

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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Edited and Published by:

E.C.Burr

50 Red Post Hill London SE24 9JQ

"THE HOLY ONE"

John 6: 66-71; 1 John 2: 20; Revelation 3: 7

D.R. It is in mind, beloved brethren, to look together at the thought of the Holy One – "the holy one of God". Peter's confession here, as the brethren well know, is not exactly the subject of revelation; it is the result of experience. It is a fine thing when in our experiences we reach the point where Christ is absolutely essential to us.

In 1 John 2 it is a question of the Holy Spirit – what we have from the Holy One. It is remarkable that John should carry the thought on there, no doubt the result of his experiences with the Lord Jesus. Again, as the brethren know, it is the effect of the teaching of the Holy Spirit, not only the presence of the Holy Spirit but the effect of it, an unction. There is something peculiarly fine in the thought of the unction.

I thought that in Revelation 3 we might just have a touch as to the Lord calling Himself "the holy, the true", particularly having a bearing on our own day, because there has been a wonderful period of recovery; the Lord has shown His power to open, and to keep open, involving conditions in localities which are suitable for the continuance of the service of God. That would lie behind the thought of the Holy One and would have in mind the maintenance of holy conditions amongst the saints. The writer says "and holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord", Heb 12: 14. I thought the Lord's speaking of Himself in this way in Revelation 3 was a very strengthening matter; continuing to the end of the dispensation it would involve that there will be the maintenance in some of the conditions required to maintain God's service.

I thought we could begin with John 6 with a fresh touch as to the indispensability of Christ. Peter's confession is "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal; and we have believed and known that thou art the holy one of God", I think one of the great needs today is what we are; not only what we have but what we are,

and that involves holiness. I think it would enter into Peter's confession at this time.

A.J.E.W. Is there a background in the earlier teaching of chapter 6 as to feeding on Christ, particularly in verse 57: "he also who eats me shall live also on account of me"? The character of life there would be representative of holy conditions.

D.R. Yes. I think this confession is really the result of that kind of feeding. It is more than light as to the Holy One; I think that there has been appropriation. Feeding on His death is presented earlier: "Unless ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man, and drunk his blood, ye have no life in yourselves" (v 53); that is the imperative character of the teaching of His death and feeding upon it; but if we could just help one another to come to the Person and feed on Him, and live because of Him, and have part in the character of life that has this holy condition about it. Peter must have had this impression, and others with him, "that thou are the holy one of God".

W.McK. It is not a matter of information or simply light; the eating makes it a constitutional matter, does it not? It enters into the constitution of the person who is eating.

D.R. That is it. I am glad of your word that it is a constitutional matter. That is really what is in one's heart at this time, that all of us may be exercised to be formed in this kind of constitution, the kind of man for God. A man for God involves the kind of man for God.

There is the kind of man that has had to be removed in the cross; we know that man's history in our own lives, what he is like: but to get to what is substantial in our own histories as believers, and to find that we begin to understand the kind of man that subsists before God, is I think involved in the eating that you refer to. Holiness is a substantive line of things.

E.C.B. Is this comparable to eating the oblation? It says it is most holy of Jehovah's offerings, but then it is to be eaten. God has His portion but so have the priests.

D.R. Very good. I wondered about that; I did not want to bring in too many scriptures, but even after the failure, the offering of strange

fire, God brings them back to that, to eat of the oblation that was left (see Lev 10: 12). Thank God there is an oblation that is left, and we are left, we are the sons who remain through God's grace, and I think this is the kind of food that is required to maintain a condition and a constitution that is suitable to God. As Christians we need to have an increased sense of what is suited to God. God has catered for us and our blessing, but it is a moral requirement of our own days that we should have a real increased appreciation and understanding of what suits God. The psalmist must have had it when he said "holiness becometh thy house, O Jehovah, for ever" Ps 93: 5. Do you not think?

E.C.B. I am sure that is right. I have wondered myself recently whether feeding on the fine flour and the oblation would produce more consistency in each of us.

D.R. Yes, evenness; Luke speaks about that – "the holy thing". Think of the holy ground that Luke covers in his writings, beginning with that thought; "the holy thing", Luke 1: 35. As we have been taught, and as I am sure we know in some measure in experience with Him, the Lord was substantially holy, holy through and through. One uses these words carefully, but He was thoroughly holy, there was no possibility of defilement in Him. As we know, the thought applies to Him even in the grave, as it says: "neither wilt thou allow thy Holy One to see corruption", Ps 16: 10. It refers to the Lord's substantive holiness, holiness in His manhood.

J.M. Do we come to that, as you said earlier, by way of experience? I was interested recently in reading where some one said as to the great movements of the testimony – the recovery. of justification by faith, and what Mr Darby had as to the light of the Head in heaven and the body on earth – that it was received not exactly by revelation but by experience. It seems as though the Spirit of God is calling attention to that line, because what is going through is what is in experience in the souls of the saints, do you think?

D.R. I think the experience of it helps you to stand by it. The man of John 9 says "One thing I know" (v 25); he had something by

experience that he could stand by. Satan is attacking, (there is always the possibility of an attack of Satan, we should never be lacking vigilance as to that) but I think what is needed to meet every attack and maintain what is for God is this substantive line in the saints.

J.M. Paul writes to Timothy about disputes of words and that a bondman ought not to contend – a line of things which is going to achieve nothing – but what will hold today is what is in the souls of the saints by way of experience of the truth. Do you think that is what is needed at the present time?

D.R. That is what I am feeling, and the truth is never better seen than when it is seen in persons. The truth does not need exaggeration to verify it. We should be careful not to use a kind of exaggerated line of things. Holiness is a substantive line of things that speaks for itself. Obviously Peter and John and others were aware of that as in touch with the Lord. It is the Minister of the sanctuary. What impressions must have been conveyed to them in their association with the Lord!

E.H.W. Would Peter have entered somewhat into this experience when he says "we have believed and known that thou art the holy one of God"? Although he had not yet received the Holy Spirit he was in company with the Lord up to this point, and he had come to it in his soul that He was "the holy one of God". I wonder if each of us has arrived at that, if we have believed and known. Would that be conscious knowledge?

D.R. Very good; yes, it is experimental knowledge, and I think we have known it in our own experiences, that it is a knowledge that comes through experience, and there is nothing that replaces it. As to what you say about Peter not having the Holy Spirit, one thing to remember is that the Lord did for the disciples what the Holy Spirit does for us. So they were not at a loss in not having the Spirit at this time; they had the Lord.

E.H.W. So that having that experience Peter and those with him were among those who companied with Him still and were not

among those who went away.

D.R. Yes, the Lord became indispensable to them; to be very simple, they could not do without Him. What a fine state amongst the saints, amongst persons like ourselves the Lord is indispensable to us! It is not to what but to whom: "to whom shall we go?".

A.J.E.W. Is it significant that the Lord puts the question to the twelve, not just to Peter, but Peter answers and uses the pronoun 'we'; "we have believed and known that thou art the holy one of God". Does it not point to the divine thought of a company in which this holy line of things is entered into and we might say shared, and mutually understood in our links together?

D.R. John goes on to show in chapter 20 that the testimony is committed to a heavenly company. It is transferred from the nation which had a certain testimony to bear relative to God – the nation of Israel – but in John 20 the Lord transfers the witness to a heavenly company, that is to the "we" of this chapter, persons who had fed on Christ together. One of the greatest privileges we have is occasions similar to this when we can feed together on the holy manhood of Christ; it has formative character and relates to our constitutions.

J.McK. Do you think the fact that it says "we" means that Peter not only had an apprehension clearly of the glory of Christ personally but a right apprehension of what was in the saints, a right understanding of what was in substance there?

D.R. Yes. I would like to hear what you say about it but I rather think that this kind of experience necessitates the company. The e is what we can enjoy individually in our links with the Lord, and that is very precious – would that we were more aware of these precious links – but there is a certain line of things which requires the company of the saints. I believe that is what Peter is indicating here that "we" is a collective idea, do you not think?

J.McK. Yes, the allusion here is to the priest; Aaron was anointed first, but then he was anointed in relation to the system.

D.R. Yes, that is Leviticus 8. The whole system is anointed, beginning, as you say, with the anointing of Aaron, but the system is anointed, involving the saints. So when we are in the company of the saints we want to be respectful, freed from the spirit of argument the spirit of dispute, and to realize that we are in a holy company.

And is my presence adding anything to it? Am I such as can fit in in the company of holy ones, persons who have fed together and can feed together on the Holy One of God?

R.T. If we go away we are really saying that everything has broken down, are we not? But as we come to see the Holy One of God we see One who can sustain the persons and sustain the system in accord with God's service.

D.R. That is good, because as we come to 1 John 2 we see that that leads into what is fixed – abiding in Him, abiding in the truth and abiding in God, and He abiding in us and the Father abiding in us. It is a substantial line of holiness which leads into a fixed order where the saints are in relationship with God.

T.J.B. Is that what the Holy One of God would suggest, a divine order of things for God which is centring in Christ?

D.R. Yes. As we know, it has some reference to the Lord's position as Minister of the holy places. The figure is there in the old, but it could never be really filled out until the new had been established in the light of Christ's death and resurrection and ascension. Think of all that He fills out now for God in a final way; it is "the holy one of God", the One who has secured everything in suitability for God.

E.C.B. Would we understand how Peter and the other disciples had found holiness in Jesus attractive? Do you wish to go away? "Thou hast words of life eternal" is what meets the need on our side. "Thou art the holy one of God" is something that attracts us.

D.R. Yes, it is as if it reaches a root in them. The disposition of the persons is involved in what the Lord says. I think the Lord is touching a root in them. As we know, John deals with the root of matters. It is a great thing in our histories as believers to be able to touch the very roots of our origins. I was affected recently in reading

a letter of Mr Taylor's in which he spoke of an old sister who had just died in New York, and at the end she had obviously been affected in her mind, but he referred back to the value of her days and what had been in her, and he said: 'The great comfort is the divine root was in her'. I think the Lord is touching the divine root here in these persons; they could not go away, the divine root was in them, and it was being worked out substantially in their lives in association with Christ.

E.C.B. When you speak of this being come to by. experience, is that our experience of Christ? It is not so much our experience of ourselves, although our experience of Him will lead us to experience in relation to ourselves.

D.R. It is, I think, the value of a company where the Holy Spirit is free, where there is liberty to feed together on the holy manhood of Christ. Christendom, as far as. I can see, has disqualified itself from the line we are on, disqualified itself on the line of unholiness and become a mixture of all sorts of things. There are real believers there and you value that, but we should I believe be exercised to maintain amongst ourselves (and that is John's word again – 'yourselves') an area where we can feed on the preciousness and holiness of Christ. I think that is a substantive line of things.

J.M. This thought of Him sustaining things is all-embracing, is it not? The words of eternal life would sustain them in the wilderness where death was, but then, as you say, as the anointed Priest He sustains the whole system; and then as the Prince of the princes of the Levites; He is sustaining the whole service here levitically, is He not? As the Minister of the sanctuary He is sustaining everything for God.

D.R. Yes, so He is enough for every circumstance. Eternal life satisfies every moral need in the believer. We come back to the wilderness, but for a moment we can touch the joy and power and sweetness of eternal life. We find ourselves fully satisfied in this blessed One; we have it in Him. That was Mr Raven's teaching, that all is in Him; He is indispensable to us. But then He is equal for

more than that, He is qual for the whole region of things in which God finds His satisfaction Men are satisfied but God is satisfied.

E.C.M. In Hebrews the apostle speaks of holy brethren: "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling", chap 3: 1. Would that bear on what you have in mind? I was thinking of John's line where the Lord says: "If I have said the earthly things to you, and ye believe not, how, if I say the heavenly things to you, will ye believe? " John 3: 12.

D.R. I think there is the idea of what is holy in a positional sense; we might be positionally holy even as the children of believers are viewed; even before they are converted, as in the household they are viewed as positionally holy. But I think what this indicates, and also your remark as to partakers of the heavenly calling, is that the saints have come into a line of substantive holiness.

A.J.E.W. Speaking of the levitical side which you touched, is there a link with the in-breathing in the later part of the gospel, breathing into them Holy Spirit and saying, "as the Father sent me forth, I also send you", John 20: 21? Is not that to convey that this holy line of things, you might say, springs straight through into the whole service that would follow?

D.R. I thought that; He is really committing the whole testimony into the hands of the heavenly company. The in-breathing involves the infusing into them of His very own Spirit, the life of Christ. It is really life of Himself, the action of the last Adam, a making-alive Spirit.

B.W.W. And there is nothing anywhere that can compare with that. We know the back ground for this confession. As to going away, there is nothing to which I could go away anywhere in the world which could possibly compensate for what is available to me, and for what we may – I suppose we can say we do – enjoy in some measure.

D.R. Just so. I think it is a fine thing just quietly to sit together. As I said, the truth needs no exaggeration humanly to support it but as we are right inwardly and right with the Lord and the Spirit we can sense and appreciate that Jesus is absolutely essential to us. I

believe that the word most expressive of Christianity is what is said in the gospel: "Jesus alone with themselves", Mark 9: 8. That is their affections, their interests, their minds, their whole being absorbed with that blessed Man. Who would want to go away?

B.W.W. And who is the recorder of those words? Is it not Mark?

D.R. Just so, that is good.

C.J.H.D. Is there not a link, beyond the wilderness experiences with the heavenly line between John 6 and John 20? He says in John: "If then ye see the Son of man ascending up where he was before?" (v 62), and that proved to be the test in the chapter, the heavenly line; but the company did actually see Him ascending up where He was before. You have pressed the gain of the company in John 20 where He stood in the midst, but then in the Acts they actually saw Him, He was taken up from their eyes.

D.R. Quite so, after having companied with Him for forty days.

Think of the preciousness of that, in a circle into which the Lord had complete liberty to come in and go out and assemble with them.

Assembling is not a formal matter, it involves holiness; it is a substantive matter, and if I am to fit into the assembling of the saints it must be that I have power morally to leave certain things behind me so that I fit into the circle of the saints. It says of Asher that his foot was dipped in oil and he was acceptable to his brethren (see Deut 33: 24). That is the kind of person who fits into the circle of this company.

C.J.H.D. And is it not good that we should ask ourselves after an experience which we may have tomorrow morning, What have we seen?

D.R. Just so, and in the language of Peter we can lay hold of that, and we can say that we have believed and we have known. It is a further confirmation of what is already in your soul as to the indispensability of Christ.

D.E.R. We may think that we are near, and that we would not go away, and yet we might be further away than we think we are. Is

practical holiness the way to be preserved?

D.R. I think that; it requires this inward line that holiness suggests. It is helpful to see that holiness is in contrast to moral confusion and uncleanness; that is what marks the whole of professing Christendom. The way clear of it is not only an external way; it is an internal way it is what is in myself. We do not speak presumptuously in saying that but I think it is true nevertheless. It is what we are as formed, as our brother said, in our constitution.

J.W. Does this inward side you speak of stem from obedience to the truth? Scripture speaks of purifying your souls by obedience to the truth (see 1 Pet 1: 22). I was thinking of the exercises in Romans 6 as to obedience, righteousness and holiness; is that the way we are purified inwardly?

D.R. I think it requires that from our side. What the disciples would see here was One who was completely free from these kind of adjustments. From our side it requires the exercise of righteousness, the judicial estimate of all around you, and the judicial estimate of yourself; that is the requirement of the exercise of righteousness, and I think it leads to holiness. Along with the exercise of righteousness is the development of our links with divine Persons; one would value the help of the brethren but I think that our links with God are absolutely imperative in the formation of holiness.

J.W. These persons could not continue with the Lord apart from holiness; the test here was continuance with Him.

D.R. They could not. The way to continue with the Lord is to be like Him. These men were really becoming like Him.

W.McK. Verse 57 of John 6 is very important in that connection. It says: "As the living Father has sent me" – the living Father sent Me – "and I live on account of the Father, he also who eats me shall live also on account of me". There is a note to that which points out that the whole thing finds its origin in Him. It is a heavenly conception, and the feeding on Him is feeding on what has come out of heaven. What would you say?

D.R. That is very fine, I could not add to it. The note says 'I live by reason of his being and living'.

W.McK. That is a very wonderful statement, is it not? My living is because He lives. So Christianity is a living state of things from beginning to end.

D.R. We take on His features, we begin to manifest the features of another kind of man, and that is really the body of Christ. It brings us to the collective side. The body of Christ is for the- display of that kind of man; it is no place for opinions or arguments or reasonings or disputings; it is the area where this kind of man is in display, and it is practical, not theoretical; it is substantive. John in his epistle speaks about that which our eyes have seen and our hands handled concerning the word of life (see 1 John 1: 1).

E.C.B. When you related our growing in holiness to our knowledge of divine Persons, is it a question whether we understand what is suitable for the presence of God, and even of God as revealed?

D.R. Yes. I think what our brother said is very fair, that it involves the exercise of righteousness, involves our ability to judge what is around and what is within, but I think also it involves nearness to God. Most of us have to be brought to it as a result of discipline.

What we fail to do ourselves God in His wonderful grace and goodness brings us to in discipline, and it says that without it none shall see the Lord (see Heb 12: 14). Holiness is really the end in that way of all God's disciplinary ways with us.

E.H.W. It says here "that many of his disciples went away back and walked no more with him", but the inference with Peter and those with him is that they continued to walk with Him, and that is in relation to what you said, that they were suitable to Him and He, speaking reverently, to them.

D.R. Following Christ is not merely an action of faith – it is that – but following Christ becomes really a question of being like Him, so we are going the same way as He is going.

E.H.W. Yes. I was thinking of the importance of knowing that we are with Him in all the journey, therefore being suitable to Him, and pleasurable to Him too. What must it have been to the Lord to find even only a few able and suitable to walk with Him.

D.R. Yes. I feel that there is no hope of pursuing, and there is no hope of seeing where the Lord is in matters, outside of holiness; it says, "without which no one shall see the Lord", and I would judge that that would involve, as we say, Where is the Lord in this exercise? The answer to it is that without holiness no one shall see the Lord. So that in a sense in God's goodness and God's grace He puts the whole matter back on ourselves, and He would say, Where is your holiness? If you want to see where the Lord is in a matter, where is your holiness? It is not a matter for older persons only; it is an energetic and beautiful thing. David speaks about the beauty of holiness (see Ps 29: 2, A.V.), and I have seen it in young people, thank God. We come in touch with it in the very earliest understanding we have of the gospel, as Romans would teach us: "according to the Spirit of holiness", chap 1: 4. The element of it is there in the glad tidings. Say more.

E.C.B. The end is the holy city out of which everything unsuitable has gone by way of history and discipline and divine ways: all the history has produced substantial holiness.

D.R. I read a touch in ministry linking "the holy thing" and "the holy city". We need to be careful because "the holy thing" never required any formation, He was essentially holy, but on our side we need formation, we require what is moral to be worked out. Think of "the holy thing", the fabric of that humanity; then you see the holy city and it is of the same holy fabric. To see that makes the exercises worthwhile.

E.C.B. Holiness is what God has brought before us once innocence has been lost; but the losing of innocence has required all the issues of righteousness to be resolved, but the end is holiness.

D.R. Just so. It is most affecting in that way that, even as He came under God's judicial dealings in the cross, prophetically the Lord

Jesus could say "thou art holy, thou that dwellest amid the praises of Israel", Ps 22: 3. What an impression that is intended to leave on all of us that the Lord should say such words at such a time.

M.J.W. I would like you to say more about the next scripture relative to what you are saying about the formation of this fabric; because we often think of the unction as something which discerns what is wrong, which of course it is, but it is much more broad in its scope than that. Perhaps you could say more about not just the presence of the Spirit, but I think you said the teaching of the Spirit.

D.R. I think it is the effect of the presence of the Spirit. We may rejoice in the Spirit's presence but then what effect has it? What effect has His teaching? I understand that the idea of the unction is the rubbing in of the thing; the anointing is more external. It is the same line of things but I think the unction is the thing rubbed in (as you take an ointment and rub it in) until it really becomes part of your moral being. Now that is how the truth is to be taken on substantially, not merely into your mind, because it might be lost some day if the mind fails, but into yourself, into your being. It is the truth, I think, absorbed into the being as the effect of the teaching of the Holy Spirit. What do you think?

M.J.W. This teaching is really the rubbing in or the formation of what is objective in the person; you never lose sight of what is objective, do you, because of this rubbing in?

D.R. No, the pattern is always needed: "And see that thou make them according to their pattern, which hath been shewn to thee in the mountain", Exod 25: 40. At the end of Exodus it says that Moses finished all the work and then God anoints the system, as though He claims the whole thing for Him self; but the pattern is so essential. I believe that the greatest error in the years that we have so much sorrow about, and the years of the formation of a system that was quite unlike the holy city, was the departure from the pattern. I say that quite calculatedly; it was departure from the pattern and the setting up of something that was not really in keeping with the divine

pattern at all. So what was formed was faulty and could not have part vitally in Christianity; God had to come in and judge it.

A.J.E.W. Jehovah says to Moses: "Come up to me into the mountain, and be there" (Exod 24: 12); he was to be in a certain environment for a protracted period of time in view of receiving that pattern. The whole set of conditions that marked the presence of God would be constantly affecting him as he took on the pattern. Do things work that way with us?

D.R. That is very fine, and I think would bear also on the Lord's selection of the twelve; there He was about to select twelve men, you might say to witness to the pattern. The matter lay so great in the Lord's heart that He spent the whole night in prayer (see Luke 6: 12). I think that is like Moses in the presence of God. Think of the Lord, the Holy One of God, spending the whole night in prayer in view of selecting twelve who would carry forward the testimony of the pattern. What has been committed to us is very great; I would not like to see it being destroyed by frivolities and skirmishes. It is so great and so wonderful that it requires this holy state. The Lord understood that – a very brief prayer in relation to the raising of Lazarus – "thou always hearest me" (John 11: 42) – but a whole night spent in relation, you may say, to the passing on of the testimony of the pattern to twelve men. So it is a very great matter that has been committed into our hands, and I think we need to learn not to trifle with it.

J.M. Moses' being in the presence of God and of the pattern affected his own spirit, so that while he could stand for the truth – he came down from that mountain as a warrior – his spirit in relation to the brethren was always maintained, indeed he was said to be the meekest man in all the earth.

D.R. Yes, what lessons Joshua would learn from Moses. At one time Joshua finds some one else prophesying and he says "My lord Moses forbid them! " (Num 11: 28); he did not understand the spirit of Moses. Joshua was marked by partisanship there, he needed to be adjusted. Then in Joshua 5 you see that he has not yet the full

gain of that experience: he says, Whose side are you on, for us or for our enemies? The answer is, Neither. I think what you see there is the exercise of the holy one of God; it would bring Joshua round to a clear and unmixed view of the course of the testimony. It was the testimony of the land and it requires a clear and unmixed view for that.

T.J.B. Is that why we get the reference to knowing all things, which would not only be negative in the sense of being able to discern what is not right but would also involve penetration by the Spirit? I was struck in the earlier scripture with "believed and known"; it is not just a question of what we believe but also a question of what we have reached or have knowledge of in a right sense.

D.R. Yes, it is not a question of knowing all the terms; most of us would be excluded if it were; but I think it is the intuitive knowledge of a true Christian state. We are taught that Romans 8 brings us to the value of a true Christian state, an inward state involving not only the indwelling of the Spirit, as we have been saying, but the effect of the indwelling of the Spirit in the person, and I think it is in that that this knowledge lies.

R.T. Do you think the effect of the unction or the rubbing in is seen in Peter's subsequent life, the way he preaches in the Acts for example, and the way he speaks in his epistle about Christ: "leaving you a model that ye should follow in his steps", 1 Pet 2: 21?

D.R. That is good, say some more.

R.T. The rubbing in: He has left us a model that we should walk in His steps; He did no sin, no guile was in Him, He reviled not again. It is the Holy One coming out, is it not?

D.R. So we have been created in Christ Jesus for good works, as the scripture says (see Eph 2: 10). What are the good works? Just exactly the things that have already been displayed in Christ, and we now have to continue in that line. We see through the teaching of holy men that it involved what had been set out in holy display in the life of Jesus, and now to be continued in those, as you said, who have the unction from the Holy One.

E.C.M. What would you say about what Peter says: "thou hast words of life eternal"? I was thinking of your reference to the forty days in which they were with the Lord after He was risen. That was a wonderful experience and effect; they were out of the world. Eternal life has been referred to which I take it belonged to the land. I wondered about these words of eternal life, as to whether the Lord would communicate something during His time with them in that forty days.

D.R. I think that is good. The words of eternal life involve that the Lord has the detail of it, so He has what you need and what I need. He has the whole detail of eternal life; He can meet the whole situation that has arisen through human necessities, because that is the idea of eternal life. It stands in relation to our needs humanly; sonship, as we know, is to meet God's need. But I think eternal life would involve that the Lord has the power to work the whole thing out in detail in relation to what each individual might need. Do you think so?

E.C.M. Yes, I do, eternal life is heavenly, it involves heavenly relationships.

D.R. Yes, and I think too it must involve what the Lord is Himself – holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners. I think that is the way eternal life would lead us.

R.T. Without any reference to independency, does this suggest that we always have a point of reference to guide us?

D.R. I think that is good. I have a feeling that it involves a state of a subdued character amongst the saints where we can be together; as Paul says to the Thessalonians: "seek earnestly to be quiet" (1 Thess 4: 11), that is quiet in our spirits, and in that way we can provide an unhindered liberty for the Holy Spirit.

R.T. For a long time we looked for an external point of reference, and that is still abroad, but is this not an internal point of reference so that we are not in confusion, not left not knowing what to do? It says "ye have".

D.R. Yes, I think that is very fine, we have it as part of the income that the Lord Jesus has given us. I understand that that really is the teaching of John 20, that the Lord takes account of their status and provides them with an income which is equal to their status, so we have it.

E.C.B. What was just said as to an internal point of reference in us all must be connected with the unity of the Spirit, must it not?

D.R. Just so; so it is not human agreement. It is not the principle of amalgamation; it is not the principle of sinking differences, because that is merely open brethernism, and we should eschew these things, but it is the unity of the Spirit. Think of what God has wrought in new creation in each one of us, because new creation is a subjective operation of the Holy Spirit. I think the point of unity therefore that lies in each one is relative to the Holy Spirit, and I think this idea of unction is the working out in teaching of that very thing.

J.McK. You have expressed the concern that this should not be spoiled, and I wondered whether committing ourselves to this line of things ensures divine protection for us.

D.R. That is good; there is a protective idea in the unction, is there not?

J.McK. You have mentioned the scripture which refers to the Lord Himself: "neither wilt thou allow thy Holy One to see corruption" (Ps 16: 10); and then you get a reference in Psalm 105: "touch not mine anointed ones" (v.15). I wondered whether what is lacking perhaps is committal on our side to this line of inward quality, and therefore we often find ourselves exposed unnecessarily.

D.R. Something that struck me recently, in looking into the beginnings of the recovery, was the fibre of the men God used, and one was tested as to whether in some measure the fibre of manhood remains. It is not the ability merely to state the truth clearly. I think the main requirement is this condition of holiness, involving the fibre of humanity that is required to continue what is suited to God. I think that was seen in Mr Darby and Mr Wigram and others. You get the sense, in reading some of these earlier letters particularly, of the

quality and fibre of manhood that was in these men at that time. If we depart from that, or if we fail in the exercise to continue it, I think we bring sorrow upon ourselves; we will reap disaster and become like Christendom.

J.McK. To refer back to your reference to Asher, in Deuteronomy 33 what it actually says is, let him: "And let him dip his foot in oil" (v 24), as if the exhortation and exercise were to be his to do it.

D.R. Very good, do it, dip your foot in oil. I think it is a fine thing to do before any of our assemblings to make sure our foot has been dipped in oil. An old brother, now with the Lord just a year or so ago, told me of a brother who was a very awkward man and caused his brethren a great deal of sorrow; he was always rising up and bringing in matters that gave the brethren much concern. Mr Taylor came to the locality (the brother at that time was absenting himself from the assemblings of the saints) and he expressed a desire to go and see him. They went, and Mr Taylor and the brother had some conversation, but he was very rude and very critical of the brethren, and Mr Taylor quoted that scripture to him saying, I have only one word for you, dear brother, Dip your foot in oil and make yourself acceptable to your brethren. It is a fine thing when you can fit in to the holy company of the saints.

J.McK. It also says that "Asher shall be blessed with sons": God will see to the continuance of that.

D.R. Just so, in fact the note says 'more than sons'; that is Anna, she was more than a son.

S.D.K.R. Would you say something as to how practically we dip our foot in oil?

D.R. My own feeling is (I would like to hear what you say) that it would involve communion with the Holy Spirit. I feel there is a great need for brothers and sisters to have communion particularly with the Holy Spirit as to our assemblings, and I think in that way we dip our foot in oil. You ask for something practical; why should we not be intimate with the Holy Spirit? We have an unction from the Holy One. I would judge that the Holy One is the Holy Spirit.

S.D.K.R. That would give us a link with the anointed system, would it not, coming from the hand of the Holy One?

D.R. Very good; it is really the workings of the anointed system and this Holy One giving it unction, giving it meaning, giving it validity.

What would our assemblings be if we had not reference to the Holy Spirit?

S.D.K.R. Do you think, dipping our foot in oil, would have a mollifying effect? I do not mean being unrighteous, but you referred to that case with Mr Taylor; would not a person who had dipped their foot in oil have a soothing effect spiritually?

D.R. There is no power in rudeness; the power lies in what I am; power lies in holiness. It says of the Lord: "according to the Spirit of holiness" (Rom 1: 4); that is the effect you are speaking of. The power is what the man is in himself; that is where the power lies, and I think that is the result of intimacy with the Holy One.

A.J.E.W. The verse previous to the one you read in 1 John 2 is very significant: "They went out from among us, but they were not of us" (v 19). That seems to be calling attention to the lack of the vital side of things in holiness which you are speaking of, and this is said to the little children too. I thought at least it showed us that this is fundamental to what properly belongs to Christianity.

D.R. We are not talking of a grade that lies beyond any of us, we are talking of something that involves us all, every Spirit-indwelt Christian; it lies within the reach of all of us. What you say is most striking; they were not of us. I would judge that is a holy company, not a presuming company but a holy company.

I felt in Revelation 3 that this reference to the Lord Himself would have a peculiar encouragement for our own day because, as we know, Philadelphia involves the period of recovery, the period that we actually live in; it is one of the scriptures that has a direct bearing on it. Is it not attractive that the Lord should speak of Himself thus? "These things saith the holy, the true" as if in that there is the assurance to us that there will be support for the

maintenance of the holy conditions that are required for the filling out of God's service right to the end.

E.C.B. Is this like Josiah having the holy ark brought in in revival (see 2 Chron 35: 3)?

D.R. Very good, say more.

E.C.B. I do not think that that reference occurs again, but he had holy men to bring in the holy ark. I wondered if Jesus was really presenting Himself like that in this church which speaks not only of revival but of what is precious to Christ that has gone right through.

D.R. So the test is our consistency with "the holy, the true". Are we consistent with that? These holy things are never surrendered into unholy hands; God will maintain them Himself and I believe the idea is that where there are holy hands He will see to it that these things are available to us.

W.J.R.B. It links up with the end, does it not that He is the root and offspring of David? I thought it would emphasize what you are saying, that there was that in a God which was peculiarly pleasurable to divine Persons.

D.R. That is very good, because we know that what God reaches in David is the point of greatest refinement in the whole of His dealings in the Old Testament. He reaches a man who is after His own heart, and that man inaugurates, in type, a service that is completely delightful to God, a holy service. So what the Lord speaks of here is very suggestive: "the key of David". The whole of the essential character of the day of recovery we are in centres around the truth of the Supper and the service of God linked with the Supper. Many Christians have not that light; they do not see the connection between the Supper and the service of God. Some companies of Christians have something at the end of a sermon, when they supposedly celebrate the Lord's supper, but there is no reference to what is for the pleasure of God. "The holy, the true" really stands related to this great order of things that the Supper introduces us into. It is an order of things that lies precious to the heart of God. The Lord here is set to maintain that.

J.W. Would you include in this what has been opened up in the temple as to the service of God? I was thinking of your reference to holiness. Does it not require holiness for the temple to function? To enter into this in a vital way we owe much to what has come out in the temple.

D.R. Yes; in 1 Corinthians Paul raises that very matter with them as to knowing that they are temple of God, that God's Spirit dwells in them (see chap 3: 17). Obviously much adjustment was needed, but I think it is reached, because when you come to 2 Corinthians it speaks of the temple of the living God. Paul adds that touch, not only temple, but "for ye are the living God's temple" (chap 6: 16), and I think that would be an area of holiness and life in which the truth can freely come out. We are to value that..

D.E.R. So would this lead to that spiritual experience which chapter 4 verse 1 speaks of. A door is opened and John has that experience in heavenly places.

D.R. Very good, it is *opened*. It is an action that the Lord has taken in our own day. Do not let us have the glory of it beclouded in our minds, and may our actions be in the light of it, that the Lord has *opened* a door. He has done that as a result of great divine activity; it was not exactly an exercise of man; men were found to be faithful in the movement, but the movement was a divine one. The Lord Himself has opened it and it remains as an opened door. The test for us is consistency with what the Lord has done.

D.E.R. And whether we are ready to go through that door.

D.R. Yes, and whether we are able to go through it. We might desire to and yet be unable for it. Holiness is really the qualification to be able to go through, and I am tested by what I am saying.

T.J.B. Is it significant that the Lord addresses Himself to Laodicea as "faithful and true" (v.14) but to Philadelphia as "the holy, the true".

Would that illustrate what you are saying, that it involves that conditions are available and suitable for the knowledge of the Lord as holy and true and what proceeds from that knowledge?

D.R. If we could only have an increased understanding of how the Lord appreciates and values such conditions! Laodicea brings out His feelings where the conditions are absent; one of the most outstanding references negatively to the holiness of the Lord's humanity is that He says "I am about to spue thee out of my mouth" (v 16). I think that is a reference to the holy character of the humanity of Christ repulsed by unholy conditions in the profession, but we need to remember how much the Lord values it where there are measures of holiness in local companies.

E.C.M. Does it link with the way the Lord refers to Himself at the end of Revelation, as "the root and offspring of David"? I wondered whether, as to the offspring, there was that which was in keeping with "the holy, the true"; and, following your line which I think is vital, we should understand that. You used the word fibre (I think it is a good word); there was that in the offspring. The root, of course, refers to His deity, but it is remarkable that the Lord should refer to Himself in that way as the root and the offspring.

D.R. He is the pattern of everything for God and for the believer. We understand clearly that He was His own root in manhood; Mary was a vessel used but she conferred nothing on the Lord. He was His own root in that way; that is important teaching. Nevertheless, what we find in Him is the pattern of this holy substantive line that the Holy Spirit would help you and me into, so that what is true in Him is to be true in me.

E.H.W. There seem to be three reasons for this opened door: "because thou hast a little power, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (v 8). Is it as we keep these three things that the door is kept open?

D.R. And what it comes down to is what you are, not merely what you say. What we say is important enough. We should say right things – there is no excuse for us saying wrong things – we have the Holy Spirit, and we have conditions, thank God, in which the temple of God can operate; it is sometimes limited by what we are as grieving the Spirit and quenching Him, but nevertheless it is there.

But it comes down in its essential character to what you are and what I am.

E.H.W. In this very verse it is "because thou hast a little power, and hast kept my word"; that would indicate what you are saying. It is what we are.

D.R. Yes, a substantive line of things.

W.McK. Would you say another word about the link between the Lord's supper and the service of God? It is a very important matter.

D.R. I think it is one of the great lights that has shone in the recovery, to show clearly the link between the Supper and the saints coming together to celebrate it, and then the Lord coming in and giving us entrance as the Minister of holy places into the service of God. I would like to hear what the brethren have to say about it. We come together on moral grounds in the acceptance of the ground on which that the death of Christ has placed us. That is a very precious thing because it means that we can come together in a day like our own, as this scripture would envisage, when so much has become broken up and split up, completely free from sectarian ground; that is, the ground on which we come together is a moral one established in the death of Christ. The Lord, as coming to us, transfers us from moral ground to spiritual ground – spiritual and heavenly ground. He takes His place amongst the saints as the Minister of the sanctuary and He is free to open up this great region in which God is served in holiness. I would be glad to hear what you have to say about it.

W.McK. I have thought of this quite a lot and it is wonderful to be liberated in the Lord's supper; it sets the saints in absolute liberty, and that links on with the service of God.

D.R. It does. It makes it worth while going through exercises of judging yourself, judging your motives as you assemble, relating yourself to what God has done judicially in the death of Christ. In coming together the first thing we have is the saints, then we have the emblems, then we have the Lord, and then there is the opening up of the ground that is heavenly and spiritual. If the moral side was continued unduly we might have reason for shame, but the word is

"he is not ashamed to call us brethren" (Heb 2: 11); that is that in the light of His own work the Lord can view us as His brethren. The exercise on my part and yours is, are we consistent with that? That is where holiness is required.

C.J.H.D. Is there a link with the Lord having the key of David in the fact that David order ed the service? He set up the service which was filled out under Solomon, but David had the ordering of it; and is there not a link with what the Lord has done in the recovery, that He has- brought back in power an administration of blessing which results in the service being enriched?

D.R. Just so. What do you think would lie in the Lord's feelings that first morning when those four men broke bread in Dublin after the whole matter of God's service had been enshrouded, covered up, for centuries? Do you not think He would give them a living sense of 'having part in the service of God? I am sure He would.

C.J.H.D. Yes, that is very good; and there is a link with David in his being given the light of the Holy One coming in: "I have sworn unto David" (Ps. 89: 3) and "thou spakest in vision of thy Holy One", (Ps 89: 19). So the link with the service of God is very rich because the Holy One has been in God's heart and mind.

D.R. That is very fine. I think we need to have a fresh valuation of these things, and as having a fresh valuation of them to be concerned that we are the kind of people that can maintain them. And that is not in terms, it is not in the cleverness of my ability to argue over the truth: it is in what I am, it is the principle of holiness. I think that God would indicate that is the need for the moment.

SUNBURY

24 November 1984

Key to initials

E.C.Burr, London; T.J.Burr, Sunbury; W.J.R.Brodie, Ealing;
C.J.H.Davidson, Dorking; J.Mitchell, Bexley; J.McKay, Woodstock;
W.McKay, Sunbury; E.C.Muggleton, Croydon; D.Robertson,
Cumnock; D.E.Remmington, St.Albans; S.D.K.Roberts, Croydon;
R.Taylor, Barnet; A.J.E.Welch, London; B.W.Ward, London;
E.H.Wakefield, Sunbury; J.Wright, Redbridge; M.J.Welch, Sunbury.

PRAYER

D.Robertson

Luke 2: 36-38

One is exercised, beloved brethren, to say something about Anna and her service, especially having in mind the service of prayer. I would love to encourage the saints to take on prayer as a service. It is the most effective service I know, and it is one that is by no means exclusive, being available to every Christian; we can all pray. One's exercise is very simple; it is to encourage the brethren to take on prayer as a service; not merely to pray from time to time but to take it up in an exercised way.

Anna is a very fine person to speak of. The first thing it says of her is that she is a prophetess. I think Anna would be an assuring person – much needed in these days – one who can bring in amongst the saints a note of assurance, a note of confidence, not in a sentimental way but as having light in her soul from God. The prophetic word would involve light from God. There is a great need for that, beloved brethren. It is not limited to brothers, sisters are included in it, and it is not limited to old people because young people could be included in it too; but to be so with God and to have some sense and some measure of God's mind for the present moment, and therefore to bring in a note of confidence and assurance amongst the brethren. It is so easy to bring in despondency and gloom. The test is for all of us that we might be like Anna, a prophetess, and be able to bring in a ring of confidence and a ring of assurance, not falsely, not building up false hopes. I think Anna would be a person who would value the prophetic scriptures. It says of Asher in Jacob's blessing: "his bread shall be fat, And he will give royal dainties", Gen 49: 20. What dainties this woman would give! She would just pick out a bit, perhaps a verse in the Old Testament, that would light up for someone in the circle in which she moved the way ahead, and give guidance, provide a word

in season, provide food. Well, let us be exercised, beloved brethren, to be like that.

So we read: "Anna, daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher". You get a sense of the fineness of her movements here; they are not rough and awkward. The need is, as we have said today, that we let our foot be dipped in oil. That is really the power for service, and it is power for movement amongst the brethren. It is a very fine privilege to be included by divine grace to have part in the holy circle of the saints, and let us ensure that our part is not marred by fleshly awkwardness but that our foot may be dipped in oil, so that we are persons who in the secret of our souls have intimacies and links with the Holy Spirit of God, and with the holy anointed system of which our Lord Jesus Christ is the risen and ascended head.

I think too that Anna was acceptable to her brethren as one who was expressive of the truth. That is the kind of acceptance we want. I am sure we would all like to be known as persons who value the truth amongst the saints, and in that sense are acceptable to the brethren; not bringing in wild things or exaggerated expressions of a fleshly character; the truth needs no such support, but the ability just to express the truth, if I may say, in its simple beauty, and to commend it to our brethren. Let us be persons like that. We can be; it is not beyond us, each of us can be like that as being possessed and indwelt by God's Holy Spirit. Her age here is given to us; she has gone on faithfully. I think Anna would be an endurer. Thank God for the old brothers and the old sisters here today; those of us who are younger should value them; they express endurance in the things of God. There is nothing more confirming as to the validity of Christianity than to see an old man and an old woman going on brightly. Even in old age they are vigorous (see Ps 92: 14), they are not jaded; the body may be wearing down, sufferings may be in it, but there is something so fine about the spirit of a person who is an endurer testifying to the value and validity of the truth. It is not better expressed, beloved brethren, than in persons. It is good to read the truth in the Holy Scriptures and to open the books of ministry that we have, but how much better it is to read the saints and to see in them

the living expression of the truth. Well, she had gone on a long time. I noticed that it has been thought that she might be one hundred and six years old; a long time she had gone on in faithfulness. At any rate she was an endurer. Then it says: "who did not depart from the temple"; she valued the area where divine light was known. I trust we all value that, especially our younger brethren, but our older brethren too, that we might never think we are ahead of the light that shines in the temple. It is something very fine to come into the temple in a dependent way, in a subject way, in a submissive way, with a heart that is opened to receive a fresh touch from God. That is Anna. She received the freshest touch in her life in this section.

The Lord had just appeared as a babe and was in the arms of Simeon. What a holy sight! Judaism never gave a sight like that.

The temple even as set up by God never gave a sight like that. It would be a place where the Scriptures were valued, where communications from God were valued, but what a sight, beloved brethren! What possibilities lie in our own day to see Christ in the hands of a man who is morally able to hold Him in the temple, in the place of divine light. Anna saw that that day. It says: "and she coming up the same hour": think of the significance of that! One hundred and six years – if we can go by that – and we might say the whole matter comes down to this wonderful hour. Think of that, one hundred and six years going on in faithfulness and endurance valuing the temple of the Lord; and then "and she coming up the same hour", the very same hour; she called up in time to see that beautiful sight of the Holy Thing, the Lord Jesus in babyhood, in the arms of this wonderful man Simeon, this product of God's dealings with man. What a sight! "And she coming up the same hour gave praise to the Lord". Might we do the same, beloved brethren, as we get some impression of God's light shining in the temple illuminating our thoughts and our souls with a touch of Christ. Well may we open up our hearts and give praise to the Lord. What more do you want?

I think for us there is a parallel in our experience in the Supper: we come up in that hour, and what do we find? We find time after time that the Lord Jesus presents Himself to us. As the word says, He presented Himself. Wonderful majesty, wonderful thought of dignity,

that the Lord Jesus should present Himself to the assembled saints! Well might it bring forth from our hearts this touch of praise to the Lord.

Now I want to come to what it says: "serving night and day with fastings and prayers". Fasting is an important feature in the Christian's life. It is not for you to tell me how often you do it, or for me to tell you how often I do it, but fasting is a needed thing. I leave that word with the brethren, not meaning to emphasize it. What I want to speak about is prayer. It says she served "night and day with fastings and prayers". Now I want to touch on one or two thoughts about prayer that might stimulate us to take up this service of prayer.

The first great feature of prayer is that we have liberty with God, and that is the result of the sufferings and death of Jesus. What a fine thing that is to carry in your soul as you approach God! We can approach with boldness because of the value and virtue of the accomplished work of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a thing it is that we might have liberty with God! It is one of the great things that will be developed in your life as you take on the service of prayer. I do not believe that persons who pray infrequently have much liberty with God in a conscious sense. Of course, the way in is for every Christian, but the thought is that we might have developed liberty in prayer. It is a fine thing to see a man in liberty in prayer with God. I do not know that I could say much about sisters praying – I mean as to hearing them audibly – but I have no doubt that sisters do pray, and perhaps the service of prayer is carried on by them in a very definite way. I am quite sure that they too will prove, as they are engaged in that service, that they accumulate wonderful knowledge and joy in having liberty with God.

I think that prayer also brings change. A very needed feature amongst us is constant change. If you accustom yourself to the presence of God I think you will become like what may be found in the circumstances of His presence. It is said of the Lord Jesus, who is the pattern and model for praying as He is for everything else, "And as he prayed the fashion of his countenance became different

and his raiment white and effulgent", Luke 9: 29. What a contemplation that is for us, beloved, our holy Lord in manhood engaged in prayer and taking on change, taking on the conditions of the glory with which He was surrounded! What an impression it must have left with Peter and James and John! We too become changed as we take up the service of prayer. It is a very practical matter, and it is very important that we should take up this service of prayer and not only find liberty in it but that we ourselves are changed by it; we become different. One might be hard and austere or arrogant, another might be timid and frightened and nervous to an extreme; the possibility is that as we engage in the service of prayer we take on change. Our heart can be changed; it may be in love's outlook on the saints. I have found that if you pray for a brother or a sister with whom you have had some difficulty, you can never again feel the same bitterness towards them. Have you ever felt bitterness towards a brother or a sister? Pray about it. You should not feel that way; pray about it, change comes in.

Another feature of prayer is directness. A person who takes on the service of prayer is able to dispense with unnecessary words, and a very simple directness comes about with one who is accustomed to the service of prayer. In Philippians 4 Paul says "let your requests be made known to God" (v 6). That to me conveys the directness of prayer; you do not need to wrap it up in a whole swell of words. If there is an exercise in your heart about something, let your requests be made known unto God. How wonderfully simple the matter of prayer is! That scripture in Philippians is all the more wonderful if you think of the circumstances of it Paul himself having already been, I think, four years in prison when he wrote those words. Think of a man in prison chained to a Roman guard – for such was the imprisonment in those days – and yet he could tell the saints: "let your requests be made known to God". I have often wondered what these guards would think as they heard Paul pray and make his requests known to God. I have no doubt that Paul, being such an ambassador of Christianity, would pray for the blessing of the very guard to whom he was bound. Would you doubt

that God blessed some of them? I would not for one minute. Think of the beauty of being direct in our prayers! I would encourage the brethren to be direct in their prayers. You young people, be direct in your prayers: in one way the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is dependent on your prayer; you must ask for Him you must also obey God in order to get the 'Holy Spirit, but the ultimate in asking is the gift of the Holy Spirit. God gives us many things because of our direct prayers to Him, but the greatest of all His gifts is the gift of the Holy Spirit. If there is any Christian here, any young person who loves the Lord Jesus and who is covered by His precious redemptive blood and has still not the Holy Spirit, I would counsel you to ask in directness to God for the Holy Spirit. You are not complete without the Holy Spirit; there is no Christian complete without the Holy Spirit.

There are other features that enter into prayer. I think power is one of them. The very fact that we express our requests to God in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ involves the power of that Name. Take it on as a service there is power in it; learn like Elijah what it is to pray with prayer, to mean it. That is another great feature of prayer – earnestness. Prayer and supplication would involve earnestness. It says of Elijah's prayer that "The fervent supplication of the righteous man has much power" Jas 5: 16. There is power in prayer, dear brethren. There is a little verse that says,

'There is not a night so dreary,
But there's potency in prayer'.

Sometimes we feel, maybe at a time of crisis or when things are shaky, that we do not know what to do; we can always pray and there is power in it, there is potency in prayer. The brethren will have noted in relation to Elijah that it is not the prayer. exactly that is fervent, it is the man that is fervent. Oh, that we might be such persons, to be fervent in taking on this great service of prayer!

Another feature of prayer is fragrance. There is not only power in the name of Jesus but there is fragrance in the name of Jesus; it is sweet to God, sweet to you and me but sweet to God. Not only so, but there is His service at the golden altar where He

has the ability to gather up the prayers of the saints in the censer and present it to God: He is the offering One (see Rev 8: 3). You will have noticed in an earlier chapter in Revelation that the elders and the living creatures also have the prayers of the saints, but they only have them as appreciating them. They do not offer the prayers of the saints. We do not need anybody to offer our prayers; there is One there in the presence of God who will present your prayer in fragrance and in perfect beauty and perfect order to His God. So there is power in prayer and fragrance in prayer.

Another great feature in prayer is intimacy and nearness. I could go on, beloved brethren, because I have by no means exhausted the virtues of prayer, but I trust I have said enough to stimulate desire with the saints to take on prayer as a service – as a service to the Lord, as a service to the saints and as a service to the testimony. A praying people is needed, never more so than in our own day. Paul says, I make mention of you always at my prayers (see Philem 4).

Another feature is that it is one of the prime characteristics of the work of God in a person. Ananias, you will remember, was a little worried hearing about Paul; the Lord says to him, Not, Behold he has prayed, but "behold, he is praying", Acts 9: 11. I have often thought of that, the Lord Jesus on the one hand listening to Paul praying, and while Paul was speaking to Him, saying to Ananias, he is praying even now. Ananias moves forward in the simple confidence that prayer is a sure evidence of God's work in a man's soul. Let us be praying people, beloved brethren, not only holy people but praying people. Faith enters into it; James speaks about the prayer of faith, Jude about praying in the Holy Spirit. Prayer is a very alive, alert state of things in the believer's life. A brother said to me recently that he was concerned about his prayer life. I liked that. I like to see believer who is concerned about his prayer life. You might want to do great things for the Lord; It might not be His mind that you will ever do them, but it certainly is His mind that you should take on prayer as a service. He loves that; God loves it. I feel there is something most valuable in it. The first time I saw Mr Darby's

letter that was published recently was two or three years ago; a brother let me read it and I could see that a wonderful bond had developed between those two holy men, Mr Darby and Mr Wigram; they spoke for so long and their subject was prayer. It would be fine if what they said about prayer had been printed. You could see, as I said already today, the fibre of manhood that was involved in the recovery of the truth; It was not hard arrogant arguers, cold-headed disputers, it was dependent, humble and holy men. May we be such, beloved brethren. I trust I have said enough to encourage and stimulate the brethren to take on prayer as a service. I trust too that what the Lord has given us might help us to go on steadily and faithfully, maybe with a revived confidence in our outlook and a renewed firmness in our step. For the Lord's sake.

SUNBURY

24 November 1984

THE CHILDREN'S SHELTER

During the air-raids on London some years ago many children with their parents and other people spent each night in the depths of Chislehurst Caves. There was perfect safety there and in fact persons became cured of certain diseases by the even temperature and dryness of the air. A baby girl, born there one night in a place set apart, was named Cavena.

It was through fear of extreme danger from their fellow-men that persons took shelter in these Caves. It was in fear of extreme danger from the judgment of a holy God that the households of the Israelites in Egypt put the blood of a slain lamb on the doorposts and lintels of their houses on Passover night. Jehovah had said the majestic and merciful words "when I see the blood, I will pass over you". God was certainly not an enemy to them but showed his love by providing them a shelter from judgment through the death and blood-shedding of another. Children, and indeed others, should know that the precious blood of Jesus gives them righteous freedom from righteous judgment. Our Saviour has Himself borne the penalty at the cross of Calvary.

A beautiful passage from the pen of Isaiah tells us that "a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the storm". That Man will be Jesus in His thousand-year kingdom on earth. He is also Jesus now, caring for His own during His absence. Children who confess Him at school may find a strong wind of ridicule blowing at them or even a storm of persecution as many before them in the testimony, but in bearing these things for His sake Jesus will give them a feeling of having in their spirits a hiding-place and covert.

That precious verse of scripture continues that the same man will be "as brooks of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land". It may be that some young believer has become discontented and critical.

This is a very dry place to be in, but even there a Man will be as brooks of water. A woman with an empty waterpot once found a Man – or was found by Him – who was able to give her living water! Through her witness many people in a weary, religious land found Jesus to be the shadow of a great rock for the reviving of their souls. Is this Man your own hiding-place?

J.C.Evershed