

A
WORD
IN ITS
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Edited and Published by :

E.C.Burr,

50 Red Post Hill, London SE24 9JQ

THE FAMILY OF GOD

John 1: 11-13; 11: 1-6, 17-40; Genesis 44: 18-34; 45: 1-10

R.D.P. The brethren will have noticed in recent times that our attention has been drawn in ministry to the testimony: how we are to be kept in the testimony; the power that is able to maintain us in the testimony; and at Glasgow a few months ago, how the testimony is to continue in the face of apostasy. I think we would all be exercised about this. One thing we can be sure of is that the testimony of our Lord will continue. The question with me would be whether I will be here as having a living part in it.

I wondered if we might look at one of the basic things which I feel underlies the testimony, and that is the blessedness of our relationships and affections together as in the family of God. In the first scripture read John describes those who comprise the family of God: "but as many as received him, to them gave he the right to be children of God". John is very direct, beloved brethren. He cuts through very much by way of formality. He writes in a day in which breakdown had already set in. He starts quickly in his gospel without very much by way of introduction or preamble, and he introduces immediately the blessedness of the Man who fills the heart of God. I think that is how we get entrance into the family of God. We immediately have brought upon our view the greatness of Christ.

You could speak to any true believer about the greatness of Christ and you will find that you have a link in the family of God. We can speak to every true believer about the blessedness of what God has done in Christ and find that we have a link together in Him. I believe that John then shows us that the development of family affections and relations is not a matter only of our standing, but it involves a moral work in us. It is those who receive Him.

Then I thought in John 11 we have those who might suggest to us some who make up this family – Mary and Martha and Lazarus.

They might be typical, I suppose. There is much in this chapter that I could not open up to the brethren, but there is just a suggestion that

they are set together in family relations and the Lord wants to develop things amongst them. There are things that can be developed in the family that cannot exactly be developed in a more formal way. There is teaching in the family that is not formal teaching. There are affections and links in the family which you do not exactly get as convened as in the assembly, and I think the Lord may help us at the present time so that family affections and relationships are developed and maintained amongst the saints.

John's epistle tells us that the two things which mark the children of God, the family of God, are that they practise righteousness and that they love one another (see 1 John 3: 10). Among the many things which are to be maintained among the saints is love and respect for one another, because the enemy will attack the testimony through this basic thing. So in John 11 we have the way that the Lord Jesus Himself works with them in the family to promote and improve their relations together and to open up the truth as to Himself and as to what is out of death.

Finally, in Genesis, the family side of things was completely awry. Let us make no mistake about it, beloved brethren, that if we allow unfriendliness and suspicion and all that is connected with that line of things amongst the people of God, it can quickly lead to a murderous spirit. That is what happened amongst Joseph's brethren; it says that they could not greet him with friendliness.

These are very serious things. They start small, beloved, but I think it is a day when we need to be simple and plain about that because the enemy would attack what is precious to Christ. You find Joseph, typical of Christ, working with his brethren that they might be restored to him. Joseph is marked by that. He says "I am seeking my brethren", Gen 37: 16. We should all be doing that, not just those we are privileged to walk in fellowship with, but generally; with a heart that is in some way like the heart of God we should be seeking our brethren, beloved. Perhaps we could get help together.

J.R. It says "not of blood, nor of flesh's will, nor of man's will, but of God". That involves what is moral, does it not?

R.D.P. I thought so. As we have been taught it is not exactly only new birth. New birth is something mysterious, the work of the Spirit of God in relation to each one of us. It precedes conversion. But to enter into the relationships and affections of the family of God involves that there is a moral work with us. It involves that we receive Christ. Now that would not only be historical; that would be present too, and John of course brings out that it is very practical because he speaks about loving the brethren and links it with our love for God.

J.R. It says: "but as many as received him, to them gave he the right", and then: "to those that believe on his name". Are these two features which give us title to be children of God?

R.D.P. Yes, I thought that; and it shows too that the mere religious principle which marked the Jews at that time was such a wretched thing: "He came to his own, and his own received him not". There is nothing in mere religion, beloved. John sets all that kind of thing aside, the way that man would dominate the things of God; John cuts right through all that and gets to the heart of it – how we receive Christ. The vital thing at the end of the day is how we are in relation to Christ.

J.R. It would almost seem that those who receive Him and believe on His name are unlikely persons. The likely persons publicly would be "his own", would they not? It says; "He came to his own, and his own received him not; but as many as received him". They might be unlikely persons like ourselves, do you think?

R.D.P. Yes, "as many as received him"; God gave them the right to be the children of God. Is that not a very dignified thing, that God gives a right to persons who receive Christ? Think of His feelings for those who received the One whom the Jews rejected. It has been said that when the Lord Jesus was here He was acknowledged by Satan but rejected by men. Think of the feelings of God, beloved, that even the evil spirits in the gospels are forced to acknowledge Him: "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God" (Luke 4: 34), and yet He was rejected by men. Think of the feelings of God as to

anyone here, any young person who has received Christ: "To them gave he the right to be children of God".

R.S.R. In 1 John 3 it is 'See what love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God' (v 1), but in this passage: 'to them gave he the right to be children of God'. Now, what do you say?

R.D.P. Well, it is an interesting distinction. John's epistle brings out status; "See what love the Father has given to us, that we should be called" that, but here I think it involves what is moral. It has been said that receiving Christ involves that there is some moral fibre in your soul that can be used

later in the resolution of good and evil. Would that be right?

R.S.R. That is very good. Do you think that the passage we are now considering would suggest what is substantial: "to be children of God"?

R.D.P. I think so. John has in mind the way in which the saints, the children of God are here in this world as representing Him. Paul speaks about sonship, which is very largely the way the saints are in relation to the heavenly side of the truth, what they are in relation to God. But the children of God the family of God, is put down here, in the place where Christ has been rejected, a testimony of the features and the characteristics of the God whose children they are. It is a very dignified side of the truth.

R.S.R. Would you think it elevates our view of one another, to view one another as in this wonderful family, children of God?

R.D.P. Yes, I am sure that is right.

W.D. Would not 'received' involve the affections as well? It seems to be implied in Romans 15 as to receiving one another, our affections go out to one another, and that would be related to the way we receive Christ into our affections, would you say? .

R.D.P. So the whole matter of the family involves affection, love expressed. Even in our natural families normally there are relationships enjoyed, there are things understood, there is always

love flowing. The family side of things cannot tolerate distance or strangeness, can it? And this is a relationship into which God has brought us. He has given us the right to be it here. Now, how can we speak about the testimony unless our relations in the family of God are as they should be?

W.L. These verses come in in a very exalted setting. Up to verse 10 it is the greatness of Christ; then immediately again verse 14 returns to the greatness of the Person, but these two verses come in just at this point. It elevates the thought of the children of God to a very dignified level, does it not?

R.D.P. Oh, that is right, and how great Christ is! "The true light was that which, coming into the world, lightens every man. You can speak to every believer and find out where the family is by speaking of Christ. If you go to someone and immediately start speaking about the claims of the fellowship you may find difficulty in making a contact but you can speak to anyone and find if they are true believers by speaking of the greatness of Christ. You will find too a link there in the family of God. Now you may find as you go further, as you will maybe, that there are things needing adjustment that involve our walk, but it is a precious thing to touch the family.

W.L. As we do that with persons you can bring them on to this elevated ground.

R.D.P. Yes, "as many as received him" would involve the resolution of things in me that are also alien to Him.

A.C.C. Why is it that such vital, important truth should be presented negatively, in these three negatives?

R.D.P. Will you help us, please.

A.C.C. Did the Jews not pride themselves in descent, lineage, culture and position, as if they had some right in the flesh, but, as you said, John sweeps all that aside. You cannot conceive of a human family like this, can you?

R.D.P. No, it is important to see that, that it is "not of blood". The features of the family come to light on this moral line, and there is

something that has the characteristics of the Father really, born of God. It says: "not of blood, nor of flesh's will, nor of man's will, but of God". It is a very dignified and precious thing, and as you say, it is apart from nature. Now often we allow natural relationships – even in assembly- matters – to influence us and they always do harm.

The older brethren here may feel that they are not affected by them any more. Well, let somebody say some thing against one of your children and see if you are still affected by it! Or about your brother or your father, you will know that this line, "not of blood", needs developing with us. That is what is characteristic of the children of God.

R.T. Is one of the first features of receiving Him displacement, one man displaced in view of another Man reigning?

R.D.P. There must be displacement. That is what we mean by what is moral. You can take things in mentally, but what is moral involves that there is a resolving of what is good and evil within, and what you say is right, that in receiving Him there is displacement. It is very practical too, because John tells you that receiving Him means receiving the brethren, means receiving those who belong to Him. Perhaps we should keep that in mind and go on to John 11, and consider the three persons there. We could also bear in mind the scripture in Luke 10 where Martha was distracted with serving.

They really set out those who make up the family side of things, and they needed adjustment. I think it is a fairly normal sort of process here. They had come to know the Lord Jesus, He had a place with them, and that is a fine thing, but it needed developing. He speaks in this chapter as their Friend. That is a fine thing when the Lord Jesus is our Friend, but it is not the final thing. You come to the next chapter and He is their all, is He not? Jesus is their all. In John 9 we have the individual, then in chapter 10 we have the sheep and the One who cares for the sheep, the Shepherd, and so on, and here in chapter 11 we have the family. We may wonder why the Lord, the One who cares for the sheep, does not intervene here and stop these circumstances developing which bring in so much sorrow but

He deliberately stays away because the features of the family of God are to be worked out amongst them.

J.R. Do you think in this chapter it may be somewhat the blood line? What I mean is the natural links are there. But in chapter 12 there is no mention of the natural links; it is for the glory of God that the Son of God may be glorified by it. What do you say about that?

R.D.P. I believe it sets out the condition that we have known ourselves and very often still do know, of persons who were together in a relationship that involved an appreciation of Christ. But the development of the family that is aside from the blood line required His own personal touch, and it is fine to see that He attends to it Himself. In the family the Lord Jesus Himself takes on really the role of parent, it seems to me. Would that be right?

J.R. Surely. He calls His own 'children' in chapter 13 of this gospel. He is like a Father to them, is He not?

R.D.P. Then in both this scripture and the one in Genesis you get the overcomer. Mary is like the overcomer, and I think you need the overcomer in relation to family links. We may think of the overcomer as a very active person, perhaps one who speaks a lot and so on but Mary and Benjamin set out the overcomer in a certain quiet way. I think they represent devotion to Christ.

A.McB. In verse 4 He says "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it".

Besides the power of what He did in raising Lazarus, are you suggesting that His glorifying is in these persons, and particularly in the overcomer?

R.D.P. Well, I wondered that, but I would like you to say more.

A.McB. I think it is very fine. This has been equated to the mount of the transfiguration, has it not? This is John's presentation of it, and it is very beautiful to see what He is actually doing in these persons. His own glory is shining in these persons themselves.

R.D.P. Yes, and it is not exactly something for publication or memorial here. You do not get with Mary's action in the next chapter

that "what this woman has done shall be also spoken of for a memorial of her" (Mark 14: 9), because it is the family; it involves the secret treasure of the children of God in relation to Christ. He makes Himself known to them here as the Son of God, and again it has been said somewhere that the peculiar treasure of the family is the knowledge of the Son of God.

W.D. Should not every exercise amongst us lead to the glory of God? That seems to be the theme that runs through Scripture even to the great climax of things in Ephesians 3; "glory to God in the assembly" is the great consummation of all the Spirit's work.

R.D.P. So earlier in the book you get the "works of God", do you not? In John 9 it is "that the works of God should be manifested (v.3), and here it is "the glory of God". All of us here know what it is to pass through various circumstances together that God allows in the ordinary course of things, and He would use it all that we might be developed in family relationships and a greater knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

R.J.C. Is it interesting the feeling way in which the Lord enters into these circumstances? I thought of what you said, He is the Son of God. He could have exercised His power without expressing these deep feelings that come out in Him. Do you think we are intended to be affected by that in view of this kind of feelings working out in relation to one another?

R.D.P. I wondered that. It says that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus". He loves, we may say, the family idea; He loves every one of that family individually. His love was greater than their love, and that will always be, but what feelings are His set out uniquely here – "Jesus wept". Think of that! I know there is very much teaching connected with this chapter but think of Him working with these three people that relationships might be adjusted amongst them, and His own place amongst them might be becoming supreme. I believe that is the family. As was said earlier, there are traces here of the family according to blood, according to nature, but as you come through to chapter 12 you are beginning to touch a

holy, quiet, restful, appreciative, worshipful atmosphere in which there is something being expended upon Christ effortlessly in the automatic flow of love.

J.R. So, as you said, the Lord loved each one of this family; and they could count on that love because they said "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick". They knew it was a love they could count on.

R.D.P. What a fine thing that is! It is a love you can count on! He heard. The fact that He waited the two days was no reflection upon His love. The fact that He allows certain things amongst us, certain sorrows that sometimes, we may feel, He could have prevented in His power, does not reflect on the love of Jesus, but is intended to develop something amongst us which could be developed in no other way.

J.R. It says: "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus. When therefore he heard, He is sick". His love took them this way. In fact they could possibly have learned the Lord no other way.

R.D.P. I wondered that; I wondered if in some way the Lord is not passing us through a way of circumstantial pressure in these present days because we could learn Him in no other way. It is surely not without point, beloved, the circumstantial pressure and sorrow that the Lord is allowing some of the saints to pass through. Maybe it is that we can learn Him in no other way. It is not exactly doctrine, that is what I am trying to say; it is not exactly some point of truth. You can wrestle with a point of truth, but this is the knowledge of the One who is your Saviour your Friend, your Lord, and in the family relationship that is reflected in the way in which you treat those who form part of the family.

J.S. Do you think the appreciation of how He loves each one should help us to appreciate those He loves, and respect and love them?

R.D.P. Yes, and of course that is not just the people we break bread with; it is the respect that is due to all those who receive Christ. The family of God is a very wide area of things and there is a respect due

to every one in that family, because there are persons who have made a way in their hearts for Jesus.

J.A.G. All this would encourage exercise about the Spirit of holiness amongst us in a formative way. He is "marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection of the dead", Rom 1: 4. You can see that pervading chapter 12. I wondered if this is how we come to it.

R.D.P. So there is a lot of orthodoxy in this chapter. The Lord speaks to Martha of her brother rising again and she says: "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection in the last day". We can hold truth in a mere orthodox way. We know that we have a heavenly portion, but what the Lord is bringing in is that in the family the preciousness and tenderness of those links are to be known now. I like what you say about holiness because it involves clearing away orthodoxy, and John dispenses with it.

J.A.G. We can become very learned and yet have very little impartation.

R.D.P. Yes, very little impartation. It is fine to see how the Lord is working with this family. Go back to Luke and you find Martha cumbered with much serving and she criticises the Lord but she is not criticising here. She is not exactly right, but in the family things improve. They improve almost imperceptibly as Christ is given His place.

J.H. In verse 20, as Jesus is coming, Martha went down to meet Him and it says: "but Mary sat in the house". It seems to be a characteristic feature with her. She, "having sat down at the feet of Jesus was listening to his word" (Luke 10: 39), and here she "sat in the house". Would that be a good moral feature in the family?

R.D.P. I think that is right. Mary is the most spiritual; I am sure we would all admit that some are more spiritual than others. Mary represents a very spiritual feature. Martha is perhaps not so spiritual, but she is one whom Jesus loved, and there is something very creditable here, that she goes out to meet Him. Now, in the family, you make as much as can possibly be made of every feature

of every member of the family. God loves to do that. He loves to make as much as He possibly can of every member of the family and every feature of Christ that comes out in them.

J.A.T. Is our blessing in each member being in relation to Christ Himself? Not a lot is said about Lazarus, but in resurrection it is what is incorruptible, it is not on natural lines, but we must be in relation to Him to get the gain of one another.

R.D.P. I believe so. The three chapters 9, 10 and 11, are a progression really. In John 9 is the man who says "One thing I know that being blind before, now I see" (v 25). He grows in his appreciation through that chapter until he is introduced to the Son of God. He is a person who is solidly grounded in his own appreciation, in his own link with the Lord Jesus. We must have that. It is not a common link. And then in John 10 you get the flock and the Shepherd's care for the flock, but here you may say those persons are set together in relation to one another to work out things down here representative of God.

J.D.G. The overcomer feels the gain of "I am the resurrection and the life", does he not? That is the challenge the Lord puts out to Martha: "Believest thou this? "

R.D.P. Yes she says, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection in the last day". That is orthodox. That is something that we all hold in our hearts, I suppose, that there is going to be a time when the dead in Christ will rise. The Lord says "I am the resurrection and the life". Think of the power of the family imbued with the blessedness of such a truth as that, and the knowledge of it, and they were to prove it – "where was the dead man Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from among the dead".

J.D.G. The great exercise is whether we are living. "Every one who lives and believes on me shall never die". That is one side of it, but "He that believes on me, though he have died, shall live". The exercise today is whether I am living in relation to this wonderful family that you are speaking about.

R.D.P. I think it is, and I say it is true if it is true. Are we receiving Christ? To those who believe on His name – that would be, I suppose, His testimony, the testimony of Jesus, the One who was here. As receiving Him and believing on His name you come into this family and then there seems to be these gentle exercises in the family that result in increasing spirituality.

R.T. You marvel at the Lord's patience with their questions. He bears with all that they say. He bears with the graveclothes, all these things. Would that not be to develop patience in the family, that there is what is right there but things come out, and they are led on to resurrection and life eventually?

R.D.P. Yes, I am sure that is right.

J.R. 1! was Martha who had this light, "I am the resurrection and the life", that wonderful statement; and then she makes a remarkable confession, does she not, in verse 27? She arrives at something of appreciation of Christ the Son of God.

R.D.P. "The Son of God, who should come into the world. And having said this, she went away and called her sister Mary secretly, saying, The teacher is come and calls thee". There is no criticism of Mary here. There is no, "Dost thou not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? " Luke 10: 40. You see, it is the family setting.

As has just been said there is no impatience with them. You do not have that in the family. We sometimes get impatient with one another, especially if somebody seems to be not clear as to something, or perhaps less spiritual, but think of the patience of the Lord, and He just works quietly on with them. How do you work in your family? You do not say, Well, this one is much brighter than that one, I will concentrate on this. You build on the best features in all, and I think that is something that the Lord Jesus would do amongst us and develop in us.

R.T. It is a wonderful thing to maintain an ideal and yet have the patience to go through the exercises to reach that ideal.

R.D.P. Yes, we would need the Spirit of God for that, would we not? Mary was a listener, she listened to His word. There is no progress

in family relations unless we listen to Christ.

J.S. So when she moved she had to come to the place where Martha had met Him. Do you think that would develop this family line, that there is a respect for one another as having a touch with the Lord? We link on with that.

R.D.P. It is a very practical thing, respect for one another, and we need to be developed in it. It is no use merely saying that you must have respect for the brethren; let us find some thing to respect in them. If the work of God is there you will find that there will be some thing to respect; and Mary came to this place that Martha went to.

She did not go her own way, she came to the place where Martha met Him. You have more to say?

J.S. I was just thinking in a simple way that Mary is the more spiritual and yet Martha has had a touch with the Lord and Mary would regard that rightly and link on with it.

R.D.P. Yes, that is good.

W.W. Would there be, in the family, mutual affection without partiality? The Lord loved each one individually – Lazarus, Mary and Martha – but there would be love circulating in the family one to the other. I was thinking of the way the Lord calls it a new commandment in chapter 13: "that ye also love one another" (v 34), and the standard is "as I have loved you"; and then again in chapter 15; "as I have loved you". "No one has greater love than this, that one should lay down his life for his friends", John 15: 13. He is the wonderful example for us in this expression of affection, is He not?

R.D.P. So love is the great operating principle. What makes a house into a home is when love is operating in the family, is it not?

You can have a house, and it is a cold and empty and bleak place unless love is operating there. That is what makes the family. If you were asked to write down what it was that turned a house into a home, you would be hard pressed to do it. It is the enjoyment of relationships, the experience of relationships and the experience of the warmth of love.

Perhaps we should turn to Genesis. Here we have the family of Jacob, and this is a far cry, you may say, from the situation at Bethany, because what had come into the family of Jacob was the spirit of murder, and they had actually taken Joseph their brother whom they had envied and hated because of his dreams, and they had sold him into Egypt. Only in the mercy of God had they been preserved from killing him. You say, could this possibly be, beloved? Well, I think we need to search our hearts and be alerted at the present time that the lack of friendliness that marked Joseph's brothers led them eventually to a murderous spirit. Here Joseph is coming to the point where, in all his operations with them, he is to make himself known to them, and he is bringing them to himself.

The key expression in chapter 44 is Joseph "was still there". Wherever we may have been, wherever we may have gone, Joseph is "still there" – Christ is still there, and He is still working in relation to the family to secure them, you may say, on a right basis. What comes out here is the way that moral exercises have so worked that the features of tenderness that our brother spoke about are coming to light.

W.M.G. In Hebrews 12 we have the word, "watching lest there be any one who lacks the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and many be defiled by it" (v 15).

R.D.P. Well, that is what had developed here. There had been a whole long line of love – Abraham's love, Isaac's love, Jacob's love – but what comes out in his family is hatred. It is a very sobering consideration that it leads them on this awful course, really a murderous course, but Joseph is still there. Surely we need to take care at the present time, beloved brethren, as to our relationships together and what we allow in our thinking of one another, because these chapters are a warning to us as to how far things can go when the spirit of the family is not maintained.

J.R. Judah comes to appreciate his father does he not? "My father", he speaks of and "our brother". Earlier they had said, "Discern now whether it is thy son's vest or not" (Gen 37: 32), but here he appreciates family affections.

R.D.P. Yes. You know, if someone does something personal against you, you can leave that with God because he will surely bring persons round to a right way of feeling. Judah had had to come a hard way. Judah had lost two of his own children in the interim. God had touched him where He knew it would affect him, so that the man who earlier had a part in the cruel report to his father now says, in effect: Ah, my lord, I would rather lay down my own life than that I should bring further sorrow upon him. Now, that is fine, beloved. "Jesus wept". Something of the tenderness of feeling that our brother was speaking of down here is beginning to come out in Judah. He really is ready to lay down his life.

R.S.R. And Joseph manifests such a marvellous spirit. He says; "And now, be not grieved, and be not angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither, for God sent me before you to preserve life". That is the spirit of Christ, is it not?

R.D.P. That is fine; no condemnation, no reproach. There is just the gladness, you may say, that here at last family affections are coming out. Joseph had no desire that they should reproach themselves about the history, or to go over the cause of it all. God had used it all for the preservation of life. It is the family, beloved. There are persons here today who are affected in their own families, even naturally, and they know the wrenching of heart there can be. Think of the feelings of Jesus in relation to the family of God and the way that He would work so that true family affections might come to light. He is still there; Joseph is still there.

R.T. Joseph asks a key question: "Have ye a father, or a brother?" If we acknowledge that we have a Father and have a brother, we could not be independent in our thoughts or have our own opinions, could we?

R.D.P. That is fine. He is probing them gently, is he not? "Have ye a father?"

J.H-n. Part of the trouble at Corinth was not many fathers.

R.D.P. Yes, that is right, and it can be ours too unless there is a tenderness of feeling; it is very easy to become hard and let things

just pass you by. God is not having that in His family. His family involves that the feelings of Christ are there, and He is going to work with us gently to bring it about. He may use what is governmental to reach His end with me. In a previous chapter Simeon ended up in prison because of this course of things, but eventually Joseph is bringing them to his house.

R.S.R. says in Acts 7: "and the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren, and the family of Joseph became known to Pharaoh" (v 13). Is that really what is in mind in the teaching you have been bringing before us?

R.D.P. Yes, I think so. The family becomes known. There is something valuable learned in it that you cannot touch in formal teaching. You do not exactly teach your children advanced mathematics in the family; that is another sphere. But what comes out in the family is respect and love and a great appreciation of basic principles that work in the family in an unselfish way. It is a very wonderful thing when that is working fully amongst us and when each one is having his or her part in it.

D.L.S. Would you say something more about the place that Benjamin has in this.

R.D.P. He represents the overcomer, does he not? He represents, you may say, that link with God; when all was far away and broken and hardness of heart, Benjamin was there. He had no part in the guilt, no part in the shame of Joseph's delivering up. Yet what impresses me about him is that according to the record he does not speak. Think of the overcomer in a place. It may be a sister in whom there is an unswerving devotion to Christ that continues when the brethren are perhaps not together as they should be.

Uncomplainingly and unknown the overcomer goes on and God is going to work and use that feature in the restoration of family affections.

J.D.N. The Lord works through the overcomer, you might say, in these two cases: the overcomer in relation to Mary – when Jesus saw Mary weeping and the Jews with her weeping; and Joseph uses

Benjamin here. Unless you bring Benjamin, the matter will not be resolved, will it?

R.D.P. That is why I wondered whether in these two scriptures you get the overcomer, but in a quiet way and in relation to the family.

The thing with the overcomer is that he goes quietly on with what is of God. When all around, you may say, is breaking down, when persons even exhibit real bitterness, the overcomer goes quietly on holding what is of God, and the true family thought for God. Do you think that is right?

J.D.N. I think what you say is important. Neither of them say anything. Their influence is more than would be expressed in words. Would that be right?

R.D.P. Of course there is the side in which the overcomer is active. Other scriptures would bring that out, but I think there is the side in which the overcomer is in a certain way in quietness and devotion to Christ. Someone has said somewhere that devotion to Christ is very rare.

A.C.C. It is the quality in genuineness as Judah's exercises come out in the fact that as yet Benjamin is guilty. The matter has not been resolved about the cup, yet he steps forward, prepared. Is that not a family quality and feature, prepared to take on the guilt and responsibility?

R.D.P. I think that is very helpful because as you say, the guilt was not resolved here. You may have said, all the evidence is that Benjamin had taken this cup, all the evidence is that he was in the wrong and that he had forfeited his liberty because of what he had in one, but the family involves that you come in and take responsibility for it in the spirit of love, not for yourself but for others. I feel that, as a basis for having to resolve matters amongst us, we need that spirit. Would you say that is right?

A.C.C. Yes, that is what I thought. Even although matters may not be clear, you can count on the family character, the family spirit operating in view of carrying things through, pending the moment when things will be cleared.

R.D.P. Yes, and I do not know whether it was ever raised again about the cup in Benjamin's sack. It almost is just left there. It is like an exercise that is raised only so that relationships might be adjusted; and in the greatness of Joseph's reception the whole thing is carried through.

R.J.C. There was a basic affinity between Joseph and Benjamin, was there not? But he does not make himself known to his brethren when he sees Benjamin. I wondered whether he waits until, in a certain sense, the qualities that mark Benjamin come to light in Judah, a certain honesty and purity, transparency. It is when that comes to light in Judah, when something has been worked out in the family, that Joseph makes himself known to his brethren.

R.D.P. I think that is good. In this relationship that is what he waits for. He waits for this man. He says: "Ah! my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears". He says in effect: This is disastrous, it is going to result in my father's death, I would rather die myself than that the old man died. This is the spirit of the family. He would rather be a bondman for ever than that his father should suffer any more sorrow. How could you go on, beloved brethren, holding to your point of view and seeing your actions causing loss and sorrow amongst the saints, if you are in the spirit of the family, if you knew something of the heart of Joseph? And it is when this spirit comes out in the heart and expressions of Judah that it says, Joseph could no longer restrain himself and he made himself known to them. Beloved brethren if we are anything at all, it involves something of divine feelings amongst the saints.

W.W. Previously these feelings had come out in Judah. Remember when he says, "But let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother, our flesh" (Gen 37: 27) and 1 Chronicles brings out that "Judah prevailed among his brethren, and of him was the prince", chap 5: 2. I wonder if the power able to prevail amongst the brethren would be dependent on our carrying things before God.

R.D.P. I am sure that would be so. There is no automatic power that we are entitled to· it involves what there is inwardly working out

amongst us.

E.W.J. Would it be in so far as we have imbibed the Spirit of Christ? What the Lord has borne for us all! It seems to me that there is the character of divine love in a spirit which can bear things. There is no complaining but you see things and bear them. '

R.D.P. So that he really lays down his life for his brethren here. He says, Take me as a bondman.

J.A.T. Do you think there is now a compatibility between Judah and Benjamin? It would seem that something had been going on since Joseph was lost to his father, something was going on still at home in relation to Benjamin.

R.D.P. Yes, something was going on in Benjamin and something was going on in Judah. At times we all know what it is to be hard; perhaps we should say to one another: Have ye a father, or a brother? Do you appreciate the preciousness of the links in the Lord Jesus that we have with one another? We have been knowing what it is to suffer loss, losing some of the brethren at the present time. Have ye a father, or a brother?

J.A.T. In our localities where we are responsible it is not satisfactory just to say, "One is not".

R.D.P. It is a very interesting thing because in the goodness of Joseph's heart here he says, Do not reproach yourselves; God meant it for good. In the working out of things God will, of course, bring good out of everything, but it is always our responsibility. He brings the brethren through the preceding chapters to the point where they recognise and see their own responsibility in it. In fact in verse 16 of this chapter (44) they say: "God has found out the iniquity of thy servants".

R.S-e. Can you help us as to why the apostle Paul went first to Corinth before he went to Ephesus?

R.D.P. You say what you have in mind.

R.S-e. I was struck by that; he went by the upper districts to Ephesus. The Corinthian state must be settled first. There is no

moral power or weight apart from separation.

R.D.P. I think that is right. What you say is good, that he goes by way of the upper districts. I just wonder how we would have resolved this matter of Joseph. He takes a period of time and he works away with them in their circumstances and upon their affections. This is a very blessed result here. This is not a partial recovery; this is not something where you may say, Well, he could have said something a little bit better. You could not have anything better than this. Judah says, Take me for a bondman, but do not bring my father's hair down to Sheol. It is a very fine thing. The feelings of God are coming out, and we can be sure of this, that God will work things out. There will be nothing left that needs resolving; it will be resolved, and at the conclusion of it we shall get these blessed words of Joseph: Do not reproach yourself; God meant it for good.

A.C.C. That expression in verse 14, "Judah and his brethren", comes into Matthew 1. Matthew speaks about "Peter, and Andrew his brother", "James... and John his brother", chap 4: 18,21. He makes a great deal of that, does he not? And then too, "If therefore thou shouldest offer thy gift at the altar, and there shouldest remember that thy brother has something against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go, be reconciled to thy brother", chap 5: 23,24. He is working with that all the time in view of the truth being worked out in the assembly.

R.D.P. I think what you say is helpful. We have relationships together in the assembly, and in the kingdom. These are all areas, you may say, slightly different from what we have here, but I believe this is one of the great basic matters that governs us as we are together collectively, that we are together as of the family of God, and the relationships that are proper to that, you may say, underlie these other things.

R.S.R. One thing stands out in Judah: he is prepared to take the blame. That is one of the last things we are inclined to do, but it wins

the day. It was thinking also of Abigail. She took the whole blame, and yet she was blameless.

R.D.P. I think that comes out in the family. That is Judah here; he had not taken the cup, he had not been involved in the matter, yet he comes forward when he did not need to come forward and takes the whole responsibility.

R.S.R. I was looking at that verse: "And now, let thy servant stay, I pray thee, instead of the lad a bondman to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brethren". That is a very fine spirit.

R.D.P. A very fine spirit! "And Joseph could not control himself before all them that stood by him... when Joseph made himself known to his brethren". I believe that the Lord made Himself known in John 11, and Joseph makes himself known here. You may say the setting is different, but it is the area of the family.

J.M. Is the motherly side important in regard to the family relations? It comes to light in the epistles and was seen with the Lord when He says, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! ", Matt. 23: 37.

R.D.P. The motherly side is a very precious thing amongst us, because a mother does not let things go easily. A mother holds on to her charge to the very end and that feature is certainly part of the family.

D.McG. I wondered if what you said earlier in regard to something being instilled into our souls _ at the beginning of our conversion would help us later on in life. It says of Jacob that he was a homely man. I wondered if in th.at there was the background to the over comer going on quietly in all the family vicissitudes and circumstances.

R.D.P. I think that is very good and helpful. He was a homely man and dwelt in tents. There were characteristics that came out in his brother which were opposite to that, but Jacob was a homely man.

Even the very word conveys something. He was content to dwell in his home.

J.A.G. Would you say that, on the basis of this, God almost commits everything to Judah

- the sceptre, the lawgiver from between his feet, our Lord has sprung up out of Judah. It is out of this kind of setting, "for Judah prevailed among his brethren" (1 Chron 5: 2), not over them.

R.D.P. I think that is very helpful. "The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come", Gen 49: 10. Beloved brethren, how much God appreciates this feature of Christ coming out in the saints!

D.R. Does that confirm what you said at the beginning, that the testimony really draws its vitality from the family.

R.D.P. That is very good. All that is involved in the testimony of our Lord is treasured and held in His family, and the representation of God is here upon the earth. Sonship, Paul brings out later, graces the whole thing, but the basic underlying thing is the children of God, and what John does all through his gospel is to bring before the children of God a blessed Man; right the way through to the end you can trace the Man of John's gospel, and he sets Him before the children of God so that they might portray Him here.

D.R. A representation of terms in the testimony without affection would be powerless.

R.D.P. Well, that is a searching thing, and yet Joseph is going to work with them. He is still there, and Christ is still there after all these years, and thank God we can say that some of us in our experience, when we have been away, have proved that He has remained and He is still there today.

R.S. Would this make way for sanctuary feelings, do you think? It says, "When Israel went out of Egypt... Judah was his sanctuary, Israel his dominion", Ps 114: 1,2. Do you think these were the feelings beginning with Judah there?

R.D.P. I think so. That is very good.

EDINBURGH

1 January 1986

Key to initials

R.J.Campbell, Glasgow; A.C.Craig, Airdrie; W.Dickson, Edinburgh;
J.A.Gardiner, Aberdeen; J.D.Gray, Edinburgh; W.M.Grosse,
Edinburgh; J.Haggan, Newcastle; J.Harthill, Glasgow; E.W.Johnston,
Edinburgh; W.Lamont, Cumnock; A.McBride, Grangemouth;
D.McGregor, Lochgelly; J.Marshall, Edinburgh; J.D.Newberry,
Hamilton; R.D.Plant, Birmingham; J.Renton, Edinburgh; R.S.Renton,
Edinburgh; R.Stenhouse, Edinburgh; D.Robertson, Cumnock;
D.L.Stewart, Edinburgh; J.Strachan, Dundee; R.Swan, Edinburgh;
R.Taylor, Barnet; J.A.Turner, Chippenham; W.Wallace, Hamilton

BUYING

R.D.Plant

2 Kings 4: 1-7; Matthew 25: 1-12; Ruth 4: 1-6; Revelation 3: 14-20

Someone reminded us the other night that the hymn that we started with (No.262) was written by a convicted murderer¹. He received from the authorities of his day what the thief on the cross described as the just recompense of what he had done. He received from God eternal peace; the whole of his debt, his moral debt, his debt to God cleared, the whole of his future secured in Christ, and it cost him nothing, beloved. The gospel always affects me; I suppose it does you. There used to be another verse to that hymn:

'Sins of such horror to forgive,
Such guilty, daring ones to spare -
This is Thy grand prerogative
And none can in that honour share.'

That is how we have all come in, beloved; it is why we are all here today, because. God has exercised His prerogative in His infinite mercy to us. That hymn says:

'Soon shall this strange, this wondrous grace ,
This perfect miracle of love,
Fill the wide earth... '

Does it affect your heart, beloved? It cost the hymn writer nothing.

The thief on the cross turns to the One who was dying alongside Him and receives eternal blessing. It cost him nothing. The price has been paid; you can have the same thing: peace with God, all your sins met, all your history of sin and self-will all that awayness from God, the secret history of sin that most of us have known and maybe you still do – the cross still stands unchanged God is still propitious towards you and what He has to offer is free, it costs you nothing. There is a parable that says, "But as they had nothing to pay, he forgave both of them their debt, Luke 7: 42. You may think I

have got mixed. up and thought this was the gospel preaching, but the gospel must always enter into what we say to one another – it must. How are we to keep the preciousness of Christ before one another? How are these family affections to be worked? How can you help me if, though I am a believer, I become dominated by my own will? Do you think you will do any good if you come and tell me only how wrong I am? If I am a believer at all, talk to me about the preciousness of Jesus the One who met my case years ago, and you might well find that the way that God met me in my sins those years ago is the way that you will el? recall me to Christ, and the wonder of it is, beloved, that it is free. Romans says '*freely*', does it not? – "being justified freely his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood", chap 3: 24,25. If you do not have that, beloved young one, seize on to it today; it is not a time for trifling with the things of God. You can have it today, and you can have it free.

Later in Romans Paul refers to the free gift in grace – "much rather has the grace of God, and the *free* gift in grace, which is by the one man Jesus Christ, abounded unto the many", chap 5: 15. You can have it; it is free. And again: the *free* gift of righteousness – "and of the free gift of righteousness, reign in life by the one Jesus Christ", chap 5: 17. In 2 Corinthians Paul speaks of another gift – His unspeakable *free* gift (see chap 9: 15), which would refer to the Holy Spirit. We shall be in glory, beloved, not because of a single thing that we have done, but because of what Jesus has done. We speak about our responsibility and our part in the testimony, and it is right, but we shall be in glory because Jesus has done it all. that is the glad tidings, and it is for you, and it might be today the last time it is for you.

You might wonder, after all that, why I wanted to speak about buying things, because that is what these scriptures I have read speak about. They speak about what is to be bought. What I have said is true and will always be true, that our blessing, our salvation, our hope and our anchor is in Christ, and it is offered on the basis of repentance and faith in Him, but I used to be told when I was a bit

younger that to know Him is to love Him, and to love Him is to serve Him, and if you want to serve Him you find it is going to cost you some thing. It is not exactly going to cost you money. Money has no value in the terms that I am speaking of here. What it is going to cost you is something by way of displacement of the first man; it is going to cost you what you want to do; it is maybe going to cost you your thoughts and your opinions; and ultimately, with a man like Paul, really it cost him his whole life. He says, "For me to live is Christ", Phil 1: 21.

I read this first scripture in 2 Kings which sets out a very sad picture of a woman who says, "Thy servant my husband is dead, and thou knowest that thy servant feared Jehovah; and the creditor is come to take my two children to be bondmen". Now, we have been taught that the debt here is not the gospel debt. She is really like a believer. It is not that she owed a debt to God; the debt to God has been paid by Christ. What this woman was finding was that she could not meet her debts here. You know, beloved, if you seek to serve Him, you will find there are things that you would need to do, and you will need a power for them, the power to do things. The power to buy things, to purchase things, involves the Holy Spirit. But she was going to lose everything she valued here. By application she was going to lose all her enjoyment, all the present blessing of Christianity, all the present way of what she had in Christ, she was going to lose it all. Why? Because she did not have anything to live on. She had obligations she could not meet, and that is a very real thing, beloved. There are obligations upon us as believers on the Lord Jesus and as those who seek to serve Him. You will find you have obligations to meet and you will find, initially' at least, that you do not have the means to meet them. One of the things that we are commanded to do is to "love one another; as I have loved you" (John 13: 34) – the words of Jesus. You say, Oh, I do not have any difficulty in loving so-and-so. He or she is my best friend, I have no problem. But what about the brother or sister you love the least? Or a young person may say, I do not have any problem speaking of the Lord at the meetings, I do not have any difficulty at times like this,

but on Monday, when I get to work, I cannot bring myself to bring the name of the Lord Jesus forward. I cannot do it, and I remember it every time I sit in the meeting, I feel this guilt in my mind that I am not faithful to Christ. These are real things. There are persons here who will know something about what I am saying, persons here who know what it is to sit in meetings like this, and to feel that nagging of guilt in their minds that really they are not faithful to Christ. They are not able to bring themselves to be faithful to Christ. Or there may be young men here who cannot bring themselves to take part in the service of God, to yield themselves to the Spirit to help and serve is people; they feel that they cannot do it. This woman in my application was like that, and because of it you are losing all your Joy, all that is worthwhile. It is a sad state to get into. If it is any comfort to you, beloved, it is something that anyone who is real knows something about. If you know anybody who says they do not know anything about such things then they do not know much at all.

If it is any comfort to you young sister – we forget the sisters sometimes – those feelings of wanting to do something for the Lord Jesus and yet not finding the power to do it, let it be a comfort that all this has been anticipated in the Scriptures; it is all known about, and the power to meet it is the Holy Spirit of God, "his unspeakable free gift". But you say, How do I get it? How do I help myself as to this?

The prophet comes in here and he does not give her anything, he does not do anything for her he does not give her money or some other income. He says, What do you have in the house? And she says, A pot of oil. That is the Holy Spirit. If you are a believer at all if you are a believer on the Lord Jesus and art of the assembly and you have the Holy Spirit you may not appreciate it, you may not have fully used that wonderful gift, but if you have the Holy Spirit, you have a pot of oil. She says "Thy handmaid has not anything at all in the house but a pot of oil". You may say, I have nothing except what I heard about in the gospel, and it does not seem to be able to help me with this situation I am in in my life down here. What she had to do here was to make some room for the Spirit. Now that is a practical thing, beloved, because initially she had to increase her indebtedness to make room for Him. I have a word for all of us here

because I think what it means is that you' take on some more responsibility. This locality and area generally is blessed of God. There are older men and women of wealth in the knowledge of God in this area of Scotland that other parts of the country do not have in the same numbers but they will not be here for ever. There is a need for some of us to take on more responsibility. There is a need for some of us to make some more room so that the Holy Spirit can fill it, and you will find that the spiritual wealth and resource that you do not seem to have will begin to be acquired – it will cost you something as you make room practically for the Holy Spirit. That wealth does not just come from learning, it comes from making way for the Spirit. You find you can pay your debt and, as the prophet says here, live on the rest. I hope the brethren will bear with the word.

The passage in Matthew's gospel is a parable. Bear in mind in all that I am saying that the buying I am talking about does not involve money, it involves you. That is the currency – you, your time, your thoughts, your affections. This is a solemn word in Matthew 25. It says that there were ten virgins and five of them were wise and five foolish. Scripture is very sparing when it uses 'foolish' in this way. You might think that there are men and women in the streets of Edinburgh on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day who are foolish in what they do. You might say quite strongly and rightly that there are young people who are wasting their lives by the way they live them and how foolish it is. But Scripture says that if you take up the profession of Christ without being real you are foolish. Oh beloved young one, and older one, this is a very real word. This speaks here of the public profession of Christ. It speaks of the fact that there are ten persons here and they are all holding forth the torch, you may say, of Christianity and it is shining. You know, there is no greater torch than that which the brethren profess, there is no greater truth than the truth of the assembly, there is no greater profession than that here amongst the saints today, and all of them had the torch, but it says five of them were foolish. Five of them, beloved, half of them were not real. You may say that is a very strong word; it is a strong

word, beloved. That is why I started with the gospel because if you are not real, you will be lost. You might share in all the privileges and the blessings, and I know that that is one of the things that is enjoyed at the present time at meetings like this, the blessedness of the fellowship, enjoyment of the company of the saints. This time of year, holiday time, the chance for an extended experience of it and, thank God, there is enjoyment. I would not suggest at all that, especially young people, might not enjoy the company of one another and the saints but if you are not real, you will be lost. That is what it says, "But in the middle of the night there was a cry, Behold, the bridegroom". I know it has been used powerfully in ministry as speaking of the present recovery of the truth, but perhaps we can think of it as being final, the time, you may say, when the Lord Jesus comes, and some of them find they have been living in the meetings and living in the privileges, and living in the blessings, and living on the kindness of the saints and all these things, all of which are given unstintingly and gladly and continually and yet they have never bought the oil. Have you bought the oil, beloved? In all your enjoyment of the fellow ship, have you ever bought anything in relation to it? Did you know that the fellowship we so enjoy is also the fellowship of His sufferings, the fellowship of His death? Have you bought anything, beloved, in the personal transactions of your soul with the Lord Jesus? Have you bought something, have you made it your own? Has the preciousness of Christ gripped your heart? Oh, beloved, would that we were more real, would that there was more in me of reality in relation to Christ.

Paul says, "To know him, and the power of his resurrection", Phil 3: 10. Would that there was more with me! And the word given to them is: "Go... buy for yourselves". You cannot get that from the brethren. It is a solemn time, Scripture speaks about it, that there will be persons who, in our terms, perhaps came to all the meetings, enjoyed all the truth, perhaps took part in it, maybe spoke of the Lord Jesus, the lamp shining, but in themselves, in their personal relations with the Lord Jesus, they had no dealings with Him. Solemn word: I will not dwell on it. It says at the end: "Verily I say unto you, I do not

know you". Pray God no-one in this room will hear that word. The gospel is for us,-and it is free.

As to the scripture in Ruth, it has been said somewhere that every scripture has an immediate bearing upon the person who reads it. You might find that a little difficult as you read the Old Testament; I think it is the truth, it is not just history, it is not just a story about three or four thousand years ago, it has an immediate bearing on you. This scripture here can be applied, as we know, to the way the Lord Jesus has come in redemption in relation to persons like you and me. When the law, which I suppose the kinsman would speak of, did not have the love or the ability to redeem us, Jesus has taken us up and paid the price. But I want to apply it in another way. This was a real history here; it literally happened, and I wanted to apply it to you and me; let Boaz be you or me. It comes to a point where the secret history, you may say, that had preceded in Ruth comes to be public in the gate of the city, and the challenge is there in the gate of the city. He says to the kinsman, This is what has happened: Naomi has come back, the one that went out in unbelief to Moab, and she is selling the land that was our brother Elimelech's, and I thought I would tell you about it and ask you to buy it from her. You know, in one way Naomi would represent one who had light from God, the light of the gospel, the light of the truth of the assembly, the light of the glory of Christ, the light of sonship; she could represent that in application. Her history through this world down here, you may say, had been chequered.

Unfaithfulness had come in but she had come back. Thank God that the light of Christ is still here, beloved, but something else had come back with her – Ruth the Moabite. Now, Scripture says that the Moabite was not to come in to the generation of Israel for ever (see Deut 23: 3), and if you put yourself in the position of these Israelites here, there would be what was distasteful in Ruth. You could imagine the Pharisees – or their equivalent in that day – saying that the Moabite should not be here at all. Beloved, especially younger ones, things have entered into the testimony that should not have entered into it, and some of us here bear large responsibility.

Sad things have entered in. The people of God have been down to Moab and sojourned there, and sorrow and loss have come in through it. How much has been lost through the unfaithfulness of men! Elimelech died and both his sons died, but there has been revival. We are in a day of revivals while we are here, but what comes out of Moab with Naomi is Ruth. She says in one place: "I am not like one of thy handmaidens", Ruth 2: 13. So Boaz says to this man: "Naomi who is come back... sells the allotment... Buy it...And he said, I will redeem it". You know, there are many people, beloved, who are ready to take on the light of Christ, the light of the truth, many people who are glad to take on, you may say, the terms of God's disposition to men; but he then says: "On the day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess". It brings out here, I think, that in divine things not only do you have to take on the truth in its terms but also the persons who are the Lord's down here, and you have to take on beloved especially younger ones, some things that have entered into the testimony that of themselves represent breakdown and failure.

Some of the companies of the saints are small and scattered; it was not always so. There has been departure and drift away by many to a lower standard of things and we must own our part in the weakness that man's will has brought in. Something had come in through Naomi's departure that in one way was a constant reminder of it. That is Ruth – that is my application anyway of Ruth. And Boaz says, "On the day thou buyest the field... of Naomi... thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess". Oh, be prepared to buy what Ruth would speak of! Be prepared, beloved younger one, to take on that which has come in by way of failure in faithfulness failure in responsibility, and yet you will find that mysteriously in Ruth there are the features of the overcomer today; a precious line of committal to God and to His people is there, and in fact she comes in on the line that leads to Christ. You will find a great blessing in it if you are ready to buy it. It will cost you something, cost you something to be identified with reproach, with those who seek to walk in separation; it will cost you something but be prepared to

meet that cost and you will find in your buying that you are coming into the greatest blessing that you can have today.

We will finish by referring to the scripture in Revelation. The brethren are familiar with these addresses to the assemblies. We are taught that the last four of the addresses are typical of certain features among the people of God which go through to the end – Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. I suppose all of us here would be able to say that Thyatira speaks of Rome and all that it stands for; Sardis, Protestantism and all that that stands for; and Philadelphia – well, how often we assume that it refers to ourselves – we would never claim it, of course, but how often the inference is there. Let us take care. We were speaking the other night about lowliness; there is one step, it seems, from Philadelphian freshness and power to Laodicea which speaks of the lukewarm state of Christendom. I wanted to say just a word about Laodicea. I do not think they were bad people in Laodicea; they do not represent these modern so called religions which are so common today. Let especially the young people beware of the efforts and power of the devil in the world, especially the religious world at the present time, to draw you away from Christ. I do not think Laodicea speaks of that, but beware of these things that the modern world is bringing in, beware of its cannot get out of. Especially young persons, take care. The enemy is dressing up the vilest things in a guise of religion at the present time, and he will ensnare you with them if he can. But Laodicea, I think, refers to persons who in the main are associated with the Scriptures and the truth; I expect they would be regular attenders at the meetings. They would be persons who had all the books, but they were self-satisfied and lukewarm. You will notice here it is a question of taste. You might say it looks alright, but it does not taste good to the Lord Jesus. Oh, beloved, let us be awakened out of the sleep that marks those foolish virgins in Matthew and see that what we need to have before us is what Christ loves and what is for His heart and what are His interests, and we shall find that our blessing follows. So He has counsel for those at Laodicea who said they were rich, grown rich, and had need of

nothing. Let us take care of mere formality. We pray in the prayer meetings and yet perhaps if someone asked you the following night what you prayed for, would you be able to remember? Let us take care of a mere routine of things, beloved. "Have need of nothing": He says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold purified by fire". Gold would speak of everything that has to do with God; it is the knowledge of God, but not philosophies, beware of admiring its cults because you might find a snare that you gleaned from books. The fire of God has burned, beloved, it burned at Calvary. The fire of God has burned, and Jesus has borne the fire, yet He has been cast out of the world as worthless. We need "gold purified by fire", the reality of the truth as to Christ, His sufferings and His glory – buy that! "White garments that thou mayest be clothed": think of Paul at Ephesus; he brought out the whole counsel God, but what was his clothing? He says, Ye know how I was with you... serving the Lord with all lowliness and tears and temptations", Acts 20: 18,19; that was the testimony of Paul. If someone at Ephesus had asked, Do you know Paul? they would have said, Ah, yes, he comes to our house often, he comes and helps me when I am low, he is there when I am in need; if there is some one up the road in trouble or has problems he goes there. He knows how to weep with them. He is the evangelist. What are our garments, beloved, as we go through in the testimony? Is it some religious garb, or is it the fervency, the simplicity, the humility of person who is seeking humbly to walk here the light of Christ? A helper of many – I think Paul would be that. Then He says, and eye-salve to anoint thine eyes" – buy that! I will sell it to you, He says. It is available to us at the present time "that thou mayest see". You might well see the saints I suppose, in all that they are. They are not heroes, beloved. There is no-one here who is without their cares, without their problems, without their weaknesses. There are very few who do not have sorrow of some kind to bear. There is no-one here who does not know what it is to be weak and need help at times. We all need the help of God, need the help of the Spirit, need encouragement. Young persons have particular difficulties at the present time. Older persons here never lived when they were young in days like today; the young need

sympathy and help and understanding, beloved. Then older persons down here, beloved young ones, have borne through some very difficult years. Some of them here have lived through two world wars, they have known a depression, they have known privations such as you have never known. Do not forget it. Always see them that way; that is how the Lord Jesus sees them. There may be times when you find them a little bit irksome – bear with it. Remember that God has worked in them, they have spent their years in the courses of the school of God. Oh, let us love one another more, beloved, see things as they really are. Let us see men too, some with lines of sorrow and degradation; see them as you speak of them when you preach the gospel, persons sometimes in desperation, for whom life has little meaning. The world is full of them, the world has no answer for them. Are our eyes opened to things as they really are? Do you ever pray for them? Men and women and boys and girls in some parts of the earth are dying because they have no food or water. Beloved, do you ever pray for them? Think of the feelings of God going out! See things as they really are, beloved. It is the time when the fullness of the gospel is going out. ! here are disasters on every hand, and God is surely speaking; it is a time for the gospel to be preached, it is a time to be real. John that we started with is speaking to believers. Let us all be believers and helped to be maintained as believers, for His Name's sake.

EDINBURGH

1 January 1986

THE VALUE OF CHRIST'S DEATH

J.N.Darby

If we examine the value of the death of Christ, what do we find attached to it in Scripture?

Do I need redemption? We have redemption through His blood, an eternal redemption; for "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption". (Heb 9: 12).

Do I need forgiveness? That redemption which I have through His blood is the forgiveness of sins, yea, "without shedding of blood is no remission". (Heb 9: 22; Eph 1: 7).

Do I need peace? He has made peace through the blood of His cross. (Col 1: 20).

Do I need reconciliation with God? Though we were sinners, yet now hath He reconciled us in the body of His flesh through death, to present us holy and unblameable and irreprovable in God's sight. When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. (Col 1: 22; Rom 5: 10).

Do I feel the need of propitiation? Christ is set forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood. The need of justification? I am justified by His blood. (Rom 3: 25; 5: 9).

Would I have a part with Christ? He must die; for "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit". (John 12: 24). How have we boldness to enter into the holiest? By the blood of Jesus; by that new and living way which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh; for till that was rent the Holy Ghost signified by it that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest. (Heb 10: 29; 9: 8).

In the power of what was the Great Shepherd of the sheep brought again from the dead? Through the blood of the everlasting covenant. (Heb 13: 20).

How was the curse of the law taken away from those who were under it? By Christ's being made a curse for them; as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree". (Gal 3: 13).

How are we washed from our sins? He has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood; for His blood cleanseth from all sin. (Rev 1: 5; 1 John 1: 7).

All was love, no doubt; but do I want to learn it? "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins". (1 John 4: 10). Do I desire my conscience purged? It is through the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God. (Heb 9: 14).

Having thus presented the value of Christ's death from Scripture, we leave it to its own force without comment.

From The Simple Testimony

July 1891

ONLY ONE MAN

Only one "Man" to be trusted,
Only one "Man" to be praised,
Only one "Man" for the Father,
That glorified Him all His days.

This is the "Man" that's rejected,
This is the "Man" that has died,
This is the "Man" that's ascended,
And patiently waits for His Bride.

This is the "Man" of His purpose,
This is the "Man" of His plan,
This is the "Man" of His pleasure,
Sat down at His Father's right hand.

This is the King that is coming
To set up His throne in display;
Hallelujah! for ever and ever
The Spirit doth even now say.

Author unknown

THE CHILDREN'S FORGIVENESS

Everyone who reads these lines must remember at some time having to say words like these, 'Mother, I am sorry, please forgive me'. From the depths of her love mother can say, 'Alright, I will forgive you, never mind'. But although – and indeed because – God is Himself love there must be a work, besides a word, before forgiveness can righteously be granted and known by the sinner.

That work is the work of atonement, or covering of sins, which Jesus came to do and completed to the glory of God. By reason of this work God forgave repentant sinners of ancient times and its virtue will last for time and eternity.

I have read that there is a most beautiful view of the Bay of Naples from the summit of Vesuvius but that some people who climb the mountain do not enjoy the view. Why do they not? Because the mountain is a volcano and there are strange rumbling noises and quiverings of the earth. Also from deep in the mountain's burning bosom comes hot acid smoke so that some people doubt their safety. They are too occupied with thoughts of their own danger to enjoy the scenery. No sinners can enjoy the wonderful prospects of divine grace and glory spread out in the Scriptures until they know themselves safely in the place of forgiveness before God.

David, in a Psalm, said that "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us". One could travel east or west for any length of time: they never meet. I have heard it said in preaching that Scripture is wise not to speak of north and south. As soon as anyone reaches the farthest point north there is nothing to do but go south! God does not forget our sins which would be weakness, but He remembers them no more which is the power of His love. Do you enjoy His forgiving love?

J.C.Evershed

Notes

[←1]

This is not in fact true – the hymn is, however, reported to have been a favourite of converted convicts transported to the penal colony in Van Diemen's Land