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Edited and Published by:

E.C.Burr

50 Red Post Hill London SE24 9JQ

MY FATHER'S BUSINESS AND MY FATHER'S HOUSE

Luke 2: 48-52; Psalm 69: 5-13; John 2: 13-22

J.A.P. I thought we might look into the Lord's statements: "my Father's business", and in John's gospel "my Father's house", as having, I believe, a present voice to us. The Father's matters are very great and the Lord Jesus was here in relation to them, especially in John's gospel. The Psalm was read because it brings out the inward feelings of the Christian in the working out of what came before us in the meeting this morning. The Psalms give us the feeling side and that perhaps needs to be developed with us; the inward exercises are given vent to. The Psalms also speak of the Lord Jesus and have their bearing on Him, but they speak of our own exercises and concerns and how we are getting through with God. "My Father's business" in Luke refers to a very extensive area in testimony. The Lord brings this to bear, and it is only used once: "my Father's business". It shows, I think, the great affairs that belong to God; they are wider than the brethren that we walk with, involving not only the service of God but the glad tidings, the outgoing of the testimony. We touched on the matter of testimony lately in Toronto. (Would that more could have been there!) The apostle said: "I am not ashamed of the glad tidings", Rom 1: 16.

This expression "my Father's business" involves a great area of things as to the work of God with which the believer must be in accord and in the mind of God about. The temple here in this section is the general buildings, as the note indicates, (it is not so much the inner shrine) which would reinforce what perhaps we might see, the great area of things in which God is working at the present time. In John's gospel the Lord's expression is "My Father's house" and we are to see what that means. John's ministry is the inward side of the work of God in the believer. But the first passage clearly has to do with the general testimony.

K.N.P. Do we see the vast scope of that in the early chapters of Acts when the disciples and the apostles went out and believers were multiplied? Were they not out in the Father's business?

J.A.P. That is right. The word 'business' is used in chapter 6 of Acts: "this business" the apostles said (v 3), which refers to waiting on the saints, serving the brethren. But the highest order in the business is the assembly and the gospel, and the scope of things is very great, as you say. What was going on in Jerusalem under the eye of heaven, which is revealed to us by the Spirit, needs to be taken account of. The same Spirit that motivated the brethren then is here now.

C.F.D. Why is it "my Father's business" or 'the things of my Father' which the footnote refers to? Why is it not God? Is it to point to the economy into which divine Persons have come? The Father is operating: "My Father worketh hitherto and I work" (John 5: 17) is a great scope of things involving not only the great thoughts of God for men generally but opening up the great thoughts of the family and all that is involved in that and the inward side.

J.A.P. Yes. In John's gospel, as you would know, it is the Father, the thought of the family, the inside position. But the thought of the Father in Luke and Matthew is, I believe, God related to men as Father; that is a great general thought in the glad tidings, that men can appeal to God as Father. Then He has great affairs which are related also to Israel; and the scriptures that were read in the temple in Luke 2 would involve Israel as well as the light of things that the Lord Jesus was about to bring in.

A.R.S. The Lord becomes a pattern to us.

J.A.P. Yes. My concern is this: we may think that the Lord's things are pretty much when we are together, but there is a great area of the Father's business that is going on twenty four hours a day. The Lord showed that to His reputed father and His mother, that He was engaged in something that was very wide. Luke's gospel is the expanse of the glad tidings; Isaiah's ministry is there. The work of God is much greater than what we are aware of as among brethren. There is only one business. There is the family side which we get in John which is private; but in Luke the glad tidings are going out to all men, and God is related to all men as Father, too.

A.R.S. The Father's business had the first place with the Lord.

J.A.P. That is right. The thing is, are you in the Father's business when you are home or away from the saints? He has great affairs. I think that our personal affairs have too great a place, if I am like another. The Lord is showing that he moved away from His family connection to be found in the temple bringing the light of God to those poor, dark men, those religious people.

C.F.D. It says In Luke 2: 30: "for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples; a light for revelation of the Gentiles and the glory · of thy people Israel". A very expanded idea is in the divine mind, do you think, and that is before Christ in what He has to say?

J.A.P. That is helpful. Matthew and Luke in the early chapters bring in the Gentiles, showing that God had them in mind in the incoming of Christ; and then Simeon and Anna show that their thoughts were very wide. The Father has great affairs going on. Some of the brethren have probably noticed the note to 1 Timothy 4:15: "be wholly in them" – 'be occupied in'. Paul says that to Timothy who was in a day like our own. Be wholly in them and occupied with them, is said to a young man. Now the Lord Jesus is saying something here when He was very young. The Father's business is a very extended matter; it extends in Acts 6 to serving tables and taking care of the widows, the administration of things.

S.E.H. What would you say about Paul's word in Philippians: "For all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ", chap. 2:21? In this scripture it is the things of the Father, but in Philippians it is the things of Jesus Christ contrasted with our own things.

J.A.P. I think Philippians is speaking of full Christianity. The Lord Jesus is in heaven, and the word 'things' in Paul's epistles is very full because it involves Christ and the assembly and the gospel. Once on the Lord's day is not the only time we preach; my Father's business" is a very extended matter. That the Lord should remain in Jerusalem when the family went home is instructive; they went up

"yearly" – a right custom (the custom are right amongst us) – but the Father's business demanded that He stay in Jerusalem longer.

S.E.H. Paul says about Timotheus: "For I have no one like-minded who will care with genuine feeling how ye get on: For all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ", Phil 2: 20, 21.

J.A.P. That is a very good connection to bring in. The note here in Luke 2 refers to 1 Tim. 4:15,16: "Occupy thyself with these things; be wholly in them, that thy progress may be manifest to all. Give heed to thyself and to the teaching; continue in them· for doing this, thou shalt save both thyself and those that hear thee". Your reference to Timothy helps us very much because 'it is youth. The Lord is twelve years old in this passage we are speaking about; it is youth, and that is to help the young men and the young women amongst us here, to make it attractive as to the Father's business. Timothy was in that business as it was in his time.

T.E.D. To emphasise that it says "the boy Jesus". There is none too young at the present time in this room to have part in it. I was going back in my mind to the Old Testament thinking of Isaac, his relation to Abraham his father, and then Joseph at seventeen carrying out a mission which required care and interest in his brethren.

J.A.P. That is very good. We could dwell on that for a moment. The matter of custom in Luke is right. There are things we do among brethren which you would not find by the letter in Scripture, but we have certain customs which are right. But the Father's business is wider than customs. When David was with the flock he says, I delivered them from a lion and a bear; that was much more than he was asked to do – to keep the sheep. That is what we are referring to, that we are in the business. It is a great business which the Father has under His hand. Are we in it fully?

A.S.H. Being in the Father's business at the age of twelve; you are starting in the business early and that grows on you and you would grow yourself as you go on.

J.A.P. That is right. Galatians tells us that the child is kept under stewards until a certain time (see chap 4:2). Some of us are in business; you would not entrust the business to a very young person. Paul says that they are under stewards and need care; but then the time comes when they are able for it. The Lord of course was able at any age in one sense for He was the perfect Boy. That the Lord Jesus as young should talk about His Father's business would help the young to want to get a hold of this, as well as those of us who are older. It is very extensive involving the glad tidings and the testimony in New York and all that goes into it right down to cleaning the meeting room. The whole thing is a great business that the Father has, and we need to know all the departments – the highest level and what I might call the ordinary matters too.

C.F.D. Is that borne out in chapter 4:16? It says: "And he came to Nazareth, where he was brought up; and he entered, according to his custom, into the synagogue on the sabbath day". When He comes out formally into the service, being about the age of thirty, it says "according to his custom"; it would appear as if what He set on at twelve years of age is something that continued; He did not pick it up and lay it down. At thirty years of age it was His custom to do what He did.

J.A.P. Very good. That gives us a little clue as to what went on from twelve to thirty about which we are not told, but His custom would be to be in the work of God.

K.N.P. Is it your exercise that we do not just come to the meeting because it is the day and the time for it but that there is something more definite in our exercise? In the section in Luke 4 He picked up the book to read and He found the place where it was written, but what He said was not what they were normally used to hearing. Do you think the action of the Spirit in our day is such that, although there are customs which are right, yet there are things in the Father's business which the Spirit would guide us in and open up?

J.A.P. It says in Luke 4: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me". I think that is what is to distinguish all of us in ministry – when we preach or

speaking to the brethren, and sisters in their service – that it is the Spirit of the Lord. When that has not been so, of course, we have failed.

We see that in Psalm 69: "my foolishness, and my trespasses" (v.5). What has that been? Those have been activities outside of the Spirit.

G.D.P. You spoke of the Father's business being so extensive; it is related to the will of the Father – His will being done on earth as it is in heaven.

J.A.P. That is the point of view in Matthew and Luke, John being more the family, but here it is His will. There are very few sons doing the will of their father these days; we know that to our distress.

Maybe we ourselves were not always what we should have been either, but the Lord Jesus was moving in the Father's will and He rejoiced in it and there were results. These older brethren here, Joseph and Mary, had to come all the way back to Jerusalem to where Jesus was. It is where He is, brethren, that is where we want to be not only found when the saints are convened but in what the Lord is doing. He is always active in the things of His Father.

K.N.P. Is that important for us, to know that relationship: "my Father and your Father"? So if we are close to Him we would be doing the Father's business.

J.A.P. Yes, that is the higher thought; I use the word 'higher' in the sense of the service of God. But there is also the side, in my life of responsibility, in which I am related to the Father. As remarked, the Lord's prayer would help us as to that, that those things I am engaged in all relate to the assembly.

A.G.S. What do you think of the expression of the Lord: "I and the Father are one" John 10: 30?

J.A.P. There it is the Persons of the Godhead the oneness of the Father and the Son. That is not just unity in the sense that you and I might have one thought; it is much greater than that.

A.G.S. I believe that. You were speaking much of the Father's business but the Lord Himself said: "I and the Father are one". I

suppose that is something we have to understand.

J.A.P. John's ministry is to help us inwardly by the Spirit, even in our testimony it shall flow out of the belly as rivers of living water (see John 7: 38). In Luke we are dealing more with the side of responsibility. There are many questions today that are perplexing all of us, and the Lord is seen here hearing and asking questions.

The Lord is extending that matter so that in the area of the Father's realm there are these questions and there are answers.

T.E.D. In verse 50 it says "And they understood not the thing that he said to them". Is there the need of devotedness and committal on our part to the business so that we should be in it in an understanding way? You just spoke about the questions that there are; if we want answers to those questions we need to be committed to the pathway of God's will and be engaged in this matter with wholehearted committal.

J.A.P. It was therefore a very delicate matter that the Lord Jesus was twelve years old, a divine Person, yet really a boy as He is called – how to be deferential, speaking reverently, to His parents, because it says in the next verse He was subject to them. All these things are instructive to us. But He insisted on this matter, the Father's business, and that He had remained away for three days from the family side of things that He might be devoted to that, to help these poor, dark men in Jerusalem who were the most learned. The Lord was helping them, and a young Christian can help dark people no matter what light they may profess to have; the answers should be in the temple now in us by the Spirit.

A.R.S. He could have taught them but He was hearing and asking questions. Does the idea of what is comely enter into it?

J.A.P. To ask questions brings out the truth. The Lord later in this gospel says: "I also will ask you one thing", Luke 20:3. That brought out that there was a state of unbelief with some and it brought out the truth as to His ministry. He says to them, Did John's ministry come from heaven or where did it come from? That brought to light their state and the whole matter of John the baptist's ministry. So

that questions can bring out things in this way. But hearing is an important matter, that we should know what is current among men at the present time and what is in Christendom and how people are proceeding. The Lord was hearing and asking questions. How were these men thinking? They were not Christians, they may not have been believers, but the Lord was listening to them in the temple and bringing out the light of things, I think, in His questions. God dealt with Job by questions. "Where wast thou" He says, Job 38: 4. God dealt with Adam by a question: "Where art thou? ", Gen 3: 10.

These are the questions that divine Persons bring in to show the state of things that there may be; and thank God that with Him there is the answer and that is in the gospel.

C.G. You have been stressing youth; Ecclesiastes 11: 10 says, "for childhood and youth are vanity", and the note says, 'prime of life'.

J.A.P. Childhood and youth and old age without the Lord Jesus are vanity. It is a question of the Father's business; For us the centre of the Father's business is Christ in heaven and the Spirit here, and it is a great area of things that comes down to practical matters of visiting the sick and shepherding and caring for the brethren and hospitality. All those things are in His business. As well as speaking of Christ to men, reading the ministry, the printing of it, the distributing of it, there is the great matter of the gospel going out among men beyond the confines of brethren. There are great things going on in the things of God, much greater than we believe.

C.G. What would you say about works? It says: "their works follow with them", Rev 14:13.

J.A.P. As to those that rest from their labours, their works follow them. So as we are sitting here today I thought of, and no doubt all of us thought of, the brother who ministered here for fifty years; his works follow and we are among them.

G.D.P. Solomon carried out his father's business. He was commissioned to build a house and then he had his workmen; all the details were filled out in that way.

J.A.P. Someone said in the recovery, I have this great business and I cannot leave it off (see Neh 6: 3). Solomon finished the business as to the house. Another thing was that David did something we all can do, he provided the material for the house; the Christian himself is the material.

G.A. In Acts 18 it says: "And after these" things, having left Athens, he came to Corinth; and finding a certain Jew by name Aquila, of Pontus by race, just come from Italy, and Priscilla his wife, (because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome) came to them, and because they were of the same trade abode with them, and wrought. For they were tent-makers by trade" (vv 1-3). Does this have any link with what you are saying about the Father's business?

J.A.P. I think that is a very good matter to bring in because some of the brethren are facing severe matters in their business affairs but it is all under the Father. That relates too to where we should live and where we should be serving the Lord. These Jewish persons had to leave because of the persecution but all that was in the Father's ordering. That they should meet Paul and should be in the same trade were all things relating to the will of your Father. You can hide your will quite a little and give many reasons for what you do, but we are happy if we are in the will of the Father, and, if so, it will strengthen the assembly. My business affairs and your business affairs should be a strengthening matter for the testimony as well as a disciplinary matter too in the ways of God. If it is becoming a drag, then it is not the will of your Father. It all worked out together for blessing in Acts 18. It would be a wonderful thing if brethren can work together in that way but very often we are not able for it.

A.G.S. Hearing and asking questions is really a word for us; we should ponder that more. Speaking for myself, sometimes I become impatient and do not listen to persons or listen only very briefly. But the Lord sets the example of hearing and asking here; He allowed time for hearing and that is what I think we should do more.

J.A.P. Yes and that we are current about what God is doing in the world publicly and what He is doing in a general sense because He

is doing great things. Then we want to be alert to what the enemy is doing, too. It is a very wide matter and the enemy knows well about this business and we need to know about it and be in the Father's will.

L.D.P. Would David be a type of one who was in his Father's business when his father Jesse had sent him to take an ephah of parched corn and ten loaves to his brethren? And further, is it in line with what you are saying when it reads in the same chapter: "Let no man's heart fail because of him: thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine", 1 Sam 17: 32. This statement of David's resulted from having done his father's will in taking the loaves to the brethren.

J.A.P. That is very good. I am glad that we are detained for a moment on that because "he that is faithful in the least is faithful also in much", Luke 16: 10. God tests us. David looked after the flock, he was tried; and Joseph the same in Egypt, and he was tried in the family connection in private and he came through. He was given greater things. Now that all helps us as to this matter of business.

Acts 6 shows that Stephen and others waited on the tables, took care of the widows, and next we find him preaching the glad tidings and going out of this scene in the sense of the glory of the Son of God being in his soul.

Psalm 69, as the brethren will know, is quoted in John's gospel as to "my Father's house". I turned to that passage for that reason and also to notice the experience the writer went through; at times he is a type of Christ and at other times he is a type of ourselves.

He says in verse 5: "Thou O God, knowest my foolishness, and my trespasses are not hidden from thee", and then he says: "Let not them that wait on thee, Lord, Jehovah of hosts, be ashamed through me". That has been the history; we as brethren have at times obstructed the light of the testimony; the failures of one and another or collectively have been a sorrow and we should never forget that.

So he says in verse 6: "Let not them that wait on thee, Lord, Jehovah of hosts, be ashamed through me". You can say that, in another sense, it might be a type of the Lord Jesus, but David is concerned that he is not getting in the Lord's way in this matter of the

testimony. "Let not those that seek thee be confounded through me": it may apply to the Lord but the other side is that it applies to us, that there has been a stumbling of people because of the way things have been done amongst us and by us, whether individually or collectively. That is a very humbling matter. And this man is going over that in his soul because he is marked by zeal for the house of God. But in our zeal at times in the history there have been things accomplished which have confounded and hindered the testimony, and I thought that we should consider that and see that this man is reviewing all that at the same time as he is committing himself to the house of Jehovah.

K.N.P. Does he not come to an end of himself? "Thou, O God, knowest my foolishness, and my trespasses are not hidden from thee". Do you think that is important first, before we can be occupied in His business?

J.A.P. That is right. I thought that is why we should look at this Psalm because this is the experience. With the Lord Jesus there were no trespasses or any failure, Luke shows the perfection of Him as a boy and His manhood, but that is not so in our case. So the matter thus is judged. Paul never fails to refer to how God brought him through. Even to Timothy he says, I persecuted the assembly but mercy was shewn me (see 1 Tim 1: 13).

A.R.S. In a positive sense Paul was a help to the brethren; he could say: "Be my imitators, even as I also am of Christ", 1 Cor 11: 1.

J.A.P. He was a help to them, and as we said, he could make tents, and he could start a fire in the rain; he actually did those things. The practical side in Christianity is important. Paul not only helped the brethren spiritually but he helped them materially. He said: "These hands have ministered to my wants, and to those who were with me", Acts 20: 34. So Christianity is a very practical matter all in the Father's business.

G.D.P. Paul does say that by the foolishness of the preaching it pleased God to reach men (see 1 Cor 1: 21). Even God can turn these things to account. That is how great a God we have.

J.A.P. Paul says that to the Corinthians, by the foolishness of the preaching, the outward weakness in which the Lord Jesus was on the cross. You wonder at those expressions being used, but Paul uses them in 1 Corinthians 1. The other thing is we can say that the saints are a self-judged people seeking to make room for the Spirit and who glory in the Lord Jesus.

K.N.P. So everything that Paul boasts in he boasted as in Christ Jesus. He could not boast of anything in himself but he could boast in Christ Jesus.

J.A.P. Very good. We had in Toronto a very helpful reading on Lord's day (I wish more of the brethren could have been there!); it was very instructive; we came to see that there is a position where we should be holy and blame less before God in love (see Eph 1: 4), which was illustrated in Daniel, a man who had a righteous walk practically, for they could not find anything wrong with him. That can be reached with the Christian.

S.E.H. Would we not have to be careful as to making a claim that we are self-judged people? We would seek to be that but I think what our brother said as to speaking of the Lord and His blamelessness is certainly something we can extol.

J.A.P. Let a man judge himself and thus let him eat is a very important matter and we can look at the brethren on Lord's day morning in that light, otherwise we could not take the Supper. So it was said about Daniel that there was something in his walk which was very commendable; and that is quite a concern, that our walk should be better. Daniel, in chapter 9, acknowledges his sin and the sin of his people (see v 20). That was said to underlie the righteousness of his walk; that is, he was in self-judgment.

C.F.D. It is interesting the way these things come out in persons, I suppose for our own help and strengthening. A man like Enoch could walk with God, his walk would be compatible with the thoughts and the feelings of God. So the two could walk together as agreed; in a sense Enoch's testimony agreed with what God is.

J.A.P. God also said to Abraham later: "walk before my face, and be perfect", Gen 17: 1. Of course right away everyone can say, I am not perfect and I am not blameless, but that is not exactly how Scripture puts it in these connections. We want to see that the Spirit is here to help us as to the fruit of the Spirit.

C.F.D. In relation to that and to questions that have been raised, would it be that you come to the Lord's supper in the light of selfjudgment; even if there is weakness with us, what the work of Christ has done is to remove everything that is objectionable so that we can be compatible with what Christ is in Him self and the glory that relates to God. Then the Spirit is here to help us to live up to that.

J.A.P. That is right. I can share our brother's thought in this respect that there are concerns amongst us universally, certain things we would be aware of; maybe in our own locality we would like to see certain things adjusted or put right in one another or collectively.

There are these things, but I say this, that the light is being held in some and God knows that and He is taking account of a self-judged state in some. So that Daniel held the ground for all in what he was saying.

C.F.D. Therefore would what comes out in Romans 8 help us?

There is a process in Romans 7 but a person is set up with a measure of power in Romans 8 whereby the law is fulfilled in the power of the Spirit of God.

J.A.P. Very important and helpful because Romans 8 helps us as to our relations with God. Verse 13 of our Psalm says: "But as for me, my prayer is unto thee". Romans 8 shows a believer able to speak to God the Spirit of His Son in our hearts crying Abba, Father. The believer has a relationship with God and can be in the Father's business rightly in that way. He is there in power as a praying man.

And this man is praying; he says: "Jehovah, in an acceptable time: O God, in the abundance of thy loving-kindness answer me, according to the truth of thy salvation". It is God's salvation.

G.D.P. Would Romans 14 help us in our relations with a brother? "But judge ye this rather, not to put a stumbling-block or a fall trap before his brother. I know, an a persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean of itself; except to him who reckons anything to be unclean, to that man it is unclean. For if on account of meat thy brother is grieved, thou walkest no longer according to love" (vv 13-15). This prayer in Psalm 69 is that David would not turn aside these people.

J.A.P. He was concerned about it. I think that is very important, that we are acceptable to the brethren. I prayed that when I took this service on that it might be acceptable to the brethren, not only to the Lord but to the brethren.

C.G. It says in Corinthians: "Do ye not know that we shall judge angels? and not then matters of this life". What is suggested in that?

J.A.P. That is quite an inquiry in itself. It is to bring out how distinguished the local assembly ought to be in judgments. That is part of the Father's business, I would think, having a right judgment of things, yourself and other things that are in it.

T.E.D. There is a reference to reproach in the Psalm: "the reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen upon me". In what sense do we enter into that as in the Father's business?

J.A.P. The saints are often attacked because people may find fault with them, but they are really attacking something that is of God. The reproach falls on the saints – O you are with those brethren, or whatever it is – and the Lord Jesus endured that reproach. But then we have to endure it even from our own brothers and sisters here. Did you notice that?

T.E.D. That is why I felt it right to raise it because specially for younger ones we might be overwhelmed by reproach. But being in the Father's business would involve that there is that side.

J.A.P. David said "Was it not laid upon me?", 1 Sam 17:29. He was in the business of his father. There are a lot of problems our young

people are facing, specially companionship, but do not be ashamed of the brethren. Bring your companions to the gospel or to the meetings, there is no better place to bring them to get help. Some young brothers in India who brought their future wives to the meeting and they were converted – my wife would witness with me, truly converted. God did that for them. God is able for this matter of marriage. The establishing of households is a very important matter and it is a real concern in Plainfield and New York, the great need of establishing new households here for the testimony. Your brothers and sisters may forsake you; it says that: "my mother's sons". Many of us know what that is – and children too.

A.S.H. Would you say something about zeal: "the zeal of thy house hath devoured me". Somewhere it says that people had zeal for God but not according to knowledge (see Rom 10: 2). Here it is for God and His house.

J.A.P. If only we could get this into the fibre of us all, zeal for the things of God! We are not to go around telling people we are in a dying company and all this kind of thing; God has a house here, the assembly of the living God, that is how it is put in Timothy.

S.E.H. In John's gospel this scripture is referred to: "The zeal of thy house devours me". Would that be spoken of in a favourable sense?

J.A.P. Very favourable, I thought. The Lord is overturning the tables of the money changers. Mr Darby did all this for us, he just went right through Christendom and showed one thing after another that was not of God; he overturned it all. We want to be in the good of that. What zeal was in that brother! What ground he covered! I can speak also about material matters; out in Canada he said it was thirty below and in Louisville Kentucky, similarly. These men were out in the work, they were zealous for God and God helped them.

Well now, the Lord is giving us a lead here in John's account. I noted Mr Darby on this passage this morning (I hope everybody will look at it in this Synopsis, it is only about three sentences); he said that the Lord Jesus is the temple in this gospel and in Him is all the authority of the word of God. It was all there in Him; He was the Son

of God. So that in John's gospel the Lord overturns these tables in the house of His Father early in the gospel but in the other accounts it comes in late, and I think both things should be true of the Christian, that we should come to some thing quickly. John is saying to us, I want you to come to something quickly, do not wait till chapter 21; but the other gospels show more our experience, that it takes a long time. Here He calls it "my Father's house", in the other gospels He calls it "my house", which is also true; but "my Father's house" here is a very deep matter involving the family and His own relationship with the Father and that He Him self is the temple.

Where is the temple today? It is the inner shrine known in assembly gathering. The outer buildings we know and must be right about but where is the inner shrine? It is where we see God, where we see God in Jesus.

C.S.E. There was a time before Saul of Tarsus was converted when he was very zealous in doing certain things, but after the Lord had to do with him his zeal was directed in another direction. How can we maintain the level of this zeal throughout our lives? Because it seems that zeal for the things of God is something which we ought to nourish and cherish, and be preserved in.

J.A.P. What was referred to earlier, the will of the Father, the will of God, is foundational; and the next thing is the Spirit. He is the power for zeal. The apostle says about the Jews, I witness that they have zeal, but not according to God (see Rom 10:2). But then he commends the Corinthian assembly; in the second epistle he says: "But what zeal" (chap 7: 11); that is, they were dealing with evil in their midst. It is the expression used of Jehu, and how God is going to deal with Rome in a coming day, it is going to be dealt with in zeal. Jehu says: "Come... and see my zeal for Jehovah", 2 Kings 10: 16. He is on his way to deal with Jezebel. Jehu is a type of the power of God to meet that particular evil and overthrow it.

C.F.D. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up". It is interesting the way the Lord brings that in here, which is unique. The Lord is rejected immediately in John's gospel. He is showing here that He is going to overturn the whole line of things which had a

religious character. "And in three days I will raise it up": He is going to establish a whole new line of things in resurrection which represents what is for God. The Father's matters, which come in so wonderfully in this book, are all going to be established in life out of death.

J.A.P. I think that is right. Mr Darby says in the Synopsis 'The body of Jesus was now the true temple. Sealed by His resurrection'; that is to say, God marked Him off. I think brethren, if we could understand that the temple now is connected with the Man in the glory we would want to reach that in our local readings and ministry, something that is outside of this world, and we touch it by the Spirit in the local assemblies which Paul deals with and speaks of (see 1 Cor 3: 16). John is rather dealing with the Person, that He is the Son of God.

C.F.D. So it says here: "When therefore he was raised from among the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this", showing that the resurrection of Christ brought in a whole new realm of things which was going to be marked by life.

J.A.P. Exactly. So that the temple is not any unhallowed sphere; Christ is in heaven; all the flesh is shut out, all man is shut out, the world's sphere is shut out because the Lord Jesus is there, He is out of death. Now that is something to reach in the temple, I think.

S.E.H. It says "But he spoke of the temple of his body"; in what sense does the assembly as His body enter into this thought of the temple?

J.A.P. You would know that in Corinthians it says: "ye are the temple of God", 1 Cor 3: 16. That would be what the saints were (alas, only abstractly for the moment), but it refers to God's work in the saints in which the Spirit is the inhabitant. "In whom all the building fitted together increases to a holy temple in the Lord", Eph 1: 26. This touch in John is to connect us finally with the Lord Jesus risen. And the Lord Jesus was the temple all through this gospel. The Lord said: "him that comes to me I will not at all cast out" (John 6: 37); that is, the Lord Jesus was there to be approached and to be known

and to be received. John is through with the religious buildings here right away in the beginning of the gospel. The disciples say at the end of Mark, See what buildings! (see chap 13: 1). We want to be through with them from John's point of view and get into this matter of the greatness of the temple because we are dealing not so much with a sphere of things, although it is there, but with a divine Person in the things of God.

C.F.D. And what is here in the saints is equal to what is there in Christ. So that He was the temple here, everything was in Him. But do you think, now that He has ascended, seated at the right hand of God, that everything now is working out here in the sense of not only the body but the temple, the place where light shines, the light of God?

J.A.P. I wanted to add and where divine Persons are. The Lord Jesus is seen here and the saints by faith and the Spirit can touch that in the ministry of the word, I believe. So it says in Corinthians that God is amongst you (see 1 Cor 14: 25). We are dealing in the readings not only with light and doctrine but a divine Person is there and His glory is shining.

C.F.D. He told the saints at Corinth that they were the temple of God.

J.A.P. That is right, in the local aspect of it.

G.D.P. In Luke's gospel, after three days they find Him in the temple, that is in the general buildings, but this three days is a deeper matter bringing us right into the shrine.

J.A.P. That helps very much. John is dealing with the inward side which the saints touch in their souls as to Christ Himself, the temple. We are touching it this morning, the greatness of the Son of God and what is available in Him; the power of life, the power of resurrection, and zeal is the power of life.

NEW YORK

26 October 1985

Key to initials

G.Ashby, New York; C.F.Dadd, Plainfield; T.E.Druckenmiller, Plainfield; C.S.Elliott, New York; C.Greenidge, Plainfield; A.S.Hinkson, New York; S.E.Hesterman, Plainfield; J.A.Peterson, Plainfield; G.D.Pfingst, Plainfield; K.N.Pye, New York; L.D.Phillips, New York; A.G.Spooner, New York; A.R.Stevens, New York

OLD MEN AND YOUNG MEN

J.A.Petersen

Joshua 13: 1; 14: 6-15; Zechariah 2: 3-5

Beloved brethren, the thought came to me to suggest something concerning two old men and one young man. It should be very comforting to us all that God is thinking of us individually as well as collectively, and to each of us God has said certain things in our histories, which is all to be held in our hearts. What parents may say to children is often within the hour forgotten, but these two old men, Joshua and Caleb, were not the forgetful type. It says of the cup-bearer who was in prison with Joseph that he did not remember Joseph and forgot him (see Gen 40: 23). The Lord's supper may be held in this city tomorrow and where will you be? Have you forgotten Him, the Lord Jesus of whom we spoke today? Is He not worthy of your remembrance? There was a woman to whom the prophet came about something and she said, I know what you have come for, to bring to remembrance the sins of thy handmaid (see 1 Kings 17: 18). The Lord Jesus is not speaking today to bring sins to remembrance; it is not that we do not have to be right about our sins and, if forgiven, to know that "their sins and their lawlessnesses I will never remember any more", Heb 10: 17. God says that. The reason we have difficulty about reaching the holy anti blameless condition that is contemplated in Scripture is that we have not realised that God has cast our sins behind His back and the other Christian's sins also who is for given. We may often remember sins, and that may do you good too in the sense in which Peter speaks of them – you are not to forget the former purging of them (see 2 Pet. 1:9). That exercise you would never forget. Thus at the Lord's supper the general position is that God has cast our sins behind His back and we are free.

Now these two old men, Joshua and Caleb, were not carrying a lot of troubles of the wilderness in their mind and into old age. They might tell the younger men to avoid certain things that they had been

through in the wilderness, the terrible sins in the wilderness – contention among others. It is bad enough to talk back to your parents, but to talk back to God is what has happened in our histories. We want to know all these places, the places of contentions and all that kind of thing that rise up in the hearts even of Christians, even against God. Peter said to the Lord, Be it far from Thee (see Matt 16: 22); that is, he talked back to the Lord. We can do that because we do not want the suffering way. But as to these old men, Joshua and Caleb, God had said to Joshua, You are old.

Thus if God tells you you are old that is what you are. And there are certain things appropriate to old men and old women. Joshua was taken notice of by God when he was old in view of the continuance of the testimony. What God says to Joshua here – "Thou art old" – should be a leading point with the old brethren. "And Joshua was old, advanced in age, and Jehovah said to him, Thou art old, advanced in age, and there remaineth yet very much land to take possession of". It is confirmed in the book of Hebrews that Joshua was not able fully to bring the people into the land. God used him to bring the people in but they did not fully get possession through Joshua; and in Hebrews, therefore, Joshua is contrasted with the Lord Jesus who is able to bring us in. And the Holy Spirit is said to be the earnest of our inheritance (see Eph 1: 14) to make us enjoy it now. Now it is very profitable to consider that we are talking about an old man or it might be an old sister. How are things proceeding?

Are you thinking of dying and you have these aches and pains and all these things which afflict us all in measure? There is nothing of that with Joshua: You are old, advanced in age, and there remains yet much land to take. There is much to be done in New York; that is what God would say to us. We have not done it all as well as we should. Joshua was not able fully to bring them in, there were many enemies left. And so it is at the present time, the enemy has some scope and there is work to be done and you are old. God did not say, Now I am going to bury you. I think some of us are thinking too much along those lines. Joshua had a time to live yet when he was old and to be effectual, as you should be. There was no answering back with Joshua. He would be humbled that he had been helped

but he had not been able to do the whole thing. That is what we have to say in our lifetime, that there remains yet much to be done in the testimony and it has not been done because we did not do it.

But it remains to be done and God will have things done in His testimony, meaning that the saints are to come into the joy of sonship and to come into the joy of their relations with God more fully than we have. The Lord may have things to bring out yet in the testimony; we leave that with Him. But I think that the Lord has many things ready for us to understand if we would just see. The Lord was hearing and asking questions (see Luke 2: 46). The questions were to bring out things, whether the bad state of the people or to bring out the glory of God.

When we come to Caleb we come to another old man, but he is not called an old man although he tells us his years. Now I think that both things are true in the history of the believer, that God is saying to us we are old – many of us have been many years in the fellowship and in the testimony, – but Caleb represents that same age, because he was contemporary with Joshua, but he represents at that same age what is still youthful and vigorous. We should not say, beloved, that we are too old to take on any matter in the testimony, especially if God says we are to take it on. God is using old brethren. They had a fellowship meeting in a certain place, both brothers who lived in that place were over eighty years old and moved the chairs around, directed the brethren to the parking place, all these things, as well of course as being able to minister; they had to do these things. David provided for the house of God when he was old. He was taking on a great big building matter when he was old, although God had not given it to him to do but to his son Solomon, nevertheless he set the thing on. My son Solomon is young and tender, and he needs help! The young people here need help to come into manhood and take on the responsibilities of the testimony and it is for the older ones to see that we can help them into it. In the beginning of my remarks I mentioned how God has spoken to each of us in our histories, and Caleb and Joshua never forgot what God said to them. God knows that you stood well in a

certain crisis in the testimony, it might be, or in your family, or something in your own history. We have seen that with many; they stand well but the next one comes along and we do not do so well.

But these men stood well in the very serious crisis in the wilderness and God spoke to them and they never forgot what God said, how pleased He was with them at that time and what He would do for them as to their inheritance. What would He not do for you and me, in us and for us? "Thou knowest the word that Jehovah spoke to Moses the man of God, concerning me and thee"; this is Caleb speaking now. The two oldest brothers in the meeting, and how well they are getting on together! He spoke about you and me, it is the same thing; he is going to bless the people in the inheritance. In God's sovereignty Joshua became the leader of the people but Caleb refers rather to John's ministry, the vibrant life in the Christian. That must go along with leadership and yet there must be leadership, and there must be life with leadership which is what Caleb refers to. So these two brothers got on very well in that locality in this sense because they were governed by what God had said to them, how He spoke to them about these matters of the testimony and about the matter of the inheritance, and how they stood at that time. He says, Forty years old was I. Remember that; you brothers and sisters that are up in your seventies and eighties, what did God say to you at forty years old and why are you giving it up, if you are? Great things have been said in this city we need not say. I heard them; others have heard them in Plainfield too, and I take it to myself, How are we doing with what God spoke to us when we were forty years old, meaning forty-five years back? Forty-five years back would take you to 1940; what was God saying in all those years and is that treasured in my heart as if it were yester day? The things which have come out about the service of God, not only the outward order among the brethren – that is important – but the life and vitality which is by the Spirit, and the prophetic word by the Spirit among the brethren continuing. Caleb is bringing up history here.

Forty-five years would not be ancient history; we used to have that in school, ancient history was one course and modern history was another course, so that we have to distinguish between ancient

history and modern history. But history teaches you one thing at least; that is that man fails in every generation; current and ancient history will teach you that. He said: "Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of Jehovah sent me from Kadesh-barnea to search out the land... And my brethren that had gone up with me made the heart of the people melt". That is, there were ten brethren saying wrong things. Caleb stood in that crisis. There are brethren who have left us saying wrong and unfair things it may be. Well, we have to leave that. "The reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen upon me", Ps 69: 9. Some of it we deserve, but if God is amongst His people it is a serious thing to reproach the saints and I would not like to be among any who criticise them. But there were ten men who came from the land and they made the hearts of the people melt and Caleb never forgot them. It says in the book of Numbers that these two men stilled the people (see chap 13: 30); they did not convert them but stilled them. Sometimes God does that in a crisis, the saints do not see everything but they are stilled, the opposition is quieted. David subjected the Philistines, they were still there but they were subdued, and that saved the day.

Now I do not doubt that everyone here has had a history with God somewhere in assembly matters where God helped you to see things and stand for them, but the great thing is to keep in the secret of your heart what God said to you in that matter, to keep it fresh in your heart so that it is available for the brethren today. Caleb is ministering and he refers to John's ministry, the vibrant lifegiving character of the Spirit of God which is to be among the brethren and which will support the authoritative side amongst us. We must have an ordered state of things, but in it there must be life and vitality, and that is what this man Caleb refers to and how he could bring something forward and make it very fresh to the brethren. Caleb brings out how Moses said certain things to Joshua and himself, meaning that he was a very brotherly man; but he also showed the brethren that he was in the good of what Moses had communicated to him; that is, he was in the enjoyment of the land the whole time although his foot was not yet on it; he was a man of faith. Now he is

speaking about the promises that God had made. We want to trust God for His promises. I remember Mr Taylor saying that the epistle to Timothy starts with the promises of God to him, because a young man needs to be encouraged by the promises of God. God has made certain promises to us and we want to trust Him that He will fulfil His promises, such as eternal life. And Caleb is saying, This is the day when these promises are to be fulfilled. You see, when you break bread you will be fulfilling one of the promises of God because the Lord Jesus has promised us the Supper and He comes to us, He has given it to us and it is for us to come into it. It is for us then to come into the land, the service of God; you have to enter in, walk around; it is a good sight. Caleb says: "Now behold, Jehovah has kept me alive": that is John's ministry, you are not looking to die and you are not in a dying company, you are alive, alive to God in Christ Jesus. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death", Rom 8: 2. The Christian is set up not only in intelligence but in life and that is by the Spirit. Then Caleb refers to Israel wandering in the desert. I feel sorry for many of our brethren who are wandering at the present time; many do not act on assembly principles. We feel these things! Such belong to God, they may still say a word for Christ, thank God for that. But Caleb is treasuring what Moses said, the law of Jehovah. Dear young person, it is time for you to get your inheritance. And dear old brother, it is time for you to enjoy your inheritance and show the brethren that you enjoy it. 'The sky, not the grave, is our goal' (hymn 238): show that to the brethren. He says: "And now give me this mountain, of which Jehovah spoke in that day; for thou heardest in that day that Anakim are there, and great fortified cities"; these are the big things that we have to overcome. A wonderful man is this man Caleb! He got Hebron and the name of the city was changed. The name of the city of New York is changed among the brethren. What is the name of this city? The name of this city New York is Jerusalem; we have a secret name, the assembly. It is Jerusalem and that is what it is going to be eternally. John saw it come down from God having the glory of God (see Rev 21: 10), and to come out in testimony. We are not going by the names that men call them

although we have to use them. Paul wrote to the brethren in Corinth, that was their name and was where their postal address was, but I am speaking spiritually. This city was Kirjath-Arba but Caleb is there and it becomes Hebron, it becomes a place in the purpose of God. We are not to take character from the physical city in which we are. The real name of the city in the eye of God is Hebron and it is where David was first crowned; it is the place where most of us first learned to know the Lord Jesus as King. There comes a time when David goes on to Jerusalem but there is a place called Hebron, it is right on the way. These are the names of our cities, Hebron and then Jerusalem.

I just want to refer to the young man. We have had about two old men, and God would love to expand on the older men and the older women and their relations with God and what could be said as to them. But in the prophetic word in chapter 2 of Zechariah (we had this book, by the way, in Toronto and I would like to see more of the brethren at these helpful three-day meetings, to exercise ourselves to be there) God is speaking to a young man as He had formerly spoken to the old men. The Lord does have His way of getting at the middle aged and the old aged, you leave them with the Lord. God is now speaking to the young man and the prophet said: "And behold, the angel that talked with me went forth; and another angel went forth to meet him, and said unto him, Run, speak to this young man". Some of us have been thinking about angels lately and we are going to judge angels, but here is an angel speaking to this young man. I believe, brethren, that the angels are serving us in this dispensation; do not write them off. They not only help us when we drive from here to Plainfield and help us in material matters but they will help you in certain other things too, help you to get the word of God maybe when all of a sudden you need it. Did you ever pull a book out of the bookcase and it had to be the right book! You read something there and it was just what you needed. The Angel is giving a prophetic word to this young man. And the angels are serving you; they are not going to follow you to places of sin; if you go the wrong way no angel is going to follow you in that direction but

they are sent out on account of those who shall inherit salvation (see Heb 1: 14); they are helping persons who are concerned about salvation, eternal and present; the angels will help you in that. If you desire to set yourself for the Lord the angels are right with you in that. God used them in the early part of Luke and He used them in the Acts of the apostles in relation to His greatest servants; both Peter and Paul were served by angels, they both say that, and not only that but angels gave them a word too. They did not only protect them from a storm or in prisons but they actually gave Peter and Paul a word. You study it and you will see. "An angel of the God, whose I am and whom I serve" said certain things to Paul (Acts 27: 23) about the shipwreck. We want to listen that the angels may speak. If the brethren do not speak the angels surely will and they will help us in what is right, they are sent out on account of all those who shall inherit salvation. You and I have a great inheritance. That is what Caleb and Joshua valued. And the angels come in to strengthen that, and I want to be in the way of God's will to get the support of the angels. So it says: "Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein". You say, we are so small, our numbers have gone down. It may be because we have not been faithful enough in the glad tidings, and rather poor at the recovery work; there are plenty to be recovered. "And I saith Jehovah, I will be unto her a wall of fire round about and will be the glory in the midst of her". So what the angel says finally becomes what God says. Notice how the speaker turns; it says: "and I, saith Jehovah, I will be unto her a wall", that is the angel was speaking but now God is speaking, Jehovah Himself is speaking to this young man.

You know, we have to get up and run sometimes, we have to run: "Run, speak to this young man". Young men and young women are hard to catch, that is why you have to run, They are not hobbling along on crutches, they are going along at a great rate in school and business and all these things and maybe with very little regard for the rights of the Lord Jesus and the rights of His people. Do you not think prophets can run? The prophet ran faster than the king of

Israel on that day when the rain came down; quite a long distance too! (see 1 Kings 18:46). Read about that, the prophet ran all the way and he reached a certain point ahead of the king who was in a chariot. The prophets can run, they not only serve locally but they get around. The prophets are speaking, the angels are speaking and we want to hear what they are saying. If somebody is running to see me I want to hear what he has to say. Think of some older ones among us, what are they doing? Running and giving the prophetic word to the brethren. What are you doing? Well, I leave it with you.

God spoke to two old men and He spoke to the young man. May there be results for God from that for His service on the morrow. For His Name's sake.

NEW YORK

26 October 1985

STABILITY

W.Dickson

Hebrews 6: 17-20; Isaiah 22: 20-24; 28: 14-middle of 17; 32: 1,2

I desire, beloved brethren, to speak simply at this time of the stability of the divine system, of which Christ is the centre, as meeting the challenge of apostasy. Why I desire to make it simple is on account of, amongst other things, the presence of younger brethren; some it would appear to me are still at school or college where apostate elements are already encroaching. In the teachings and educational curricula of men these elements can be observed. In John 13 it says of Judas that "he went out...: and it was night" (v.30). That, beloved brethren, covers the dispensation – night. That remains. On account of the rejection of Christ it is night. So the testimony of God is the great bulwark against the challenge of apostasy at the present time.

I want to speak of four stable features – the anchor, the nail in a sure place, the foundation stone and then the great rock. These four stable features lie in Christ and, apprehended by the Spirit of God in the saints, they act as the great bulwark against apostasy. I want to speak very soberly. It is evident apostasy when the leaders of religious hierarchy openly proclaim doctrines which undermine the very foundations of Christianity. It could not be anything else but apostasy. Then there is the introduction of these strange doctrines and cults from the East, and allied to them this horrible traffic in drugs. I am painting a sober picture because there is no believer who loves the Lord but carries these things in their responsibility towards mankind and as having the truth of the gospel in their hearts.

Along with apostasy there is atheism, agnosticism and infidelity. The atheist is a person who maintains that there is no such being as God. How prevalent! The agnostic says there is such a Being as God, but it is outside of man's range to know Him. The infidel will agree there is a God but will not accept that the revelation

of God is in Christ. Now, beloved brethren, it is essential that the people of God should be stable in the presence of these terrible currents which are sweeping over the area which once had, and still has in measure, the light of Christianity. I say all that in a preliminary way because I want to bring Christ before you, the great stable centre of God's universe. Once you grasp by faith, in the power of the Spirit, that blessed Man, that Rock, nothing will shift you, no matter how they try to permeate your mind with false teaching. You will stand firm because you have a link with that Person.

In Hebrews it speaks of the anchor of the soul. A wonderful simile – anchor! We saw it in the days when the big liners were more in use than today, huge liners held by an anchor. But we have an anchor. You may know that old hymn, 'We have an anchor... steadfast and sure'. So it says here: "Wherein God, willing to shew more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of his purpose, intervened by an oath". If you read the beginning of this chapter you will see that it speaks of apostate conditions. It speaks of those who fall away and how it is impossible to renew them again to repentance as they have no work of God in them.

Now, let me say for the comfort of the young people, that once you are the Lord's, nothing can take Him from you. Be assured of that.

That precious blood of Jesus shed at Calvary secures your eternal security and peace. No matter what men may say to you, no matter what the enemy may do to disturb your peace, look at that blood, that precious blood of Jesus, and be assured that nothing will ever take away the efficacy of that blood. These persons in the earlier part of this chapter had no work of God in them, none at all. They had made a profession. In the face of that the writer speaks about two unchangeable things. What are these two unchangeable things? One is the purpose of God, nothing can change that – two immutable things that stand out in the moral universe, God's purpose and God's word. Where are they? You look round in the confusion and you say, Where are they? In Christ. He is gone within the veil.

Think of that, an anchor for the soul. He has gone in as a Forerunner, and as we go in following our Forerunner within the veil

we can take account of these two changeless, immutable things, God's purpose and God's word. What a stable position in the shifting sands of man's thoughts! Jude, the writer who deals with the apostasy, speaks of "spots in your love-feasts, feasting together with you without fear, pasturing themselves; clouds without water, carried along by the winds; autumnal trees, without fruit, twice dead, rooted up; raging waves of the sea" (v 12) – no stability there. Oh! how much more blessed to have an anchor for the soul in that Man who is in the presence of God, our Forerunner, and to go in there and see fixed in Him these two things that can never change, the purpose of God and the word of God.

In Isaiah 22 we come to the matter of "a nail in a sure place". There again it is in the background of apostasy. In verse 15 there is reference to the steward Shebna who opposed Isaiah and was sympathetic to an alliance with Egypt, and God was going to deal with him; and then against that he brings forth this beautiful type of the Lord Jesus in Eliakim the son of Hilkiah. "And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand". That is Christ in resurrection honoured by God, honoured by the Father up there. It says: "And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem". A reference to the Lord's fatherhood was made in the reading – a very touching thought, the Lord as Father. It is worthy of a little consideration. When the Lord was here with His disciples, with His own, He was a father to them. Every need they had, every care, every sorrow, they took to Jesus. It is a fine thing to have fathers in a local meeting that young people can go to with their cares, with their soul exercises with their struggles and temptations. It is one of the great features of stability in God's moral universe. Further it says; "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; and he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open". Now that shows how the challenge of apostasy is come, the challenge of apostasy in regard to the distinctive privileges of the church. We have had that in our own time. The clerical system would take from God's people the distinctive privileges that belong to the church, but

the key of the house of David is laid upon the Lord's shoulder; in other words, that blessed Person will maintain to the end of the dispensation these privileges of the church and this relates to the recovery of the truth in our time. I think it is right to call attention to Mr Darby's tract, 'The notion of a clergyman: Dispensationally the sin against the Holy Ghost' (Collected Writings Vol. 1, p.36). The whole clerical system – and you can bring it historically as near as you like – will endeavour by the apostasy to rob the church of its privileges.

A nail in a sure place is Christ, and all the vessels hang upon that nail. That is wonderful. You and I, sinners saved by grace, do not need to go to any earthly priest, we do not need any accredited religious authority, to have part in the privileges of the house of God. We can go in, we can take up our service, we can approach God, we can sing to the Spirit, we can rejoice in sonship, we can say we are of the brethren of Christ. Why? Because we are hanging, small vessels as well as the vessels of cups and vessels of flagons, on that nail in a sure place. I would encourage you, young brethren, to learn to function as one of the vessels in God's house, a little vessel it may be, but do not be deterred if some of the flagons are in use and you feel your capacity is small. The Lord Jesus will be as delighted to see you empty your little cup as He would be to see that older brother empty his flagon. Where would we have been today without the nail in a sure place? To ensure that these wonderful privileges which we enjoy, which the enemy would take away from us, God has established that great stable point, that nail in a sure place.

In chapter 28 it is again the background of apostasy. The men that rule in Jerusalem say: "We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol have we made an agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us". Think of that! That is what men say today. They say the judgment shall never reach us. They defy God. So in verse 16: "Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I lay for foundation in Zion a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: he that trusteth shall not make haste". Now, beloved, that corner-stone is a

reference to the establishment of God's house down here upon earth. In our time it relates to the preaching of the glad tidings. That is what Paul tells us in the second chapter of 1 Timothy, one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus. That is the tried stone, the sure foundation. Stability in Christ and His finished work and His place in glory is the assurance that the gospel will go out to the end. Let us cling to the truth of the gospel. Let nothing dim our mind as to the pure grace of God involved in the gospel. It has been secured for us at wondrous cost, by the precious work of Jesus, and God has established His house down here upon earth as a place where men can hear the gospel and come into blessing.

The Lord said that the gates of hades shall not prevail against the assembly. Be assured of that. People say that Paul's gospel is old-fashioned; the school teachers will tell you that the Old Testament is largely mythical; the religious leaders even will tell you the resurrection of Christ is not factual. Jesus in resurrection is the tried stone and the precious corner-stone, a sure foundation the theme of the gospel. How could anybody who had the light of God's house close the door of the gospel to enquirers in the light of the fact of this foundation in Zion? Zion speaks of God's sovereign mercy. "He that trusteth shall not make haste". "Not make haste" has a note: 'shall not hasten with fear'. Do not lose courage in the presence of the apostasy. Let us withstand it. Let us maintain the truth, no matter the cost. Let us maintain the truth of the glad tidings. It has been often said that Paul grieved more over the Galatians in regard to the introduction of the legal principle than he mourned over the Corinthians in their looseness. The gospel, beloved hearers, will be maintained to the end of the dispensation.

In chapter 31 it says: "A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment". It is a fine link with what we had earlier. You may say that that refers to the world to come. Well, it is the world to come, but your little local meeting should be a foretaste of the world to come. Have you ever thought of that, that your local meeting should be like the world to come, where every moral principle is upheld and princes rule in judgment? That does not

mean arbitrary judgment; it means that the prince sits on his throne and ministers judgment in grace. In righteousness and grace judgment is administered. The assembly is no place for harshness, but divine rights must be maintained, and will be maintained. They can be maintained in righteousness and judgment. Then it says: "And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the storm; as brooks of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land". That great rock would be Christ: "they drank of a spiritual rock which followed them: (now the rock was the Christ)", 1 Cor 10: 4. Christ is the rock. The reference to the brooks of water in a dry place could be an allusion to the Spirit here – Christ risen glorious on high, and down here the reflection of that blessed Man and the Spirit of God furnishing us with spiritual refreshment, spiritual life and spiritual joy. It is a thirsty land around, outside the sphere of the Spirit, but we can dwell under the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. So when a meeting night comes you say, I must be there; I am going to get my thirst quenched. We drink of these brooks of water in a dry place. The shadow of a great rock is over the companies of God's people. Oh, what stability in an apostate world! Let us stand. Ephesians tells us: "Having accomplished all things, to stand", chap. 6: 13. Let us stand and give nothing up of the inheritance we have received from God at the present time. May you young ones have your part in it, because we depend on you carrying on the testimony in freshness and vigour and power to the end of the dispensation.

May the Lord help us for His Name's sake.

Amen.

MELBOURNE

23 November 1985

THE CHILDREN'S LIFELINE

Elihu in the course of a long sermon to Job, spoke of "the light of the living". The Almighty would graciously grant this to Job and indeed to all who sought salvation. Thus even thousands of years ago there were glad tidings for the needy, bringing many of the blessings which we enjoy in our own Gospel. Elihu spoke of God's favour, of ransom, deliverance, righteousness and of a desire to justify Job. It was an early foreglow of the light of God's desire and power to bless mankind on account of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. All was ready in His heart and it was a matter on Job's part of feeling his need. It is indeed so with ourselves, young and old, who may enjoy the full light of reconciliation, or friendship with God.

David, in one of his Psalms – really a Prayer – wrote of God, known to him as Jehovah, being his portion in "the land of the living". At the time David was taking refuge in a dark cave because his life was in danger although he had done no wrong. The land of the living is very much like "eternal life", known when all around seems touched by darkness and death. You may not know much about this blessing but it is one that is given to us in the glad tidings. The Lord Jesus promised it as a fountain springing up within the believer.

David in his painful experiences felt as if no one cared for his soul. But his God cared for him. You can never say that no one cared for your soul because there are those, maybe many, who pray for you and you have been baptised in faith that you would come to know the Lord for yourself.

Scripture also speaks of "the bundle of the living". This at first sight seems a strange picture-word to use, but this too is just another of the blessings that divine love has in store for us according to the glad tidings. Believers are not intended to be merely so many individual persons but when indwelt by the Holy Spirit we are bound together for the greater enjoyment of what is really life. This helps to explain that there is "one body in Christ", and having the Spirit we are members of it. As in your human body, each member must do

its own distinct work for the benefit of the whole. Do you know your place in the body of Christ?

J.C.Evershed