

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 181

April 1988

Contents

[THE FALL AND RISING UP \(1\)](#)

[DIVINE RIGHTS](#)

[THE CHILDREN'S LESSONS](#)

THE FALL AND RISING UP (1)

Luke 2: 25-40

A.C.C. "This child is set for the fall and rising up of many in Israel".

It is not in mind to concentrate on the fall - that is painful enough - but rather on the rising up. It may be necessary to speak about the fall, but I wondered if in this first reading we should get some sense and feeling as to whence the fall was. That was the word in Revelation 2: 5: "Remember therefore whence thou art fallen" - not the point to which the church fell but the point from whence it had fallen. It was with that in mind that I had this section read. I think Simeon and Anna would in a way prefigure what was set up in perfection under Paul's ministry. There is a certain idea of completeness in the picture with the man and the woman in a locality in Jerusalem. You could not improve on that - a man in Jerusalem - neither could you improve upon what was set up under the Pauline ministry. That does not exist publicly now - that is true enough - but the light of it remains; and it is from that that publicly the fall has taken place. So it is right to get some idea as to how the church publicly was set up under this ministry.

I think Simeon would represent first of all the anointed vessel in a place, a vessel for the Spirit, and then too some idea of the sanctuary with the ark enclosed, the service of God proceeding. All that belongs to the spiritual side: Anna represents more the historical side. But first of all the spiritual side is seen in Simeon. That is an indication of what we might look into.

E.P. It sounds as though it could be very helpful to us. As to the fall it is fall and rising, is it not?

A.C.C. Yes. The fall comes soon enough. We need to get some idea of what was accomplished through the activities of the Spirit and the service of Paul, and then the rising up again. Though the fall has taken place, the rising up again, as we hope to see later, corresponds, not in public glory certainly, but in moral quality with all that was set up in the beginning. But let us inquire into this matter of

what has been set up, to see the great place that the Spirit has in this system.

B.D.F. Is there something important in "that thou hast left thy first love", Rev 2: 4? Do we need to get back to first love in view of arriving at this point?

A.C.C. Yes, I think that is the truth; there is sufficient available in the Spirit to bring us back to something which corresponds in moral quality with the original.

J.N.G. So what is said here - "Lo this child" shows that everything is focussed in Jesus; the prophetic utterance at this point was connected with "this child". As you mentioned in prayer, the testimony is the testimony of Jesus; that is the form that things have taken in these last days.

A.C.C. Certainly: after all, He is the great subject, and everything attached to Him, as you well know, is bound to go through. Whatever may come in in the interim by way of breakdown, whether it be personal or in the church, things set in relation to Christ are bound to go through. That is the great encouragement and safeguard for all of us, to have the sense that we are vitally attached to Christ. Whatever else might be in the profession, the thing is that we are linked with Christ.

A.V.W. Simeon was stimulated as he took Jesus into his arms. Would he have a sight of the perfection of things from God's side which was now coming in in our blessed Lord?

A.C.C. You are taking us on pretty fast!

A.V.W. I was carrying what you said as to the fall, but the view of what God has from His side helps us to see things properly and to get back in our minds to recovery.

A.C.C. I think it is beautiful; it is very stabilising to get hold of something that has been established. You may say, but it is broken down. But wait a minute, do not go too fast. First of all get a sight of what has been established and, too, realise that there is sufficient to give us some taste of that again. That is what we set ourselves for.

But we want to get a clear view of what has been set up. Here is a man in Jerusalem, and I say you could not improve on that, with all the light of the purpose of God and the thoughts of God set up there. He is a vessel for the Spirit. What a view comes before you, not only the church period, but there he is with the Babe in his arms, and he is blessing God and blessing the people. It is a picture of the world to come, the Melchisedec priesthood in function, blessing up and blessing down. When we get a view of the church proper, everything, including the world to come, must come within our range of view. There is this Child: bring in Christ and you bring in everything, the whole new world.

J.N.G. Is Luke writing under the influence of Paul's ministry?

A.C.C. Certainly. "The world to come of which we speak" (Heb 2: 5): who said that? Paul - at least the writer of the Hebrews, and we all believe it was Paul. Simeon is a fine man, "the Holy Spirit was upon him"; he represents the anointed vessel.

E.P. It is very attractive; it says "it was divinely communicated to him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death before he should see the Lord's Christ". And they "brought in the child Jesus". The simplicity of it! The attractiveness of Christ!

A.C.C. It is! And what is proceeding? It is a pouring out of what God has down here: that is the anointed vessel. Think of what He had in Jesus here in this gospel! In chapter 4 He was the true anointed vessel - "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" (v 18). But then the Spirit has come in to perpetuate Christ here; and whatever may be the obscurity, whatever may be the breakdown, the anointed vessel is here.

J.St. So we are being prepared for the world to come, but God is preparing something here that is going to fill the world to come; the greatest thing that God has ever had is being prepared now.

A.C.C. We are inclined to have a very narrow view of things, but if we get a sight of what the assembly is, what has been set up under Paul, we cannot have a restricted view. There may be limitations, fewness of numbers, and pressure, but if we get a view of things as

set up by the Spirit in this dispensation in its pristine glory we are bound to have an extended view.

L.C.P. We see in Jesus here, a Babe – outward weakness - yet, as you say, what is there under the eye of a man in Jerusalem!

A.C.C. There is bound to be what will receive Him when He comes in. It must be so: God will see to that. Well, what is there today in the way of what belongs to the anointed vessel that is competent, capable of receiving Christ? Do you not think He comes? And when He comes in what is there that would in some sense be true of what belongs to the original?

A.M.D. The whole of heaven was in this matter. Earlier it says "the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they feared with great fear" (v 9), and then "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men" (v 14). It looked on to the good pleasure that would be in men.

A.C.C. That is true and it is to be continued. If you think of the anointed vessel, you belong to that, I belong to it. In the realm of the profession, in Christendom, today there is much crudeness, an unrefined way of thinking and speaking, and how much of the flesh there is, and here is a wonderful situation where we have part in the anointed vessel, God's possession here, baptised by one Spirit into one body, "so also is the Christ" (1 Cor 12: 12); we belong to that. What refinement there should be with us then when we think of the way in which we have been taken up and anointed by the Spirit!

B.D.F. Do you think that there is a moral correspondence in Simeon? "This man was just and pious, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him" - as though the Spirit would be with that kind of man in view of promoting Christ.

A.C.C. That is very good indeed; I am glad you refer to "just and pious", because if there is to be any degree of sensitive feeling as to the anointed vessel (and we do not claim anything, but we belong to it) there must be the moral foundation for it, and "just and pious" is that. There is what is there subjectively wrought by the Spirit in view of the anointing; you cannot dissociate the anointed from that. You

say, a man has gift, that is everything. It is not everything, there must be the moral basis for the gift to operate.

J.C.F. Is the way into the assembly by way of a little child?

A.C.C. That is true but that is our side of it we accept that position - converted and become as little children. But what we are saying is important and we all want to be clear about it, that for the anointing to be in function there has to be the moral state. At one time we made everything of sovereignty, everything of gift, and missed our way, and that is still being done. The great thing is that there should be a moral basis for the anointing.

L.H.B. I suppose this godly man would have seen a good number of children come in like this, but here is One who has come in in a special way and it thrills the hearts of both that man and that woman - the presence of Christ as brought in. There must have been some moral feature in Him as a little child, do you think?

A.C.C. At any rate the Spirit was there, and Simeon was available to the Spirit for this great moment, as you say this unique moment, when Christ is brought in. It shows that where we are just and pious, in the simplicity of that, we are available to the Spirit as belonging to the anointed vessel and we immediately detect the presence of Christ.

L.H.B. Would you say that, as we see moral glories in Christ, they are to be reflected in us, and that that is the moral basis in us?

A.C.C. I think that here it is a question of what the Spirit is doing, and to emphasise to us the importance of the Spirit's service, and directing to Christ. As set up under Paul's ministry the great gain of that is brought out. I think that the moral side is needed, that for us it forms a basis, but the emphasis, I believe, is on the activities of the Spirit. First of all we belong to an anointed vessel; we accept that.

Think of what that does to you, the feeling of that! Then, too, Simeon has the word divinely given to him by the Spirit. Now he represents the oracle where the mind of God is coming out. These things belong to us; there is the oracle, he has the immediate mind of God, and then, too, He comes by the Spirit - these three things.

The whole of his activities, every function, goes on in the power of the Spirit. I believe all that is brought up to emphasise to us the importance of the Spirit's service; and all that came into evidence under Paul's ministry.

T.O'C. Simeon came into the temple by the Spirit. How important that is! How do we attend a meeting? Do we come in the Spirit? If so, then we would enjoy what the Spirit brings before us.

A.C.C. Certainly, most important. It is remarkable that a man who does not belong to our dispensation is taken up to set out what has been set up, as far as I can see, under the great ministry of Paul who had a heavenly ministry.

A.M.D. It says that "God has made him ... both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2: 36) and "has poured out this which ye beyond and hear" (v 33). It is a matter of what is demonstrated before our eyes, what is shed forth.

A.C.C. Yes, that took place at Pentecost, and from the beginning the anointed vessel was there; when the Spirit came in the anointed vessel was there. Of course it takes Paul's ministry to bring out the light and the truth of it.

A.V.W. You are stressing that these moral qualifications must be present if the thing is to function, that is that the Spirit is free to bring this greatness in in any locality.

A.C.C. These are the things we lack and you cannot hope to be spiritual if you are not pious. These are simple facts, and our forefathers, 50 years ago, 100 years ago, before we were in the testimony, were far more pious than we are.

J.St. Coming in by the Spirit would imply that I have been walking in the Spirit. That is Paul too, of course; "Walk in the Spirit", Gal 5: 16. But as we are doing that practically we would come to the meeting and be able to come into things.

A.C.C. Yes. It seems very wonderful to me that we have the anointed vessel, and the oracle in function, so that we do not need to be in the dark about anything, we have the solution to everything in

the Spirit available to us to say something into our ears. What more wonderful system could you have than this. We are set up in the Spirit here; Simeon "came in the Spirit".

J.N.G. It is a wonderful thing that the anointed vessel is still here in the face of a world that is becoming increasingly independent of God; the Spirit of God is here.

A.C.C. That is true, although it has become obscured because of the breakdown.

J.N.G. And it is to be seen even in one person.

A.C.C. Very good; that is right. It seems to me that Simeon represents also another great truth the new man in Ephesians (see chap 4: 24), has no antecedents, he has no tribal connection, his age is not given; we assume that he was an old man, but I think he is so absorbed with Christ that, even though he were a young man, he would have wished to go. He represents the new man in Ephesians, entirely new, whereas the woman, I think, represents the new man as in Colossians 3: 10 - young and fresh over 100 years old, so buoyant and fresh. That is the new man in Colossians, it never grows old, that is the idea. She has antecedents, she represents the historical side, the moral side.

B.D.F. Would you say more about being pious.

A.C.C. I think it is good that we should be detained on that because there is so much that passes muster nowadays which is not piety at all, only empty profession. Take the epistles to Timothy and Titus; there are no other epistles that stress piety so much. Now why is that? Because you have to do with the house of God. "Great is the mystery of piety" (1 Tim 3: 16); that is connected with Christ again.

G.R.W. Is that why it is *Holy* Spirit here? In the scene in which we are would the emphasis be on that? Not that we are dwelling on that side, but it comes in; "Be careful in his presence" (Exod 23: 21) is the word.

A.C.C. Yes, I am quite sure we need an increasing sense of that, that He is the Holy Spirit. A sense of that would deepen with us a

need for piety, that there might be more scope for Him.

A.V.W. You spoke of the contrast between previous generations and our own. Do you think that, in view of the conditions about us, we should be straining ourselves all the more not to be on a casual line of things as exists in the world. Without realising it we have dropped tremendously from the level that our grandparents maintained.

A.C.C. I think we should stand out in piety, not to draw attention to ourselves - we can do that without being pious - but we should not be average, we should be more than average. You will notice at the end of Mark, which brings up the matter of piety, there are emphatic people. It speaks about Mary of Magdala: "She went and brought word" to the disciples, chap 16: 10. Then the two going to Emmaus: "they went and brought word to the rest" (v 13). They were emphatic people, standing out in the presence of the profession, of what is average or nominal. We should not be nominal, and we begin with piety.

A.V.W. Why does the scripture use the word 'mystery' in relation to piety?

A.C.C. I think it represents all that was there in Christ, right from His incoming to His being received up in glory. Those who are initiated and who belong to the anointed vessel can understand this somewhat. The mystery of piety was all that was here for God - "this child".

K.L.C. The psalmist speaks of loving Jerusalem: "they shall prosper that love thee", Ps 122: 6.

A.C.C. "Let my tongue cleave to my palate; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy", Ps 137: 6. Well, that is fine; we should think about the assembly in that connection, it would help us to come into line with the Spirit.

K.L.C. You were speaking about Anna and the freshness and youthfulness that we see in her. "They are still vigorous in old age, they are full of sap and green", Ps 92: 14.

A.C.C. Very good - because "they are planted in the house of Jehovah" (v 13). They are planted there; so she was.

J.R.S. Would you say that, if we have desires after Christ and after the assembly, and are concerned to be morally right, God will help us? Paul finishes the first epistle to the Thessalonians with "Now the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly: and your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v 23).

A.C.C. I am glad you referred to 1 Thessalonians. I think that Simeon fits in there; he was waiting for the rapture. I think that Anna was waiting for the appearing but Simeon the rapture. That is what we are waiting for. It was one of Paul's specialities. Although John brings in the rapture too. "I am coming again and shall receive you to myself", chap 14: 3. Still, I think it was one of Paul's specialities, the great truth of the rapture, and Simeon was waiting for that.

B.D.F. Paul speaks to Timothy a lot about piety and he links it on with not loving the present age and things that are here; is that a line of things to bring to a young man's attention?

A.C.C. Very good, that is piety. The affluence that there is, in our country for instance, where they boast about taking care of a person from the cradle to the grave, and they look after people well, could be used to rob us of our piety and our trust in God. It is not that God would not enter into it and make supplies for His people but it should not rob us of the sense of dependence on Himself and trust in Him. That is what He likes.

B.D.F. It speaks of Barnabas as a "good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith, Acts 11: 24. Is that the kind of man you can trust in the assembly today?

A.C.C. That is very good. You get to know God in piety and in working out things with God in simplicity and trust.

J.N.G. The reference to "A pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons" would link on with that. It was not a position of great affluence here.

A.C.C. No, that is what marked Joseph and Mary; the Lord came in that way and it is characteristic of Him all through the gospel. There was no room for Him, none in the inn. It seems to me that what the Spirit is at is making room for Him, both in the man and the woman. That is what He will do now, do you not think?

J.N.G. I think He would, not only in our gatherings together but in every feature that belongs to our households and individual lives.

A.C.C. And why not? It is this Child; everything as far as God is concerned stands in relation to Christ, and that would enter into all our activities.

A.M.D. Would you say what the difference is between piety and spirituality?

A.C.C. Oh a big difference; you would know.

A.M.D. Piety is the dignity in which we act and do things. Scripture refers to the Spirit that is on us (see 1 Pet 4: 14); spirituality would be the Spirit that is in us, what we are as doing things in the Spirit, in a spiritual way.

A.C.C. I think so. A simple trust in God, simple giving of thanks for our food, that is not spirituality; that is piety, and trusting in God, knowing Him as your Father. That is what the gospels set out, especially Matthew: "Your heavenly Father knows that ye have need of these things", chap 6: 32. You just look to Him and trust in Him, and He delights in that and we should do so too.

J.St. There are two inns in Luke; there is no room in the first one but in the second one there is room for the servant and there is enough there to do until He comes.

A.C.C. Well, we will work that out in the next reading.

L.C.P. It has been said that you can be pious without being spiritual, but to be spiritual you must be pious.

A.C.C. That is a fact; it is built up on that ground.

L.C.P. Spirituality is our relations directly with divine Persons, and that is what this man had. It is something to covet; it is so far beyond

me and yet it is there.

A.C.C. Very much to be coveted, a state that permits the Spirit to be free, and to provide conditions for the incoming of Christ. These are simple things; if we want to be spiritual we need to have trust in our Father and get to know Him. That will leave us free in view of making room for the Spirit.

T.O'C. I was thinking of the divine communication by the Spirit to Simeon; how important it is to be listening. We may do a lot of talking, we may do a lot of praying, but to be listening to what is said to us is most important.

A.C.C. Now we are going to speak about that. "It was divinely communicated to him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death". How wonderful that is! That is the anointed ear; the blood was there, the oil was there. You say something of what you have in mind.

T.O'C. A listening ear is most helpful; we need to be silent sometimes in prayer and listen to what is said to us.

A.C.C. I think that is true. It opens up a great field for our encouragement; such is the state, such is the condition, that the Spirit of God has a means, a vehicle, by which He can convey the mind of God. And in the assembly (I am not speaking for the moment of the individual) He has a vehicle by which the mind of God can be made known - a very wonderful thought.

L.C.P. In Revelation 2 it says "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies".

A.C.C. That belongs to this time of the fall.

J.N.G. Would you see this anointed vessel operating in 1 Corinthians 14? Persons were sitting around and listening by the Spirit and the Spirit is free to communicate in 'that setting.

A.C.C. I thought of that chapter in connection with how the mind of God is conveyed through the prophetic word, the Spirit having that or those, by which He can convey God's mind. It is by that particular means that He conveys the mind of God, the whole truth of the body

being sustained and supported and also direction given for the pathway the church.

J.N.G. That makes the prophetic meeting very important, does it not? It is not only brothers who might take part in it vocally but every brother and sister is sitting there in the power of the Spirit. So it is a very important time.

A.C.C. Let us all therefore be encouraged by the fact that first of all we belong to the anointed vessel; and we do not anoint ourselves, it is by divine sovereignty, divine action, baptised by one Spirit into one body. That is the great matter. Then you come to chapter 14 that you refer to; you would admit that things are not maintained by what is on our bookshelves. The ministry has its place, but things are maintained, both as to sustenance and direction, by the current moves of the Spirit.

J.N.G. So it is important that we come into the meeting by the Spirit.

A.C.C. That is it - by the Spirit.

E.P. His parents wondered at the things that were being said. Do we need to be more honest in regard to what the Spirit is saying to us and the Lord's mind for us in relation to any matter?

A.C.C. Oh yes. Think of the woman in Proverbs 31: her husband is obviously absent, and she is there in his absence carrying things out just as if he was present. And that is what the Spirit of God is aiming at. Oh, you say, it is a broken day. Maybe, but then He would give the grace, and the power, that there might be some reflection of the original. In all the brokenness and obscurity the features would come through: the Spirit would see to that.

J.St. We really have to come to it that we cannot receive or communicate anything except by the Spirit. We feel the importance of what you are saying that, without the Spirit, we cannot receive or speak.

A.C.C. There is nothing effective in anybody unless by the Spirit Himself.

J.St. With us and in us for ever, in the assembly: should that help us to grasp what you are saying?

A.C.C. Well, I think the great encouragement this morning is that we have been divinely honoured, a people of high estate, given such privileges and brought into something that belongs to God down here, and with which the Spirit of God is immediately connected. I would not mind if we did not have anything else but to get hold of that this morning, that that is how we have been taken up by God and set down in such a wonderfully favoured place and given to drink of one Spirit. So there is the baptism outwardly, that is the anointing, but then there is being given to drink of one Spirit; so there is no discrepancy either outwardly or inwardly.

L.C.P. It has been said that we cannot say we are the assembly but can we not say that we are the assembly in principle in a broken day?

A.C.C. Surely, and we hold to that.

L.C.P. Yes; I was thinking that weakness has come in through our saying that we are not the assembly.

A.C.C. Yes, I am very glad you say that. You will remember the man in the Psalm who said to somebody else: "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: count the towers thereof; Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces: that ye may tell it to the generation following", Ps 48: 12, 13. Now there are two people who saw and knew what Zion was. I think the first was Paul and the second Timothy, and Paul would encourage Timothy to walk about Ephesus, have a good look at her, mark the bulwarks, count the towers, because there is going to be a generation, not that you will see it.

"Tell it to the generation following" - that is you and me. We have not seen it in its glory but we have everything carried down in testimony by the Spirit. We have every principle with the glory that belongs to it. We do not have it in its pristine condition, but we have it by faith and we hold to that tenaciously.

A.V.W. Two scriptures occur to me: "Things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard ... which God has prepared ... but God has

revealed to us by his Spirit", 1 Cor 2: 9,10. Then, spoken prophetically as to our Lord in Isaiah 11: 3: "he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears". If those faculties are removed, how impossible to receive except by the Spirit.

A.C.C. The natural man just cannot receive them, no matter how good he is.

B.D.F. Is receiving Him into his arms the great result of what we would see in this man that his affections are vitally in the thing?

A.C.C. It is very beautiful; it never says that he let Him go again. Once you have Christ in your arms you have Him for ever. We let Him go too easily. "I held him, and would not let him go", Song of Sol 3: 4. I think it represents what is in God's mind and is carried through, not in public glory but in the affections of the saints; Christ is carried through.

J.R.S. This idea of receiving the Lord Jesus is very attractive. It is not going to be very long before the Lord Jesus receives us and if that is before us more and more, it will help us in our exercises to receive into our hearts and affections every impression of Jesus.

A.C.C. What heart have we for Christ? I constantly raise that with myself and with others. What heart is there for Christ? Ever since the Bethesda trouble that has been the great issue, because what came out at Bethesda was heartlessness as to Christ.

J.C.F. The enemy is constantly attempting to introduce something similar, all the way along, is he not?

A.C.C. Oh yes, I thought this morning of what Abraham insisted of the servant, that he must not bring Isaac down to Mesopotamia: she must come to him (see Gen 24: 6,8). The trend is always down, reduce Christ. But Abraham insisted on it twice over do not bring him down. The question comes up, is there power available to bring her up to Isaac? Surely there is, all the way.

J.N.G. There is something similar to what you have in mind at the end of Malachi. In a day of breakdown in Israel's history, when

everything had gone to pieces, the word is "Remember the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, the statutes and ordinances", chap 4: 4. There is no lowering of the standard there.

A.C.C. Everything is carried through and taken up here in the beginning of this book. I am quite sure that these two persons were some sort of prefiguring of what God had in mind and which He achieved through the ministry of Paul.

J.N.G. What you said in regard to Bethesda is very meaningful in the time we are in, because persons are saying, It is so long ago and we have not looked into it. They are not interested enough in regard to the person of Christ to look into the origin of these things to protect the testimony.

A.C.C. We do not forget those issues. In the reference to the assembly in Matthew (see chap 18: 18) the retaining of the sins come first; John puts it the other way.

A.M.D. It says that the Lord's mother kept all these things in her heart, and she evidently kept them and took them out every now and then and contemplated them.

A.C.C. Kept them in her heart; that is the place to keep them, and Christ will have His place there. Referring again to Matthew's gospel, in chapter 16: 19 Jesus says: "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of the heavens; and whatsoever thou mayest bind upon the earth shall be bound in the heavens; and whatsoever thou mayest loose on the earth shall be loosed in the heavens". Then in chapter 18: 18; "Whatsoever ye shall bind on the earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on the earth shall be loosed in heaven". Matthew puts the binding first because the assembly here in the place of Christ resents every attack or assault on the rights of Christ. The assembly is here so much in His place that she resents every attack on Him; and who would not resent these things that have attacked Christ? In every issue you find it; whatever might be the exterior, Christ is the point of attack.

A.V.W. The ministry is very challenging and it comes to each of us, does it not? You spoke earlier as to the blood and the oil, and that must have its bearing on me in a practical way each day.

A.C.C. Well, the divine rights and divine claims are there in the blood. He has a right to your ear. In the ear you have the whole body, that is the idea, "ears hast thou prepared me" (Ps 40: 6) which is translated in Heb 10: 5: "thou hast prepared me a body". If He gets the ear, so to speak, the whole body is available to Him. Oh, what a vehicle! That is what impressed me, what a vehicle is here available to God by the Spirit in view of the mind of God being communicated. There does not need to be any difficulty. People say, Oh, we must wait for the judgment-seat. To me that is not true at all. There is everything available in view of the resolution of every matter, and to go on in the current mind of God. The difficulty lies with us; we get our ears blocked.

J.C.F. The Spirit is still here.

A.C.C. Oh yes, or you would not be here and I would not be here. Our time is nearly up and we have not yet spoken about this woman Anna. She represents the historical side; she is a prophetess, she has been a wife, she is a widow. All that brings up the side of history. As I said, her tribe is given, her age is given; these are absent with Simeon. I think it represents the side of moral exercises, and she is night and day serving and that brings up Paul's great night and day serving in Acts 20: 31: "night and day ... with tears". Think of the tears she would have too. But she spoke of Him, she "spoke of him to all those who waited for redemption". That is the appeal, she spoke of Him to all those who waited for that.

G.R.W. Does that make her a prophetess? Why is she spoken of as a prophetess?

A.C.C. That must have been part of her character, what came out as being available to communicate the prophetic word. She has that classification which is something choice, something to be coveted too, I suppose.

G.R.W. I am thinking of the other prophetesses mentioned in Acts (see chap 2: 17; 21: 9). Also, Paul speaks about the women having their heads covered and praying and prophesying (see 1 Cor 11: 5).

There seems to be a special part for sisters.

A.C.C. Yes, it brings out the beautiful feature about her, the first thing that is mentioned: "there was a prophetess". I think it is what the Spirit of God would pronounce with any of our sisters who are thus available to Him to communicate something after the current mind of God. She has that in her testimony, it belongs to her testimony, and I believe it belongs to the historical side. There are Philip's four daughters, and in the Old Testament we have them too; there were certain prophetesses available, maybe when there was no prophet. Think of Deborah for instance (see Judg 4: 4), she was able to communicate God's mind for the moment.

J.N.G. This sister was a prophetess, she was a daughter and she was a widow.

A.C.C. Yes; that goes with the subjective side, the side where history is wrought out. It is not so much the side of the anointing, belonging to the anointed vessel, that is sovereign, but I think there are the moral exercises that proceed alongside of that, and Anna represents that. You need them both for the filling out of the testimony. You cannot be all objective, you must have the subjective going along with it, the side of growth and experience.

J.N.G. Does the objective side help us to go through the historical side?

A.C.C. That must be first.

A.V.W. It says of Asher, "Let him dip his foot in oil", Deut 33: 24. Something of that comes right down to this sister.

A.C.C. Yes, and he "shall be blessed with sons". But she is not a son. What do you say about that?

B.D.F. She would be a protector. I am thinking of what you said as to Acts 20: 31, what Paul was laying on them, to be protecting what was of Christ here in a very real way.

A.C.C. Very good; I think that too is a service which each of us could easily take up. But she is a prophetess and she is a daughter of the tribe of Asher, far advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, herself a widow up to eight - four years. Notice these numerals: seven years, she was seven years married, her husband died young. Stephen was a young man, and God broke His marital link with Israel at the death of Stephen; that is to say God maintained a national link with Israel until they rejected and killed Stephen, and God broke his marital link with Israel as a nation. I think that alludes to Anna's husband. Then you begin the long period of eighty-four years widowhood, and that brings up the whole course of Paul's ministry. Do you think so?

A.V.W. The long side of history, it is most instructive to us.

A.C.C. Well, think about it, these things are not down there for nothing. Eighty-four years

- that is twelve times seven. Seven years from her virginity, seven years married life then eight-four years long period of widowhood, down through the dark ages.

E.P. Can you say something about Anna not departing from the temple.

A.C.C. That is as Paul said in Acts 20: "serving night and day, with tears".

J.C.F. Are you linking your thought of widowhood with the assembly in a time of Christ's absence?

A.C.C. Yes certainly, only she is not a widow; do not misunderstand me. Her head is in heaven. We were in danger of having a head on earth like others. There is a head on earth he sits in Rome. We were in danger of having an earthly head and it has no place in Paul's system. But we know in character what widowhood is, we know it in spirit; He is absent, He is out of sight, but we have a living Head in heaven.

E.P. It says that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor 6: 19). Would this mark Anna? It is quite a challenge to any one

of us as to how real our links are with Christ and the Spirit.

A.C.C. Do you not think that it comes back to our committal to things, and how really we value what has been set up at the beginning under the ministry of Paul? We refer to the ministry of Paul but it is really the Spirit in His great ideal in setting things up at the beginning. He would bring out the testimony of that and He would expect us all to be fully committed to it. Anna was that, she had no interest elsewhere; all her interests were in the temple and, like Simeon who came in at the very hour, so does she. That is what marks people who are going on with the truth and the Spirit; they are instantaneous, so to speak, there is no lagging behind, they are just there at the right moment.

T.O'C. She spoke of Him. Anyone who was praying and fasting like Anna would be very ready to speak of Christ.

A.C.C. Very challenging! That brings up the matter of what our conversation is, whether Christ is the centre of our conversation.

She spoke of Him, she knew the Lord and she knew everyone that waited for redemption in Jerusalem. I think it represents this side of what was set up under Paul, a side of definite committal to what there is of Christ here.

Ques. In Luke 4: 22 they wondered at the words of grace which were coming out of His mouth; would that be connected with the anointed vessel?

A.C.C. Yes, He was that. It is just what comes out there.

J.St. "All those who waited": if we were waiting we would not be going on with what is here but going on with what God has here: she was one of them. Can we help each other to be occupied with Christ in a waiting time?

A.C.C. What are you waiting for?

J.St. Thessalonians is one aspect of it, but we are waiting for a new heaven and a new earth, Peter says; all our prospects we are waiting for, we have no prospects here, have we?

A.C.C. No, we are waiting for Him, and we are waiting for the world to come, and we are waiting for a new heavens and a new earth.

There was a party being shown round a clothing factory and they came upon an old Jew who was sewing on buttons. Someone said, You are sewing on buttons. No, he said, I am waiting. What are you waiting for? Oh, I am waiting for the Saviour. He was only sewing on buttons while he was waiting for the Saviour.

J.N.G. What do you connect this eight-four years with? Does it go up to the time of Paul in Rome, and turning to the nations, or does it go beyond that?

A.C.C. I think it covers the whole period right down to our time. As you know, at the close of the book of the Acts Paul has not died, he is still serving in his own hired lodging. I think that the eighty-four years covers that, a perfect period of administration. You say, what about the breakdown? The Spirit of God has been here and you cannot connect the breakdown, even in administration, with the Spirit.

J.N.G. That is very good, there is no breakdown at the end of Acts.

BENDIGO

21 March 1987

Key to initials

L.H.Bennett, Warrnambool; A.C.Craig, Airdrie; K.L.Clark, Stawell; A.M.Davidson, Melbourne; B.D.Fooks, Melbourne; J.C.French, Melbourne; J.N.Grace, Melbourne; T.O'Connor, Melbourne; E.Pilcher, Bendigo; L.C.Pittock, Ballarat; J.A.Seeley, Melbourne; J.Stenhouse, Bathurst; A.V.Way, Melbourne; G.R.Wellington, Melbourne

DIVINE RIGHTS

D.J.Willetts

1 Corinthians 6: 19,20; Revelation 1: 12-20

I desire to say a few words, beloved brethren, about divine rights.

We need, perhaps to go over in our souls some of the foundations of Christianity, and one of the things that enters into that is divine rights. So I ventured to read these two passages: the first relates to us individually, the second relates to assemblies. I need not remind you that the Lord's rights are absolute. They remain in all their authority and power, but they are wielded in grace. It is a wonderful thing that at the present time the Lord is on the Father's throne, so that what marks the current dispensation is the predominance of grace. Now grace works with what it brings, not necessarily with what it finds. That is a wonderful thing, that God should exercise His right by the use of what He comes with, the fulness of divine resource. The rights and powers of a kingdom are tested by the ability to disburse its resources to the extremities of the kingdom and to contain its dominions. Now that would have its bearing upon us at the present time. We might say that divine Persons are not lax in regard of Their resources, because divine resources are not only adequate, but they are infinite, and the needs of the saints are many.

So I thought we should begin with this chapter. The background, of course, is one of great sobriety. The apostle Paul has referred in chapter 5 to the incestuous man, and in chapter 6 he comes to the general bearing of this upon the saints. Then you get these two beautiful verses at the end of the chapter. It is almost as if the apostle, in addressing his own by saying "Do ye not know ...?" in verses 15-16, and again in verse 19, "Do ye not know ...?", is reminding them of what exists of things that have always been true of the as having received the Spirit of God. It is like a parent saying to a child, Do you not know that you belong to such-and-such a family? The apostle would alert the saints at Corinth and say "Do ye not know ...?". He would remind them of their standing and he

reminds them of divine rights. He says, "Do ye not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you ...?". That has a very practical bearing upon us, that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The immediate point in the chapter, of course, is in relation to fornication but I think that we might look at it in a far broader way. It is not just certain members of the body but of the whole body - "Do ye not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God ...?". That would remind us of where we have received the Holy Spirit from - "which ye have of God". It is a very salutary word to each one of us as we move about and seek to use our bodies in relation to the testimony; he would say, "Do ye not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God ...?" - a wonderful thing that to contemplate, that each one of us as having received the Holy Spirit has something substantial from God. Everywhere we go we take Him with us, whether it is at work or at school, the factory or the office, or when we come to the meeting; even when we are at home in the household we have the Holy Spirit with us. What is in mind in the temple is dwelling conditions; so we would need to be sensitive as to His rights, sensitive as to where we go, and what we do, what we think.

This really takes us to Roman teaching; it has a very detailed working out for every one of us. I remember the first time I was affected by Romans 6. I do not know whether you have read it of late; it says, "Now, having got your freedom from sin, ye have become bondmen to righteousness. I speak humanly on account of the weakness of your flesh. For even as ye have yielded your members in bondage to uncleanness and to lawlessness unto lawlessness, so now yield your members in bondage to righteousness unto holiness" (vv 18,19). We are all familiar with the way we have yielded our members instruments of unrighteousness in bondage to uncleanness, but have you ever thought of yielding your members, as it says, "in bondage to righteousness"? Maybe you do not like the idea of being in bondage. Perhaps it is because you do not understand that formerly it was true of you that you were

in bondage to uncleanness, that you were held in the power of uncleanness, in the power of sin. The death of Christ has come in in order that you and I might be completely free from the dominion of sin and the power of it. We recognise the fact that sin had dominion over us. Every one of us here has to recognise the fact, however acceptably outwardly to men we may have lived our lives, done the best we can for ourselves, that we have yielded our members in bondage to uncleanness. Now the way out of that is through the death of Christ; not only that Jesus died but that He was buried. So the very man who was under bondage to uncleanness has gone - gone (see v 6). So you can reckon yourself, not now alive in the things in which you used to walk, but alive in the things of God. So it says, "reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (v 11). Wonderful thing that! So the apostle says, "yield your members in bondage to righteousness unto holiness". How very attractive that is, that we are required to be in bondage to righteousness. But it is not optional; every one of us is under responsibility to yield ourselves in bondage to righteousness unto holiness. The end in view is a state which is suitable for the divine presence.

So when you come to chapter 12 you are "to present your bodies a living sacrifice ... which is your intelligent service" (v 1). I think that all that can be read into these two verses in 1 Corinthians 6: "which ye have of God, and ye are not your own". That, you may say, is a lever in the soul for yielding our members instruments of righteousness; it is because you are not your own. Do you realise, young brother, young sister, that you are not your own? You have come under new ownership, "for ye have been bought with a price".

What was the price paid for you? Can you measure what it cost God? - "He who, yea, has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him grant us all things?", Rom 8: 32. Can you measure that cost, what it was to God not to spare His own Son? How attractive that is! What a price, the death of Jesus! So, beloved brethren, let it affect us. When you think of yielding your members instruments of righteousness, when you

present your body upon the altar, however you move and in whatever circle, remember you are not your own, you belong to Another, and you belong to Another at such a cost. I would to God that I could present to you that cost today; the purchase price was the blood of Jesus. In Acts 20 it speaks of the assembly which he has purchased with the blood of his own" (v 28). Think of that! Think of the purchase price for you and me that we might be redeemed from evil. Does it not affect your soul afresh? When you are tempted of the enemy to yield your members back as those instruments of unrighteousness, remember the fact that it says, you are not your own, you have been bought with a price. O, what a price! I wonder, beloved brother beloved sister, if you would act any differently if the Lord Jesus was literally here; I wonder if you would. If He came into your house, would you change things? If He came into your business life would you change things? Would you do things differently if He were literally walking alongside you? Why should it not be that you change those things now? Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who witnesses here to the Man above. Would you change your circumstances? Would you act differently? Would you do more for your parents? Would you be more obedient? Would you work harder for your employer? Would you? Do not forget, as we often say to the children, but I would remind all the saints, The eye of the Lord is upon us, it is never off us. He is looking for an answer. What is the answer? "Glorify now then God in your body" - in your body.

Then it comes down to detail the way you think, the way you act, the way you act away from the saints, the way you act with the saints, the way you act in your household; the rights of Christ are at stake.

Are you going to act as if you have come under His dominion and under His lordship? His power is undiminished, and as your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit you have One with you who can help you in the detailed working out of every day in the testimony for God's glory.

So I raise that question with you to think about solemnly - the rights of Christ. The rights of Christ remain wherever we are in whatever circumstance, however difficult, however pleasant, the

rights of Christ remain in relation to you because of redemption and because He created you. That is a very sobering thought. Every time you draw a breath it is in the hand of God. None of us can add one day, one moment of a day, to our life; our breath is in His hands. He upholds all things in the creation; He has rights in every respect in relation to the creation, and the way we use it. It is a good thing to remind every one of us that we are not our own that we have been bought with a price. We speak about sacrifice but what is it compared with the infinite cost to the Father to give the Son in order that you and I might be bought for Himself. How affecting it is when you think of these things! What did He give up? It was not a life tainted by sin, marked by insubjection, no, far from it, it was the exact opposite to that; it was a life of perfection, it was a life of purity, and that not only in deed but in every thought of every moment of every day, completely and absolutely for the pleasure of the Father - "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight", Matt 3: 17. You may say the Father's emotions were stirred by what He found in the perfection of Christ. He looked down the history of mankind, through those great men, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David; He saw features of Christ; but then when Christ comes upon the scene the heavens were opened, that His very inwards, His inward breathings in relation to the manhood of Jesus might come out. Those secret years, those years of perfect public service, what they meant to the Father! He opened the heavens again upon Him and said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight": Matt 17: 5. That was the One who had to lie in the stillness of death if you and I were to be bought; His blood had to be shed. He had to lie for three days and three nights in the heart of the earth in order that the man that caused all the trouble should go out of the sight of God for ever, for ever. Brethren, what a price! In the light of that are we going to continue in the things in which we once walked? So what does he say? - "glorify now then God in your body". That is Romans 12, putting your body upon the altar - "glorify now then God in your body". It is not just in bondage to righteousness but there is a glory about it. Did you ever think of that, that it is possible through the members of your body to be able to use them to glorify God?

Very attractive, is it not? The rights of Christ all lie in that because He has not only His rights creatorially but He has His rights because we have been bought with a price. So may that just affect you, beloved brother, beloved sister, afresh, and may it cause you to yield intelligently your members as instruments of righteousness that you might glorify God in your body. It is possible by the power of the Spirit to glorify God in your body, even in these days, in 1987; it is possible to move amongst your school mates as glorifying God in your body; it is possible to move amongst your work mates in the same way. Even though there has been a breakdown in household relations to a point that perhaps the world has never known before it is possible in that relationship to glorify God in your body. It is possible to hold those positions of authority that have been delegated to us as glorifying God in our body. The rights of Christ individually are effective; they have a very broad bearing. They are set forward in delegated authority, you may say - God, Christ, man, woman, children; there is a line of authority that comes down which has to be respected. It is very sobering to think of, the way the lordship of Christ is presented in relation to family relationships, and business relationships, and relationships with children and their parents; the rights of Christ enter into them. In the next chapter, chapter 7, the apostle speaks of the authority of the husband and the authority of the wife. There are divine rights that have been delegated to us, and we need to fill them out in our bodies. So wives can be subject to their husbands. It speaks in chapter 11 of a woman having authority on her head; there is what is attractive to heaven where the rights of Christ are recognised in the way He has put authority in the man. The rights of Christ are recognised in the way the children are obedient to their parents, the way they are subject. So in every one of these relationships, the way God has established His right is the way for our blessing. We may think that we know better particularly when we are younger, we think perhaps that we know better than our parents; then we have to come to it that it says, "Children, obey your parents" (Col 3: 20) and be submissive. Why? Because it is the way divine rights affect you. Then he speaks about the husbands too, does he not? "Fathers, do not vex your

children". So that we all come into this line of authority that has come down from God. As filling out those relationships, as recognizing the authority of God in that way, we come into a sphere of blessing.

That leads me to Revelation; it is a very profound scripture, the rights of Christ are there, not only in relation to individuals but the rights of Christ relate to each local assembly. So I read this section, the way the Lord is presented judicially. It says, "And I turned back to see the voice which spoke with me; and having turned, I saw seven golden lamps, and in the midst of the seven lamps one like the Son of man". Think of the Lord Jesus presently moving amongst His local assemblies. He has a right to do it; He has a right to do it.

He exercises that right as He walks amidst the seven lamps. It says, "I saw seven golden lamps"; that is very interesting, is it not? Lamps are light bearers; the local assembly is a place where divine light has been deposited and it speaks of golden lamps; that is, there is the glory of divine righteousness attached to that. You say, How can that be? When you read about those seven, How can that be? - "seven golden lamps". There are certain ones the Lord has to speak very severely to, and yet they are still referred to in this section as golden lamps. Whatever the state, there was that there which answered to divine light; even in Laodicea there was what answered to the divine light - "I counsel thee to buy of me gold purified by fire ... and eye salve ... that thou mayest see", chap 2: 18. In each one of these churches the Lord was asserting His own rights in relation to the conditions that existed. I suppose all know that these seven churches represent the phases of the assembly's history from Pentecost right up to the rapture; they refer to the things that are.

But they are addressed to seven churches that existed; they were not all the churches, as we know; Colosse is not referred to, neither is Corinth, and there are others you could think of, but they were seven churches that co-existed. I think it would speak to us of the various states that may exist in assemblies, and the Lord's rights relate to each one.

So it says, "and having turned, I saw seven golden lamps, and in the midst of the seven lamps one like the Son of man". Think of the Lord Jesus asserting His rights in relation to each one. The Lord Jesus is asserting His rights at the present time in relation to London; asserting His rights, maybe, in relation to Croydon, and He is walking amidst the candlesticks. What is He going to find? He is moving here judicially in order that He might see, you may say, how the saints have answered locally to the light that has been vouchsafed. We are very privileged, beloved brethren, at the end of the dispensation to have a great amount of light, and the Lord is raising the question as to how much we have answered to the light that He has vouchsafed to us. So He moves here judicially, "clothed with a garment reaching to the feet, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle". His affections are restrained for the time because He is not appearing to the assemblies in relation to His bride, He is not presenting Himself in this part of Revelation in that aspect, neither is He presenting Himself in relation to the body, He is presenting Himself in relation to works. He says, "I know". In each of these assemblies He says, "I know". He is presenting Himself in relation to the way each of the assemblies has answered to the light that has been given to them. Then it says, "his head and hair white like white wool, as snow". Think of that! He is moving as One who has a great wealth of experience. That is to be respected, is it not? Think of the Lord presenting Himself to the local assembly as One who has a wealth of experience, and He is saying, Have you answered to the light. Are you prepared to answer to the Lord Jesus in His rights in relation to the light He has presented? But then it says, "and his eyes as a flame of fire". Think of Him burning up all the works that are just of man. The idea of the flame is "for also our God is a consuming fire", Heb.12: 29. Think of that! The Lord will not rest until He has removed every vestige of what is unrighteous in every place. Then it says, "and his feet like fine brass, as burning in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters" . He is giving us a sense that His voice is powerful. The penetration of the Lord's present speaking, I think, is seen in the meeting for prophetic ministry, the voice of many waters; the Lord would present Himself

each week in that way in His own particular voice to relate to the conditions in our localities, for encouragement, for strengthening, for education, in order that the light that has been presented to us might be answered to. Then it says, "and having in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth a sharp two-edged sword going forth; and his countenance as the sun shining in its power". The Lord's rights here are presented as absolute - "as the sun shines in its power".

There is no greater luminary in the universe than the sun, and apart from the sun everything would become dead. Remove the sun, and immediately everything dies, not only because of heat, but because of light. The Lord Jesus is presenting Himself here to these seven assemblies in His right to an answer to the light presented from the countenance that shines in its power. The idea of the countenance is that whatever Christ is in His own Person, in the grace and the beauty of what He is, is towards the saints in grace. Wonderful thing that, that the Lord is towards us in His countenance as the sun shines in its power. I wonder if we can look,

in that way, the Lord in His face in relation to local conditions. It is very challenging, as to whether I can present the state of my local assembly before the Lord and feel things. Well, you come to this last verse, "The mystery of the seven stars which thou has seen on my right hand, and the seven golden lamps. The seven stars are angels of the seven assemblies; and the seven lamps are seven assemblies". What a thing to contemplate! They are on His right hand - "the seven stars which thou hast seen on my right hand".

The right hand involves the place of power; but then, as these addresses open up, they are not only on His right hand, but they are in His right hand. Has the Lord relinquished that? A brother referred earlier to Sardis; it says, "These things saith he that has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars", chap 3: 1. He still has them.

The Lord has not given up His right to any local assembly. It raises the question, beloved brethren, as to what constitutes a local assembly. I think that would be a very sobering and searching contemplation for any one of us here today, because it is *apropos* to present exercises among the saints.

One has been thinking of Corinthians; Paul addresses them in a very elevated way; he says, "Paul, a called apostle of Jesus Christ, by God's will, and Sosthenes the brother to the assembly of God which is in Corinth to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours", 1 Cor 1: 1,2. He addresses these saints at Corinth as the assembly of God in relation to what is universal. It is interesting that the Lord speaks of these local assemblies, as to the voice of the Spirit; He says, "what the Spirit says to the assemblies"; in other words, what is universal is in view. So it is interesting to ask ourselves, What constitutes a local assembly? Let us take Corinth for instance. Now the state at Corinth was bad; there was a man there who was incestuous; then you come later in the epistle to those who were teaching bad doctrine, saying that the resurrection had already taken place; there were those there who were reigning as kings, and yet the Lord through Paul addresses Corinth as a local assembly. I believe we have to find our way through the application of 2 Timothy 2 (in the great house and that sphere of things) and you would say, of course, 2 Corinthians 6. We need to be reminded, dear brethren, that Matthew 18 still stands: "where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them" (v 20). We have been taught that that is two or three assembly-minded persons. If you look at Corinth that is what you find; certain persons had written to Paul in the apostleship that he had, but instead of exercising it by going, he writes a letter in grace to the assembly of God which is in Corinth.

So it raises a question with every one of us as to whether we recognise the local assembly that God can address. If you addressed a letter to the local assembly in Richmond, where would it go? No doubt, dear brethren, it is a question for every one of us to recognise that it has a moral foundation, not "a name that thou livest and art dead" (Rev 3: 1), but a moral foundation - "Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity", 2 Tim 2: 19. It is that character of persons that make up the local assembly. So Paul can speak of the assembly of God which is in Corinth

because he anticipated that they would be able to deal with the incestuous man, and that his word would be acknowledged. I believe that is one feature of a local assembly, that it deals with evil, knowing that the Lord's rights exist. It is very interesting that, in these seven addresses, they are all to recognise the Spirit's voice: "let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies". So we need to have a universal ear to what the Spirit is saying to us, in our own locality but also what the Spirit says to the assemblies, in the plural, what He is saying to every locality. He does not say to Philadelphia, Thou hast a little power, you had better go over and help Laodicea, does He? Why is that? The reason is because the Lord has His own rights in Philadelphia and He has His own rights in Laodicea; He has His own rights in Sardis. They are still in His hand, they were never taken out of His hand and we need to recognise them. One of the things that comes out in these seven addresses, and I just appeal to the brethren to take note of it, is patience. He speaks to them of "the word of my patience". In relation to Ephesus Mr Darby says that which characterises power is patience. I wonder whether we acknowledge that power is characterised by patience. The Lord credits Philadelphia with having kept the word of His patience (see Rev 3: 10), and He says to Smyrna: "ye shall have tribulation ten days", chap 2: 10. That would involve that the saints have to exercise patience. Dear brethren, what we need with one another in our local assemblies is patience, in the knowledge that the Lord still maintains His rights in every local assembly. I say that, beloved brethren, because these simple fundamental facts need restating amongst us, because the Lord has His rights, even if there are only two or three. We may say, just to be practical, that certain ones may be slow in doing things; maybe you would like to see things resolved quickly, but the Lord perhaps would take ten days, whatever that might refer to for this assembly. Maybe it was in the history of things ten separate persecutions, maybe it was ten years, I do not know; whichever way you look at it, time was involved, and the Lord has a right to use time because He made it. We might think that things are not going quite as fast as we would like, but what we need to learn is the patience of the Christ. His rights remain in relation to each local

assembly, and bear in mind that if there are the true features of the local assembly there, it is a golden lamp. Beloved brethren, what a fulness of light has been given to us: is there going to be a full answer to it, as the Lord walks amidst the candlesticks? He continues to walk, and He continues to hold those seven stars Himself; therefore every local assembly is directly related to Christ.

So we come back to Corinth and what do you find? Christ has been made unto us wisdom and redemption (see 1 Cor 1: 30); everything, you might say, is in the local assembly, it has a full resource within itself to resolve its own matters. That does not, of course, absolve us from our universal responsibilities; the Lord does not do that in these addresses; He appeals to every one to listen to what the Spirit has said in other assemblies. What is more, according to Corinthians, Christ is present in each locality.

Everything is in Himself, to meet every exigency that appears, for a resolution for His glory. May the Lord help us, beloved brethren, in thinking on these things. Maybe I have presented it feebly, but I think you can see the bent of my thoughts, that we need to recognise the Lord's rights individually, and as recognising the Lord's rights individually there will be a fuller answer in that in our bodies we will glorify God, and as recognising the Lord's rights in our local assemblies there may be an answer to Christ's present affections in fulness. May it be so for His Name's sake.

RICHMOND

10 October 1987

THE CHILDREN'S LESSONS

We know that the Lord Jesus was - and surely is - lovingly interested in children of all ages. More than once He spoke to the great apostles by this term of endearment and we know that He took the little ones into His arms and cherished them. No doubt the old and the young are looked upon as being able to learn the lessons that He

came to teach. He even watched the young children at play in the market-places and saw that sometimes they did not keep the rules of their games of weddings and funerals. Indeed, He gave the grown-ups a lesson from this! On the one hand they should have rejoiced in spirit as if dancing, because the Son of man Himself was amongst them: on the other hand they should have felt more deeply the fact that it had been necessary for John the baptist to suffer in calling them to repentance.

The lessons that the heavenly Teacher gave were often in the form of word-pictures relating to His own wonderful creation. He told earthly stories with heavenly meanings. He spoke of trees, flowers, animals, fishes, moths and even of insects. Count up and you will find from the Gospels about seventy familiar things in the course of His lessons. It is wonderful, too, that His earliest teaching was not in criticism, nor by way of correction, but He pronounced a nine-fold blessing upon those who would hear and do those things that He taught.

For a period of two years the apostle Paul taught in a school at Ephesus and, as a special mark of God's presence, he wrought "no ordinary miracles" of healing. It is interesting that our word 'school' comes from an older language where it meant a place where persons spent their leisure time talking over matters of importance to them. Paul was a teacher by divine gift and we can say that his ministry, with that of others in New Testament times, provides for the needs of believers until the Lord shall come. Part of Paul's teaching was that slaves should obey their masters, where there might be no affection; how much rather therefore should children obey their parents, where there is a special love known, shown and enjoyed! Paul wrote that "this is pleasing in the Lord". Are you pleasing to Him?

J.C.Evershed