in particular would know when they saw Him alone on the cross that He was the One who had this exalted glory?

R.T. Yes, that is a part of what He says, "Tell the vision to no one". Heaven saw to it that some persons had a view of who He was in His Person before they saw Him there in a position of suffering and shame and ignominy. Pilate and the Jews and the Romans could do what they willed to humiliate Him, but there was a witness from heaven that the Person who was there was God's beloved Son.

E.C.B. Is that not calculated to help us, especially in the preaching of the gospel? As far as men were concerned He was, as you say, there as a malefactor, but the secret in our hearts is that. He was the Father's beloved Son.

R.T. Yes, and that gave efficacy to the work that was done, did it not?

E.C.B. Romans 8 says: "He who, yea, has not spared his own Son" (v 32).

R.T. Yes, so that the value of the work done was that it was done by One who was God's beloved Son, and honoured from heaven as such in the days and circumstances of His pathway of humiliation and sorrow, marked out in those conditions as God's beloved Son.

C.B. You can understand that He was in the bright cloud.

R.T. Yes, what do you say about that?

C.B. He made them; His brightness must shine out, must it not?

R.T. Yes; I think that that bright cloud comes in as a protective covering, as it were. Moses and Elias were there, but the bright cloud relates to the Father and the Son, does it not? It overshadowed them, and then there is the voice. The voice is distinctive. Hearing it they fell upon their faces, terrified, but through

the touch of His love what they see is Jesus alone. These men are still there in one sense: they continue, they have a place of distinctiveness in the course of the testimony, but here is One who is the object who fills the Father's affections.

H.A.H. At the end of Exodus Moses was unable to enter because of the cloud: it is the same cloud, I take it. But here is One who is able to sustain the glory because the glory is intrinsically His own, is it not?

R.T. Yes; He fills the Father's affections, and He has come on to view that He may fill ours. I felt that the view of this is to help us through the dispensation. The Lord speaks in John 17 of the glory that they may behold. There is a glory that we share, but in John 17 the Lord in their presence speaks to the Father about a glory that they may behold. I think that is connected with seeing Christ apart from everybody else, One who is able to carry the dispensation through and to sustain the saints through it for the Father's pleasure.

C.J.G.B. Is the effect of that seen in the way that Peter speaks in his epistle of eye-witnesses of His majesty, leading on to the importance of the prophetic word (see 2 Pet 1: 16,19)?

R.T. Yes. Peter got the gain of it; He would not have said again what he said on the mount, and I think you can see Peter in the gain of it in the Acts in the way he functions. "Neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved", chap 4:12. No other name: how he would emphasise that in his preaching! As you say, writing to those of the dispersion he says that there is somebody who has majesty, there is someone on the throne who is able to carry things through, in whom we find our trust and strength. I think, as you say, it would make room for the prophetic word, divine speaking to preserve us and see us through.

R.W.F. Does that scripture in 2 Peter 1 indicate in what Peter says that it is possible with the help of the Spirit, to a degree at least, to have the Father's view of Christ? "He received from God the Father honour and glory, such a voice being uttered" (v.17). Do you think that that might enter into the question of seeing Christ in His

distinctiveness, that we aspire, with the help of the Spirit, to have the Father's view of Him?

R.T. Yes. I understand that was something that the brethren used often to be reminded about, to ask the Father that He might help us to see what beauty He found in Him, what it was that called forth this exclamation. It was not His service only, I think it was what was in Him intrinsically, and we need to be helped to see that, what is in Him that no one will ever share or have part in. It is what He is in Himself that is carrying the dispensation through in power.

E.C.B. We used also to be told of the Spirit of God's Son helping us towards the Father but the Father's Spirit helping us as to appreciation of Christ. It is interesting in Ephesians 3 that it says "to be strengthened with power by his Spirit" (the Father's Spirit) "in the inner man; that the Christ may dwell" (vv 16,17).

R.T. Yes, that is the end to be reached, and I think that, as He dwells in us, we will very quickly come into our blessings. As there is the dwelling the blessings will be the more easily entered into and enjoyed to the full.

C.B. We can say we experienced this touch this morning when Christ was before us in all His beauty and excellence.

R.T. Yes, I think that that would normally be true; we could say the same. Well, the Lord says to them "Tell the vision to no one, until the Son of man be risen up from among the dead". Now when it comes to Monday the secret of it is to be in your soul, the secret of Christ in His personal worth as being greater than all is to sustain us through each day.

E.P. There is a touch by Paul, too, in 1 Corinthians 2: 8. He speaks about "the Lord of glory", and that such a one as the Lord of glory was crucified. The circumstances on Monday or the rest of the week may be very testing, but are you suggesting that this view will carry us through?

R.T. The passage you quote says "had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory". Well, we know, do we not? And

these disciples were let into the secret. That He is the Lord of glory is something treasured in our affections.

B.W.W. Should we count upon the help of the Spirit of God as always and immediately available to us? I am not disregarding how my state might be at any time, but normally the Spirit is ready to help us to move in this way of taking account of Christ in His glory.

R.T. Yes; I think of that verse in Samuel; if we bring it into our dispensation it is like the Spirit's voice: "Arise, anoint him, for this is he", 1 Sam 16: 12. David came in in his beauty; he was ruddy; something drew the hearts of the brethren as David came in, and it is like the Spirit saying "Arise, anoint him, for this is he", We need help in the attitude of our minds, to be in an area where the Spirit can be free to speak these words, and as we carry this secret in our souls we will all the more readily touch it. Christ is to be the centre even in our gatherings together. Ministry is not expounding the Scriptures; ministry is Christ, and unless He comes into view in the ministry, the ministry is failing in its object. It is not just that we know the Scriptures better and we can say chapter and verse, and dot our i's and stroke our t's. That is not what ministry is for; ministry is to enlarge the heart and bring about a place where Christ has a greater influence and area with us.

D.A.B. Is the Father's voice ministry, in that sense?

R.T. Yes, you might even say it is corrective ministry, but what a way to correct the brethren, to bring in Christ, and what a correction it is!

Peter is adjusted and he says that what he saw was majesty. It is a very fine example of Christ being introduced in His distinctiveness and glory, and everything finding its place in relation to Him.

E.P. Would it be right to say that the word from the Father came from the bosom of the Father, because Jesus was there?

R.T. That is right. He never left heaven: "the Son of man who is in heaven" (John 3: 13). "The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father", John 1: 18. It brings out here the Father's jealousy.

That may help us to make more room for Him. The Father is jealous that no other man, no code, no system, no brethrenism or

anything like that, takes a place that hinders Christ from having His distinctive place among us.

C.B. Would it be part of what Jesus has done to us, in being able to voice to the Father the appreciation of Christ? What pleasure for His own heart, and what pleasure this morning for the saints to hear a young brother simply thank the Father for Christ. He did not say a lot but it was beautiful.

R.T. Yes. He "has delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love", Col 1: 13.

That is what He has done to us, and Peter never forgot something that was done to him here and that was that Christ was to have the first place in all things and there was to be no rival whatever.

J.S.G. Is His face shining as the sun a hint of universal glory, which some were being introduced into in advance?

R.T. Yes, that is very beautiful. It is beyond compare, that His face shone as the sun and His garments became white as the light. What we see is beyond being compared with anyone and that is to hold us through the dispensation.

E.C.B. Do you think "his garments... white as the light" is like "We see the Godhead glory shine through the human veil" (hymn 188).

R.T. Well, that may also be Philippians 2. We set there a glory shining through, and we need that touch, that the Lord has come into circumstances but it has not changed His person. In John 17, after having been here in these days and touching circumstances of humiliation, He asked to be glorified with the glory which He had before the world's foundation. Humiliation and lowly manhood has not detracted from the Person. It has brought Him on to our view, but He is the same blessed Person who was there in the beginning.

E.C.B. That is what you had in mind when you referred more than once to His ability to sustain things through the dispensation, because He is in an unchanging condition of glory.

R.T. I think we need to apprehend that, that the dispensation will not run out, that things will not fall down, because of the glory He has

been given. I think that is that glory in John 17: "behold my glory which thou hast given me" (v 24). In His manhood, in His Person and in His position there is what is unassailable.

J.A.B. "I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age", Matt 28: 20.

R.T. Yes, go on; I was thinking of that verse. What do you say about it?

J.A.B. It was very stabilising for the disciples at that point, was it not? And it goes on into the testimony now.

R.T. That is a very fine touch. It is another of the mountains in Matthew. It has been called the mountain of divine appointment. So keep the appointments; if we keep them we get helped into this area of things. They kept the appointment there, and they saw Him and all power had been given Him in heaven and upon earth. They were to go forth into a position of reproach, but they went forth in the full sense that there was a Man whom they knew, into whose hands all power had been given.

J.S.G. Does the thought of transfiguration convey that His own were introduced to the circumstances that Jesus Himself was accustomed to? He lived in them.

R.T. Yes, I think so. We referred to them in John: they went and abode with Him that day (see chap 1: 39). They would see something of the same things as they saw on the mount here; as was said, it is the Godhead glory shining through the human veil.

We are apt to limit the Lord to these conditions unwittingly. We are apt to limit Him as we know Him in His grace, know Him in the conditions into which He has come, but we must always remember that He is God over all, blessed for ever. The circumstances, the conditions, the grace of His manhood, have not altered who He is, but the wonder of it is that He has brought all the resources of divine love into manhood. There is all the wealth of what is divine shining for us in a Man.

R.W.F. His glory is illimitable, is it not? Do you think we would look to the Father to give us a fresh view of His glory? I was thinking of the service on Lord's day in particular, whether we might, if a word is given at the stage of address to the Lord, wait to hear the Father's voice, that we might have a fresh view of Christ. There can be no limit, can there, to the range of His glories?

R.T. No; 'Every view of Him unfolding, Wakes fresh bursts of joyful praise!' (hymn 83). There will be fresh glories of Christ through all eternity which will wake fresh outbursts of praise. We will then be in perfect conditions, and yet I think there will be fresh apprehensions all the time of the glory of the Man Christ Jesus. In Philippians we see Him in His descending movements, the way that He has gone and how unique He is in it.

E.C.B. The Ephesian scripture in chapter 4 that corresponds to this – He descended but He has also ascended – is "that he might fill all things" (v 10) and in that He becomes exclusive, does He not?

R.T. Yes, I was thinking of that scripture. There can be no thought of a rival, because of the way He has arrived at it, do you mean?

E.C.B. Yes; that is what comes out here. It is all presented apart from any question of sin or of sins, it is just His own movements and the Father's answer to it. It helps us to forget ourselves a bit.

R.T. Yes; it was His movements in love, expressing Himself like this: "subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form".

E.O. Is the setting of this becoming poor that we might be enriched through His poverty (see 2 Cor 8: 9)?

R.T. That verse says "he, being rich, became poor, in order that ye by his poverty might be enriched". That is how He has brought things out to us. But the Man who became poor never ceased to be who He was. Even in these circumstances of a bondman's form He was God in His Person, and there was there in Him, in bondman's condition, what was unique and distinct.

W.J.R.B. Is it brought about peculiarly here that the saints might be thinking one thing?

R.T. Yes. I purposely did not read those verses at the moment; we may speak about them in a minute but I thought we might be affected first of all by the descending movements of Christ.

D.A.B. He did not become an object of the Father's love, did He? He always was. I was thinking of that scripture in Matthew; the voice said "This is my beloved Son", Jesus said "thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world", John 17: 24.

R.T. Yes, that was as to His Person. He loved Him before the foundation of the world, but coming into manhood drew out those affections in a way that marked Him out as distinct from all.

D.A.B. Yes. I was thinking that God's love to us is sovereign. We sing about it being causeless, but it was evoked by what was in Christ, was it not? There was what was in Him substantially that drew out the love of God.

R.T. You get that in John's gospel: "On this account the Father loves me", chap. 10: 17. The way that He went, you may say, caused the heavens to be opened. If earth was silent about Him in these movements of down stooping love, heaven could not remain silent to distinguish who He was in His Person.

C.B. Have you any thought as to "emptied himself"?

R.T. Well, just that it was His own action in love. He did this of His own accord. The One "who, subsisting in the form of God", moved like this. How it drew out heaven's appreciation. Paul is bringing it in in Philippians that it might draw our hearts to Him,- to see how unique He was in His movements of descending love.

E.C.B. So in every one of the downward steps of these verses He is alone. He is in the likeness of men but He is unique in every one of these steps.

R.T. Yes, that is what drew me to the passage, that we are looking here at Christ alone. No one could have any part in Him taking a bond man's form. He was in each of these steps, as you say, alone,

and in it to be an object that draws out our hearts and softens them and makes us impressionable, draws us to the wonder of His Person.

E.P. In the scripture you referred to in John, "On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again", He says "I have received this commandment of my Father" (v 18). Would that be the glory of the obedience that is referred to here?

R.T. You mean in the sense that He says "I have received this commandment of my Father"?

E.P. Yes.

R.T. That is a wonderful thing to think about, that there was a Man here in bondman's form – "humbled himself" – and in it perfectly pleasing and in perfect communion with the Father who is in heaven.

E.C.B. What is even more remarkable about that is that according to Luke He increased in favour with God (see chap 2: 52).

R.T. Yes, you can just think of these things wonderingly. Who He was in His Person! As was said, He was loved from before the foundation of the world, yet in His movements in manhood He called out the Father's fresh appreciation of Him. How He should call out ours as we contemplate these descending movements! And He was never deflected in them. Think of being "tempted of the devil", Matt 4: 1. He was never deflected in these descending movements. The whole power of the enemy's resources were arrayed against Him but He went on in perfect obedience, in perfect accord with the Father's will.

D.A.B. And they did not change Him either, did they? I was thinking of when He said "until the Son of man be risen up from among the dead". The glory they had seen on the mount would remain, would it not? It was not something death would taint or spoil.

R.T. Somebody used to speak about a tried and tested humanity, and you see it here in these steps downward. As was said, it was Jesus alone treading that path, and there is nobody to be compared

with Him, but He is to be an object that draws out our hearts towards Him and makes us impressionable.

E.C.B. The very fact that He became obedient even unto death distinguishes Him, because death is our lot, the lot of every other man. He became obedient even unto death.

R.T. Yes, a very affecting verse, that. I do not know how you understand it, "becoming obedient even unto death". Think of Gethsemane! Think of those moments in the garden. I think there is something there of His becoming obedient, even to death, do you think?

E.C.B. I am sure that is so. We get Gethsemane in Matthew and Mark, but I think you get a distinct impression of His becoming obedient unto death in John's gospel: "as the Father has commanded me, thus I do. Rise up, let us go hence" (chap 14: 31) and it is to the cross.,

R.T. Yes, that is very beautiful. I think Mr Darby comments that in John everything is settled. In the garden everything is settled. He says "Rise up, let us go hence". He goes forward in that perfect obedience, settled in His soul, feeling the weight of it, but obedient unto death.

C.G.H. The more that we are occupied with the blessed Person of the Lord the more the Spirit causes us to take character from Him. It may be in a certain sense to us unconsciously, but it happens, does it not?

R.T. Yes, I think that what you say is good. So you would encourage the brethren to commit this passage to memory. It is good to memorise it all if you can, but I think some of these things are good to read over. As you say, unconsciously, the effect in our minds is that we will become more like Him. Paul writes this that this mind may be in us; not only to be contemplated, not only to be adored, but that some of this attitude may be with us.

R.W.F. There is what is unconscious, and growth is not a conscious matter to us. Do you think there is also in this section what is

deliberate, that the steps taken were deliberate? There was full knowledge on the part of Christ of what they would entail. They were deliberate, and the effect upon us, do you think? is that we are to be deliberate : "Let this mind be in you".

R.T. Yes, and the Lord said "not my will, but thine be done", Luke 22: 42. That was a deliberate committal to a will that He fully understood. We may commit ourselves and we do not understand what the will of God may be, but He, in the full conscious sense that the will of God involved for Him the death of the cross, committed Himself to it. You can understand that drawing out the Father's affections, and that this kind of Man must be exalted. It says "Wherefore also God highly exalted him". As it were, the Lord took these steps down to the end of verse 8 but heaven intervenes. Peter says "whom heaven indeed must receive", Acts 3: 21. It was impossible that He should be held by the power of death.

P.S.W. Could we say, reverently, that it is God's deliberate act highly to exalt Him, and that we are to come into accord with it in bowing the knee to that name, the name of Jesus?

R.T. I think it is to give us strength to commit ourselves to this mind, the going-down mind that God will honour. The readiness to take on this path of committal, obedience, humbling ourselves: God, in due season, will honour. It is a line of things that tests us all as we feel how far short we come, we would all have to feel that; but as we said at the outset, we are looking at Christ alone, something that is far beyond us. But then Paul says "Let this mind be in you" – the attitude of going down. That is how Christ has met the whole question and God has honoured Him in giving Him a name that is above every name.

H.J.T. Why is it God here? We have been enjoying what the Father has done. Is this a wider view, a more public view?

R.T. Yes, I think it is finality. "Wherefore God": there is nobody higher, it is the final matter. There is what the Father has done, and that would be an inward view of things, but I think it is a public, final

matter, that God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name above every name.

E.C.B. It is God and the Man, is it not, not the Father and the Son?

R.T. That is right, and there is nobody to interfere in that. "God highly exalted him, and granted him a name, that which is above every name".

C.B. Would you say that we have to bow the knee before we can use our tongues in that way? We bow to Jesus and then confess.

R.T. Yes, and that is an outward order of things, that we bow the knee, but I think we bow our hearts in the presence of this. That would be the mind: "Let this mind be in you". It means that we bow our hearts in adoration as we see Jesus alone in these movements of love.

E.C.B. I carry the reference made to this leading to what is prophetic. Do you not think this would help us in our prophetic meetings? You may have heard of an occasion of which we have heard, when there was a ministry meeting at which nobody spoke, and they gave out a second hymn and went home, and a brother said 'Could nobody have said anything about Christ?' Do you not think there is more scope for this on Tuesdays?

R.T. Yes; well, we feel very tested on a Tuesday. The prophetic word is maybe in the first four verses. I think he is bringing the atmosphere of the downward movements of Christ to make us amenable and impressionable. Do you think that?

E.C.B. I am sure of that. I have often thought, I can testify to it myself, that if a brother on Tuesday night said 'I have gathered this about Christ today' what a difference it would make. In the scripture referred to in Samuel the prophet said "we will not sit at table till he come" 1 Sam 16: 11.

R.T. It is hard labour trying to work things without Him. The disciples in the boat were rowing and toiling when He was not there but as soon as He came into the boat they were at land. You find that in meetings, and I think we should arrange ourselves more to

look for the Lord coming in, whether it is Tuesday night or whatever night. We should look for the Lord coming in with His own touch. I think it makes room for these opening verses, that if these things are so, Paul almost uses this as a lever in their hearts and he says "fulfil my joy". It is like the prophetic word coming in, that the impress of the love of Christ and His descending movements may cause us to "think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking one thing; let nothing be in the spirit of strife or vain glory, but, in lowliness of mind, each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves". These things will only work as Christ has His place among us, and that would be the burden of Paul presenting it, that these movements of Christ may cause Him to have His place among us, and these things, "thinking the same thing, having the same love", would be the result. We will never reach them any other way.

R.W.F. It is sobering to reflect that according to this section, even the infernal beings will acknowledge the greatness of Christ; how much more those to whom He has endeared Himself.

R.T. They will all have to bow, but I think as He comes in among us there would be a bowing in heart. It would be easy to have the same love, to be joined in soul, to esteem the other as more excellent than ourselves, as we see Christ having His true, unrivalled place among us.

J.S.G. The Lord says about the woman in the Pharisee's house that she "from the time I came in has not ceased kissing my feet", Luke 7: 45.

R.T. Yes; I think we need to remind ourselves in all our meetings that the assembly is for Christ. It is His counterpart. I was thinking about the wife: the assembly is His wife, she is doing everything, arranging everything for Him. It is not her name that is on the door.

All that she is doing is to extol Him and make it easy for Him. That would be our present position, that we are holding things for Him as He comes at the time of love.

LONDON

17 November 1985

Key to initials

(All local unless otherwise stated)

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"DO YE KNOW WHAT I HAVE DONE TO YOU"

R.Taylor

John 13: 3-5, 12-17

I would like, dear brethren, to speak, briefly I trust, of the Lord's question here: "Do ye know what I have done to you?". I would like each of us to bear that question. Maybe you would like to go home today and answer it more fully, write it down. "Do ye know?".

Perhaps it will take a lot of pages as you start to go over it. You know the old hymn: 'Count your blessings... it will surprise you what the Lord hath done'. You might begin that He has forgiven you your sins; that is something He has done for you. I would like to make things a little more personal. We will speak about that what He has done for you. Ah, the day will declare it, beloved, what He has done for us. What He has done for God! What He has done for you, forgiving you your sins! Why should He? Have you ever thought of that? Why should He have forgiven you your sins and left the sins of others upon them? Does it not endear Him to your heart, what He has done for you? Could you say, like some others, that He has done for you what no other one could do? He has. Father, mother, ancestry, money or anything else – He has done for you what no other and nothing could ever do. That is the claim of Christ. There is a great deal that He has done for you which He has done for many others, but I would like to get just a little more personal, if I may, as the Lord would raise this question with you: Do you know what I have done to you? I would like to ask the question. Has it left its mark? Has what He has done to you left its mark? I think we could say it did on these men. The scene here never fails to affect me, that the Lord was going back to His Father. What expectations must have been in His heart! During those thirty-three years He was here in circumstances of humiliation, tasting as He alone could the sorrows and sufferings of humanity, and He is going back to His Father; yet what occupies Him for this short space of time is His own who are in the world. And He lays aside His garments. How affecting that must have been! He takes water, a basin, a towel: how

simple but how affecting, and after He has done it He says "Do ye know what I have done to you?" It left its mark upon these men, I am sure. You could almost say this is the Lord training those who were going to be here to represent Him in the dispensation during His absence, and this is what He does. He does not send them to college, He does not give them indoctrination, an intensive course of study; He takes water, a hand-basin and a towel and He washes their feet and wipes them with the towel, and He says "Do ye know what I have done to you?" Where was the wisdom of this world?

There was Christ impressing upon these persons something that was going to come into expression in the dispensation.

If we could turn to Genesis for a moment I would like to speak about Abraham. Verse 16 of chapter 14 speaks of Abram returning from the conflict and it says "he brought back all the property, and brought again his brother Lot and his property, and the women also, and the people. And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after he had returned from smiting Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, into the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's valley. And Melchisedec king of Salem brought out bread and wine. And he was priest of the Most High God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heavens and earth.

And blessed be the Most High God, who has delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him the tenth of all. And the king of Sodom said to Abram, Give me the souls, and take the property for thyself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up my hand to Jehovah, the Most High God, possessor of heavens and earth, if from a thread even to a sandal-thong, yes, if of all that is thine, I take anything... : that thou mayest not say, I have made Abram rich". He knew what God had done to him, done to him, not just for him, and in the conscious sense of it he refused all that the king of Sodom could offer.

I would like to speak for a moment about the priesthood of Christ, what He has done to you as a Priest. Great resources and wealth met Abram here, Abram the believer, a man of faith, a simple man in many ways. He had been promised the whole earth. What

have you not been promised? What would God not give you today? What is not available for you in Christ? The king of Sodom tries to deflect Abram away, to tempt him with the world, its resources, what it has in the way of education, what it would offer in the way of prospects. Abram, in the conscious sense that the Lord has done something to him, says, You could not add anything to me. That is a very testing thing, very real. Here is a man in humble surroundings and the king of Sodom says to him, You can have all the property for thyself. Abram says, No, I belong to some body better. Could the world add anything to you, beloved? Could the world give you any more satisfaction? Think of this priest that met Abram. "Melchisedec... brought out bread and wine". Oh! what is available in the priesthood of Jesus! "What I have done to you". He set Himself apart as a priest, brought in the resources of bread and wine, bread that would satisfy, that would nourish and strengthen the constitution, and wine that would make glad the heart, speaking of a great system of blessing that is available in the priesthood of Christ. I want to say, it is part of what he has done to you. It is not the priesthood of Christ only as a general idea. The world knows nothing of it. I may say that unexercised believers scarcely know the benefit of it. You have to put yourself in the way, as Abram did here. Melchisedec brought out bread and wine. How ready the Lord is to bring it out to you today, dear friend, young or old. There may be exercises pressing upon your spirit, the world offering some kind of palliatives, maybe just the enemy offering an easier path; what a temptation! Is there a heart that does not feel tempted by it at times in the sorrows of the way? The priesthood of Christ is there bringing out bread and wine. What a priest He is! "Melchisedec, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine". It refers to the Lord in His deity. It is not Aaron that would meet you here about your exercises and wilderness circumstances. This is another touch, like the man from Baal-shalishah. It is Christ coming in with the wealth of heaven, the infinite resources of divine love that no world could ever provide. Abram absorbed it, and when the temptation comes he says, No, you cannot add anything to me. I suppose the king of Sodom might have made him a duke. Melchisedec made him a prince. What a

great line of dignity and royalty Melchisedec brought Abram into!

The priesthood of Christ: I wonder at times how much we know of this kind of priesthood. We cry to God and the Lord, rightly so, about our exercises and our sorrows and our circumstances, but do we know anything about Him bringing us into what we are before God?

Oh! what strength Abram received here. He says "I have lifted up my hand to Jehovah, the Most High God, · possessor of heavens and earth". The king may have said to him, Abram, I do not think you know what you are talking about, you have only a tent. Ah, he says, I have every thing through what He has done to me. He has enriched you, beloved, in a way that the world can never enrich you. He has left His mark upon Abram. He went through in the steps of faith, "the steps of the faith... of our father Abraham", Rom 4: 12.

May we be encouraged, dear brethren, as to what He has done to us in His priesthood, what He has brought out in the way of bread and wine that would nourish us in the midst of trying circumstances, that we may not turn to the world. Can it add anything? It can; it can add something to you, and that is sorrow and grief and distress; but Melchisedec brings bread and wine. He strengthens Abram so that he can refuse, like Moses, the great system of what the world could supply because he knew something that God had done to him.

I would like to read another scripture, in Judges: "The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them; and they said to the olive tree, Reign over us. And the olive-tree said to them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to wave over the trees? And the trees said to the fig-tree, Come thou, reign over us. But the fig tree said to them, Should I leave my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to wave over the trees? Then said the trees to the vine, Come thou, reign over us. And the vine said to them, Should I leave my new wine, which cheers God and man, and go to wave over the trees?", chap 9: 8-13. There is something else that the Lord has done to you; He has set you in the body, the body of Christ. He has done that to you. He has set you in a place where you can function in your measure for the glory and praise of God. The setting here is a man who was mourning the loss

of his brethren, and I trust that is the feeling in every heart here, that we are mourning the loss of our brethren. I never go to a meeting but I miss many. You never travel through this country without passing through places where you used to know some brethren who are no longer available. These are sorrows of the testimony that we should feel and we should carry day by day. Let us never become accustomed to it. This man was feeling it, he was feeling that some of his brethren had been slain, some of his brethren were no longer there, and so he comes to what I want to speak about – the need for the body functioning.

Maybe you are tempted to be out of your place. The enemy brings all sorts of things, he puffs up our minds, and we may function out of our place, but God has set you in the body, in your own place. That is something He has done to you, and may I say that you have a place that nobody else can fill, and please do not try to fill anybody else's place but be with the Lord to know what He has done to you.

What place has He given you? It is a very disturbing thing if the feet should go beyond where the eye may see in the body. What would happen? You would stumble. But the body works so beautifully, the eye sees the path in which the feet tread for safety and for blessing.

So here are persons who are enjoying their place in the body and nothing would tempt them away from it. The trees want to anoint a king over them. What a sad thing that would be! There is one body; the Head of the body is Christ. In that body there are many members, and here is the olive-tree enjoying its place. It is like a believer who knew the touch of the Lord, what He had done to him.

The olive-tree says "Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to wave over the trees? " Oh beloved, our minds are very open at times to the enemy giving us thoughts that may be beyond our place in the body. God has set certain in the assembly, but the body has been tempered together, each in their place to function in glory to God. Then they go to another tree. They say to the fig-tree "Come thou, reign over us". It says "Should I leave my sweetness". What a fine brother that would be! Well, these things are open to you. Desire to be in the body in

your place, whether it is a foot or an ear, or maybe some member that is not seen. Each has its own function "Should I leave my sweetness... ?" – a conscious sense of being there under the direction of the Head. There could be nothing more blessed. I say again, these brothers, these sisters, knew what the Lord had done to them. Then they said to the vine "Come thou reign over us....

Should I leave my new wine, which cheers God and man, and go to wave over the trees? " They speak of persons who could not be upset or moved from the place of functioning in the body. There are many not available to us today and you may have to take on a little more; instead of just being sweetness you may have to take on something of the fatness. There is more to be done. Most of our companies are smaller than they used to be but the body is still to function. The resources from the Head are the same. The numbers enjoying them may be less. In a sense there is all the more to be done. Nehemiah speaks of those who committed themselves to dwell in Jerusalem. Jerusalem in one sense is a public idea where there is breakdown. There is a great deal of outward pressure but somebody says, I will commit myself in the midst of the pressure to fill out my place in the body that Jerusalem may be held in view of the great King. There are people today who are holding things in view of that time about which we sang: 'wider praise in Zion waits for Thee' (hymn 75). What a time it will be! But how is it going to be brought about? It is being brought about by persons today filling out in obscurity their place in the body.

Now there is much more of which we could speak, but these are some things that the Lord has done to you. I would like to return to John 13 ; may you allow the question: "Do ye know what I have done to you?" Having washed their feet He says "Ye call me the Teacher and the Lord, and ye say well... If I therefore, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet". Peter would not forget what the Lord had done to him. You see Peter in the Acts with John as bondmen; indeed all the apostles, if you look at their writings they refer to themselves as bondmen. Peter, John, James, Jude, Paul, all take that place. They

were affected. Affected by what? By the love of Christ. That is what He has done to you, He has loved you, and the impress of that love is to be upon every believer in Christ. May the impress of Christ's love grow with us, dear brethren. "We know that we have passed from death to life. O why? "because we love the brethren", 1 John 3: 14. The impress of the love of Christ was to be on them. How it was set out: He laid aside His garments. Is that how you approach the brethren? The way the Lord corrects the disciples is very interesting; usually it is by a question. They went fishing, a fruitless expedition away from the lord, and He says "Children, have ye anything to eat?" John 21: 5. That is not how I would have done it. I would have said, See what you have done. We would have met it by the rod, would have said, This has to be met, we cannot pass this by; all these things have to be taken up. No, He says "Children, have ye anything to eat?". Everything was met. They said "No". May we learn to be simple, dear brethren. Love gets through all the complications, it gets to the root and it saves and enriches the person. That is how the Lord was instructing them here. He laid aside His garments. Do you do that? Is that how we approach one another. In matters needing to be attended to, do we lay aside our garments? Or do we go armed with all the references to this and to that? If somebody questions it we can say, Oh well, it is on page so-and-so. Can we approach, laying aside our garments? Can we take a wash-hand basin so that that brother says, Well, in the presence of the love of Christ I was wrong. That is what the Lord does. He says, Now that is what you have to do, "I have given you an example that, as I have done to you, ye should do also". What He did to them, the impress of it, never left them. Maybe what He did to me has waned with me, what He did to me in bringing me into this one body. It did not wane with Peter, it did not wane with John. He made them other kind of men. It did not wane with Paul. He says, "what things were gain to me", Phil 3: 7. The Lord did something to Paul, to him personally, that changed his whole way of life and his whole outlook. I say, He has done that to you, He has done it to me. May we allow the impress of it to function among us, for His Name's sake.

LONDON

16 November 1985

"JESUS HIMSELF DRAWING NIGH"

F.C.Mutton

Luke 24: 13-15

What is affecting and impressing one at the moment is this section as to these two disciples who were perplexed, discouraged and disheartened. It says, "Jesus himself drawing nigh, went with them". And so it is, beloved, that in our tests and pressures, and especially at times of sorrow such as this, we have the sense of Jesus Himself drawing nigh and being with us. It does not just say that Jesus drew nigh, but "Jesus himself". Just let us reflect upon that, Jesus Himself. He is spoken of in this gospel as the Son of God, and this was the day of His resurrection. I suppose there are three outstanding days in the history of time; when Jesus was born, and when He died and when He rose from among the dead. This was on one of those great days. A Man had been into death; He says Himself, "and I became dead" (Rev 1: 18), and now on this day He was out of death, and death's power had been broken. Yet these two persons were not yet in the gain of it. How affecting it is that "Jesus himself drawing nigh, went with them". He entered into that whole situation; He listened patiently as they poured out their troubles and perplexities, and then brought in, as this chapter unfolds, the most glorious light as to Himself. Verse 27 says, "And having begun from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself". Later they say, "Was not our heart burning in us as he spoke to us on the way?" (v.32). Then they speak of how He was made known to them in the breaking of bread.

Beloved, the Lord would make Himself known to us at this time in a way in which perhaps we have never known Him before. It is as if He would take advantage of the sorrows and pressures which may bow us down in grief. Though many may sympathize and pray, and many do, and are praying, none can draw near and go with us like Jesus. I love that expression; not only did He draw near, but "went

with them"; went through the whole experience with them, and lifted them out of it in a fresh manifestation of Himself. May that be the experience of every one of us. I am sure such a time as this brings home to us the passing nature of everything here, everything that is earth-bound, and death bound. What have we beyond? As has been said, we have nothing if we do not know a risen and glorified Christ, but as knowing Him we have everything. So these two are lifted out of depression, and doubt and discouragement; their hearts are set on fire, and it says "rising up the same hour, they returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven, and those with them, gathered together", (v 33). They found the comfort now not only of Jesus but of the Christian circle where Christ is everything and in all. The Lord would use this word with one's self or any one of us, so to manifest Himself to us that we retrace our steps, perhaps some wrong steps, some careless steps. He would present Himself to us so that we rise up this same hour and return to where He would have us in the circle of His own, of which He is the centre. May this impression and this experience be ours, beloved – "Jesus himself drawing nigh, went with them". May He go with our beloved sorrowing brethren, not only today but, if we are left here, in what may lie ahead – an unknown experience, a fresh path, but; "Jesus himself drawing nigh, went with them", Nothing could be so blessed, so all-sufficient. May we experience it, for His Name's sake.

ROTHERHAM

18 March 1985

At a burial

THE CHILDREN GROWING UP

How much we wish that there were more incidents of the childhood of Jesus recorded in the Scriptures! His earlier days are covered by the human yet inscrutable simplicity of the record that He "grew and waxed strong in spirit". The "wisdom" of the Boy was seen at the age of twelve when He heard and enquired of the teachers in the temple; His "grace" was shown in subjection to His parents. In later childhood Jesus "advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man".

The generation of children who grew up during the years of the public ministry of the Lord Jesus must have had some precious remembrances of the Master. Perhaps even some of the little ones blessed by Him would remember the wonderful moment. The youth at Nain, brought back to active life by Him would long to grow up, as we all should, in a way that would be pleasing to Him. Then there was the girl of twelve who heard the voice of the Son of God and was raised by Him from a sleep like death. He desired that something to eat should be given to her. What a remembrance she would have every time she gave thanks for food! Too, she would learn that her soul needed to be fed and that Jesus was the food of life also.

These miracles were openly seen, but hidden miracles of the work of God take place with even little ones today by having a personal friendship with Jesus as Saviour. If any older believers should read this I am sure that they could quickly call to mind help that they received from the Lord during their growingup years, and many touching and interesting experiences could be related.

Many children would have had acquaintance with Paul at the various places he visited. At Tyre he had to spend a whole week with the brethren whilst waiting for his ship to sail away. The final scene on the beach must have been very affecting. The fathers with wives and children knelt down on the shore in prayer together with the apostle and his company, whom they afterwards embraced. I

have wondered if the Canaanitish woman and her daughter healed by Jesus lived at Tyre and were at this farewell meeting!

Paul wrote "Children, obey your parents in the Lord". Do you?

J.C.Evershed