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Contents

LODGING PLACES

ENCOURAGEMENT

THE CHILDREN'S DISCOVERIES

LODGING PLACES

Joshua 1: 10,11; 3: 1-6 ; 4: 8,9, 19-24; 5: 2 -6, 10-12; Colossians 2: 9-13;3: 1-4

R.T. As the brethren well know, a tremendous amount of ground is covered in these passages, which we would not have time to compass even if we could; yet the scope of it may be in our minds. What I was thinking about was these lodging-places which are referred to in Joshua. In chapter 3 it says, "and lodged there before they passed over". In chapter 5 in Gilgal they lodged there after they had passed over. There may be a need for us at times to lodge and take a review, be consolidated. In the first one there is a need to be strengthened; they lodged there with these victuals - they had never gone this way before, and it is divinely ordered that they were to lodge there before they passed over. There were other times when they stayed too long in a place and had to be told to move on, and yet other times when they moved without direction: all these things we would find in our histories. But here there is specific direction that they should lodge, that time should be spent to prepare victuals to strengthen them; it all has in view, as we read in chapter 1, that they were to pass over to enter in "to take possession". That is something that is always to be in our minds - to take possession. That is what the book of Joshua is; taking possession is more than knowledge or light; it requires exercise. In Colossians there were similar exercises; they were needing to be consolidated in view of going on, going on to the heavenly places. So may there be encouragement as we speak together about these things.

S.D.K.R. I was noticing the venison: would that be enjoyed during their lodging?

R.T. It was a very necessary part of the direction it seems - "Prepare yourselves"; it was something they had to do. We do not go this way without exercise. The manna, up till now, was there for the gathering up; you went outside your tent door and there was the manna - just bend down and pick it up, as much as you want, food for the day and

food for the journey. But now there is something additional: it says "Prepare yourselves". Venison would involve hunting, exercise, roasting; it involves preparation. So if we have a heart for the land, brethren, it is going to test us, there are going to be exercises. So there is food provided that we might be strengthened to pass over. It says, "ye shall pass over ... that ye may enter in to take possession". If we just stay in the wilderness, content with justification, our sins forgiven, we are not enjoying the possession, we are not possessing the land that has been promised.

We would seek to stimulate and encourage one another in the exercise to enjoy our heavenly part. The Lord, very consistently through His pathway, reminded the disciples of how He was going to suffer; He spoke of the Son of man going up to Jerusalem and that He would be killed and crucified. The disciples were very slow to take that in, very slow to apprehend Christ's death. All that would enter into the victuals, I think, and the lodging place. We may be slow not only to apprehend Christ's death, the way He went, but to be with Him; our death with Him is the teaching here.

V.E.W. I was thinking of the way the apostle had to bring the moral glories and greatness of the Person before the Colossians.

R.T. Yes you read in Colossians 1 that there is nobody like Him and that is what comes into this section, I think. I believe there are more references to the ark in this variety of names in this section in Joshua than in any other part of Scripture - the ark of the covenant, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth, the ark of the testimony, there is the ark; there are all these names that would endear Christ to our hearts. We will never go over save as He is enshrined in our affections, will we? I suppose that is why the apostle begins Colossians with these glories, to endear Christ to our hearts. Where He has gone is to be our place, it is where we want to be. It says in Joshua 3, "When ye see the ark of the covenant of Jehovah your God ... go after it". Well, where has He gone? He went by death, but He is gone into heaven; He has gone to glory and there He has prepared a place for us. Colossians tells us that our

place is above, and seeing where He has gone we would want to follow Him.

J.M. It says, "Every place whereon the sole of your foot shall tread have I given to you". Do you think that these lodging-places are necessary in view of our actually experiencing what God has given to us, to take possession of it?

R.T. Yes, I think so. We have a great deal of light and we may treat it very lightly, but the lodging-place brings the thing into your soul. Think of that holy ark! "In all their affliction he was afflicted" (Isa 63: 9); that indicates the way that He went through the wilderness; and here the ark is facing the Jordan, and the lodging-place, I think, would give us to see that only as having our eye on Him are we going to get through. And it would encourage us to put our foot down. These meetings would be, and all such meetings should be, to help us to put our foot down, to claim things as our own; not only to have them as light but to put our foot down for possession.

F.C.M. We all enjoy meetings locally and of this character, but they should be followed, should they not, by time with the Lord in exercise as to what He has said to us in our comings-together?

R.T. Yes, I thought that was chapter 1; "Prepare yourselves". It is not only what is provided in divine grace and what others may suggest to us, precious as it is, but it becomes our own - "Prepare yourselves". We used to be reminded often that you had to roast what you took in hunting. Maybe there is not enough roasting; there is the need for preparing for ourselves. What is the food that I am enjoying in my soul that is going to help me to put my foot down and take possession of this good land to which Christ has gone?

F.C.M. It helps me and encourages me to see other people enjoying it, but I am to enjoy it for myself in conscious possession.

R.T. Yes, it is "Prepare yourselves". I suppose there would be a household aspect to it, and there would be an individual aspect to it; there may even be a local aspect to it. There is a need in relation to these things to be exercised about them, because it says, "for ye have not passed this way heretofore". What a scope is opened up

for us! What times are ahead! There is a need for being strengthened with our faith in Christ, and our links with Him in view of enjoying this good land.

E.C.B. The inference here in chapter 3, as in Numbers 10, is that the ark moved out of its normal travelling position. It has been remarked in regard to Numbers 10 that the ark took the initiative, and Christ has taken the initiative in this way through death.

R.T. Only He could have done it. "What ailed thee, thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou turnedst back?", Ps 114: 5. Death was there, and it was in the enemy's hand, the power of death was in the hands of the devil and it held man in bondage, but here Christ in type is moving forward and He is annulling him who had the power of death. He has taken the power of it out of the hands of the devil that we may, through identification with Him, come into these glorious thoughts of divine purpose and divine blessings. So it is, "When ye see the ark". How He would be endeared to our hearts in the way He went invading these waters of death!

E.C.B. It speaks in the transfiguration in Luke of His accomplishing His departure, as if there was something to be done and He triumphed in it.

R.T. I thought the disciples were very slow to come to it. I do not say that derogatorily because you can well understand it, but I think they are samples of ourselves who are very slow to come to Christ annulling him who had the might of death; because at the crucifixion where were they? The Lord was crucified but I think Mary of Bethany had some sense of having prepared these victuals. The Lord says about her that she has anointed My feet in view of burial. So in Mary there was somebody who was picking up these references to which you have referred and she saw Him as One who was able to go right through; it says about her that she had been sitting at His feet and listening to His word. I think what was said about individual exercise is seen in her, the heart strengthened in confidence in Christ as the One who is going to carry things through for the will of God.

J.W. Would the way the Lord is presented in John's gospel particularly bear on what you are saying? In that gospel, persons had to move toward Christ to get what was in Him, did they not?

R.T. Yes. He said in the garden, "Whom seek ye?", then "I am he", and "they went away backward", John 18: 5,6. The Ark was moving of itself in divine majesty and, as you say, in John there was exercise in view of finding Him. What more would you say about it?

J.W. I wondered whether if we are to enjoy the land, the way the Lord is presented in that gospel has a particular appeal to us. It is the greatness of the Person we have to go after; it is not like Luke exactly where everything is brought to us of the grace of the Lord. That is one side, but we have to go in for it, do we not; we have to go after the Person in that sense?

R.T. Yes, chapter 3, "remove from your place". Well, these places may test us; whatever the place may be, it says, remove from it, and go after it. It is moving of itself in majesty. Jordan was full over all its banks, the great barrier between the good land and their enjoying it was death; and here Christ in the majesty of His Person, is entering in. Yet there shall be a distance. We need not only to be exercised but we need to be alert; there was a good distance between them and it. He stands alone; He is there but He is to be followed with our eye upon Him in view of passing over.

C.C.I. You referred to John 18; it says "if therefore ye seek me, let these go away" (v.8). Do you think that the Lord had His disciples particularly in mind in relation to His death? Yet there is the greatness of His Person who they have to pass by the ark to get into the land?

R.T. Yes, He took the initiative, as was said, He moved of Himself - "When ye see the ark of the covenant of Jehovah your God ... then remove from your place, and go after it". He has gone before. Divine love had in mind that we should enter into this good land and all that has been prepared, a land where we will at without scarceness, a land of great blessing; but it requires these

movements and this exercise, and being consolidated in our appreciation of Christ and His distinctiveness in moving into death.

J.M. There is power in the ark, is there not? But then there is also need for power in the people. Do you think there is some strong reference to the place that we give to the Spirit in view of following the ark over?

R.T. Yes. Just think of this incident; how else could they have seen Him? The teaching follows from Numbers 21, does it not? They are a people who have already given place to the Spirit, and I think the Spirit would be necessary to cover this distance. Think of this great company of people and every eye beholding the ark! By the Spirit we behold Him, and in that power we are strengthened to go forward.

S.D.K.R. It says in verse 13, "when the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of Jehovah ... rest in the waters of the Jordan", then the Jordan became dry. Would that indicate that the ark touched the waters itself?

R.T. Yes, it would seem to be; He tasted death, tasted it. It is a scripture that is full of a great deal of meaning and may yield a lot to us as we think about it. It was not just that He met death in His power, but He tasted it. What was it? How bitter it must have been to Christ! It says, He tasted death for everything (see Heb 2: 9). So that it is not only a question of His power; death could not stand in His presence - that is one thing - but He tasted death. But here it is His power, the power of Christ over death; it says that the waters were cut off. Death still exists, people are dying, but the power of death has been broken. The way that He went has removed the barrier that stands between us in the conditions in which we are and our enjoying the good land that divine love has prepared. Things which eye has not seen God has prepared, and the exercise to follow Him is going to bring us into these heavenly things.

J.M. Does the antitype embrace both the ark and the priest? They are all one, are they not? So the soles of the feet of the priests refer to Christ going into death.

R.T. I think so.

E.P. It says "Jehovah will do wonders in your midst" - He will do it. Do you think that when the Lord went into death, and especially in this aspect, He went in like an invader, and in the greatness and the glory of His Person to accomplish things for God in view of the people?

R.T. That is to enhance Him to our view. There is one blessed Man who has gone this way. We sing that hymn, 'Death had on Thee no claim, Thou sinless One!' (No.152): that is the Ark and the Priest. The sinless One touching the waters of the Jordan, death had to bow. In the lodging place they must have looked at the river, and you can just visualise them saying, Well, it is higher today than it was yesterday, the river seems to be getting deeper and bigger, and yet there is the land ahead of us - how are we going to pass? A blessed Man has gone that way, and when we come to it the power of death is broken. The waters were not even in sight, they were driven back very far; the very ground was dry. Oh, what He absorbed! What He met in the power of His Person that the ground was dry! The ark is going over in power but going over in leadership to make a way that we may come into these thoughts of divine love.

H.A.H. The allusion which you made to the scripture in Hebrews should affect us, that it is by the grace of God that He tasted it. As you say, it had no claim on Him.

R.T. No: He tasted death for everything. It is a wide matter, but here it is for us, to encourage us. The whole section is full of trying to attract the people over. Deuteronomy is full of that too; and Joshua's ministry, his mission, was to cause the people to inherit; and that should come into our assemblings, to encourage the people to see the ark, as we have said, to see by the Spirit where He has gone and the way He has gone, that we may follow Him in these movements.

E.C.B. Would you say more as to His tasting death? I think we speak of the Lord's power and of His Person, but His entering into death was not without feeling - one looks for a word. Gethsemane brings it out. This cup, and the tasting of death, does it?

R.T. Yes, what you say is what I feel; you look for a word, because it is very difficult to describe something that is almost infinite in a sense - Christ in death. I think there is a lot of food in it for our souls that we could well think about; His death and His burial for example. He was unique in it, but it was not something that was only His power, there were the feelings of the soul of Christ as tasting death. It was not possible that He should be held by its power, the holy One in death. I think all that would enter into the lodging place, what He met in view of our passing over. I think it is to encourage our hearts to follow after Him, to promote confidence, confidence in the presence of this great terror, you may say, because Hebrews speaks about it like that; we are held in bondage by the power of death, but we see One who has broken its power so completely that here they went over on dry land.

E.C.B. The fact is, is it not, that death meant infinitely more to Him than it could ever mean to us?

R.T. Yes, oh yes, because of His holiness. Then it speaks about the pains of death (see Acts 2: 24). I do not know that I can speak much about it, but there is a lot of food there for our souls as to all that He went through. But, when we come to it, it is dry ground because of the glory of the One who went this way before us.

F.C.M. He says to John "and I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages" (Rev 1: 18); it is inscrutable.

R.T. It is very affecting - He became it, it was His own action. The footnote says to that word elsewhere 'What He was not before'. Death did not apply to Him, and yet He came to die, and "he became dead". That is the ark moving of itself, is it not? It says, "When ye see it". Coming into the lodging-place our hearts are affected by the One who went that way, and death had to bow. He tasted death; He absorbed these waters, you may say; He drank them up, He met it, so when we come to it it is dry ground.

R.W.F. Are the feelings of Christ, which extend beyond ours and which we cannot reach, brought out by reference to "the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of Jehovah ... rest in the waters

of the Jordan". As to the people it says that they went over on dry ground. It brings out the uniqueness and the depth of His feelings, do you think?

R.T. Yes, well, in speaking of these things there is to be the two thousand cubits; we are speaking adoringly as we speak of Christ, and we are affected by the way He has gone. Does it draw our hearts? Does it cause us to move from our place? The place may have a great claim on us, but it says, when ye see it "then remove from your place, and go after it". Well, you know, it did not stop until they were in Gilgal. They went after it; He went before. I suppose the great end was David; "go after it" would lead them straight on to Hebron, Jerusalem - "go after it", the ark in its place. That would be the going after it. What exercises came in that deflected them but I believe the lodging-places would have i view our being strengthened that we may go after it in a more steady way.

V.E.W. We see with Saul of Tarsus that he was told to go into the city, like a lodging place in his spiritual history; he went after it did he not?

R.T. Yes, very good; he spent a few days there, did he not? Then it says that "straight way ... he preached Jesus that he is the Son of God", Acts 9: 20. What an effect of the lodging-place! Maybe we have suffered through neglect of allowing the truth to affect us in our inwards, constitutionally, that we may be the more amenable to divine leading in view of entering into the good land.

S.D.K.R. The Lord called His own aside to rest awhile. That would be on the line of a lodging-place.

R.T. Yes, there is instruction in it. Officers went through the camp. "When ye see the ark", when the Lord moves, then there is direction, but in the lodging-place He strengthens us in confidence, I think. As I said, the waters were getting deeper but every eye was caused to look at the ark and there was no other to depend upon save Christ, Christ magnified in the eyes of the people.

S.B.H. At the end of John's gospel the Lord said, "Follow thou me", chap 21: 22. That takes on a greater significance in what you are

saying, does it not - through Jordan, through death?

R.T. Yes, that is very good - "Follow thou me". "What of this man?". Peter would have looked at John. In our place we may look on one another, may look on many things, but what you have said is good - "Follow thou me" - and that was to be their salvation, they are brought on to this new ground; that is what the Lord would bring Peter on to as well. "Follow thou me" brings us on to new ground.

J.B. Do you think the lodging-place is intended to sharpen our vision? It is "When ye see the ark of the covenant of Jehovah your God". Occupation with Christ would sharpen our vision so that we are ready to see Him, every movement He took.

R.T. The Lord may bring certain exercises that cause our vision to be sharpened, because we come to exercises where He alone can help us. There are matters that we are shut up to Him about. All that would enter into the exercise of the lodging-place; as you say, our vision would be sharpened - "When ye see the ark" - it is not what somebody is saying or any other matters, but "When ye see the ark"; it is what Christ becomes; as we have said: "Follow thou me".

E.C.B. This lodging-place is a place to which they never returned - "remove from your place". I was thinking of your word 'confidence'; they had confidence to leave this place and they never returned to it.

R.T. Well, that is the intention of divine love; He took the people from Egypt, from the world, that He may bring them into the place that divine love had prepared. I think what you say is good; the lodging-place would consolidate matters in our souls so that we would not want to return. I think it is to change our taste. "When ye see the ark". It was impossible for them to return from one point of view. The two-and-a-half tribes returned - a very solemn word for us; two-and-a-half tribes were going through this and yet their mind was that they would return - they did not remove from their place in the full sense of it - but I think the exercise of the lodging-place is that we would not want to go back. We are occupied with the heavenly One; we are prepared to enjoy the good land, to appropriate what divine

love has furnished, all leading us into what we speak of as our enjoyment of the service of God.

J.W. Is it in this lodging-place that the fact that Christ has been into death is to be appropriated by us? I was thinking of John 6 as to feeding on His flesh and drinking His blood; there is stimulation to go forward, is there not? Some went back there, but some went forward and Christ became indispensable to them.

R.T. I think that may connect more with chapters 4 and 5. In removing from your place your eye is to be on Christ and who He is in His uniqueness. Two thousand cubits has been referred to Colossians 1, the personal glory of that One, Creator of all. In Colossians He is before all; He has the place of pre-eminence. All that enters into the lodging-place, I think, that He fills the soul, that we follow Him in these movements, a way that we have never gone before, but we are drawn to Him, blessed glorious Man, so that we follow as having confidence in Him where He is going.

J.M. Our life now is in Him, is it not? That is very wonderful, that He becomes everything to us.

R.T. It is very challenging and very testing, but it is what He wants to be to us. In Colossians there was a danger of complacency and allowing certain things, and maybe just going back a bit. I think in our exercises, brethren, sometimes we may tend to go back a bit, we just tend to allow things, whereas this exercise of the lodging-place is that we would not want to go back. Things have been met, things have been judged, why do we want to go back? Is not what is before far better than anything that we could turn back to?

J.M. You spoke of the leadership of Christ here; He is actually leading over the Jordan, is He not, in type into the purpose of God? Then there is the leadership of the Spirit as well. So there is great encouragement for us to go forward and seize hold of what God has given to us in His purpose.

R.T. Yes, there is a great deal in that; and there is Joshua too. It says, "And Jehovah said to Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel", chap 3: 7. Moses was dead, but He

magnified Joshua in the eyes of the people, so there is a great deal of encouragement to go on, to go forward. Jesus says, "Will ye also go away", John 6: 67. Think of the Lord's feelings! "To whom shall we go?": I think that would be the effect of these lodging-places, that the ark, Christ, is enshrined in the affections so that we want to be where He is. Your mind is on the things above where the Christ is; Christ is to be our life. It would test us, but may our hearts be encouraged to have our eye on the ark, on Christ.

G.W.E. Would you say something about verse 3 of chapter 4, please.

R.T. Well, they have gone over. What joy would fill our hearts as we experience that the power that held us in terror has been broken; great things now lie before us, the power broken by Christ. In verse 3 there is to be a memorial. All this is to help us from turning back, as was referred to; it was a witness. I think we have to be the stone, to be the witness ourselves that we have been raised with Him. Not only have we been identified with Him in death but we have been raised. That is the normal Christian position; circumcision goes on to that, baptism goes on to it; in Colossians we are not only baptised but raised with Him. So it is an advance on Romans - baptism in Romans hardly goes that far - but in Colossians it speaks about being raised as well. That is the basis, you may say, of our life, that we have been raised with Him. What do you say about it?

G.W.E. And also it is a lodging-place, not to stay but to go on in the light of all that has been accomplished.

R.T. Yes, it says that they came up out of the Jordan. The waters returned to their place, but there is the witness in the stones; there is the witness in the saints and the way we live, in what we enjoy in our life, that our life is hid with Christ in God, that we are having our mind on the things above where He is.

E.P. Do you think it would bring a touch of triumph into our spirits - not our triumph but His? We rejoice in that, and I have wondered whether it would be contributive in the service of God.

R.T. Yes, there must have been a Hallelujah when the last ones came out. The previous time they had contemplated the barrier, but think of them on the other side of the barrier; what a note of praise must have arisen in their hearts! These things are to touch our experience, that we have some sense that not only has Christ broken the power of death, but we are so drawn to Him that we want to be identified with Him in His death that we may enjoy something of living with Him in that life beyond the power of death.

E.P. The psalm celebrates this that happened: "What ailed thee, thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou turnedst back?" (Ps 114: 5), and we can provide the answer to that, can we not, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Himself? He is the only answer.

R.T. Yes, He is the answer and then the answer is in the saints, the twelve stones which they had taken are set up in Gilgal, and it says that they are there to this day; so there they are. So, long after, there is testimony in the saints that the power of our life is in Christ's life. The resources that we draw from are in Christ's life. So it bears on the way we do things. Colossians brings up the way things are done; it is in the power of the life of a risen Man.

F.C.M. Is it not an important point in soul history to lay hold of the fact that I have an entirely new origin and a new life? I was thinking of the hymn, 'Out of Thy death has sprung A wondrous living throng' (No 152).

R.T. Yes, I think it is of all moment, and that is the import of these lodging-places, that we are to be consolidated, that what marked me before is no longer to mark me. The twelve stones were lying there buried in Jordan; all that the enemy may raise about my history is covered for ever in the death of Christ, and all that I am, I am as being raised with Him in the power of His life.

E.C.B. These twelve stones taken out of Jordan do not represent knowledge, do they? I wondered if that is something of what you had in mind, that we are to get beyond knowledge into experience. It is God who says that stones are to be taken out; He does not tell

Joshua to put' twelve back, Joshua did that. God will have something in reality that exhibits a life that can be enquired about.

R.T. You distinguish between knowledge and intelligence?

E.C.B. Well, I would distinguish between knowledge and intelligence, but what I am thinking of is that we can all find out what these stones teach by reading the ministry, but that is not what these stones represent.

R.T. Oh no, these stones represent persons who had passed by the ark in the bed of the Jordan, persons who had seen those other twelve stones placed in the bed of the Jordan and who have followed on to this ground through being drawn to Him in His personal worth. It brings you into the beginning of Acts, I suppose. He appeared again, coming in, coming in through those doors in John 20 as well. I think it brings them on to new ground entirely; all that marked them before was gone and they are now living in the power of a risen ascending One. Do you think so?

E.C.B. Yes I do. If I may say so, I think there is a great need among us to get beyond the knowledge that we get from reading - you can trace in meetings knowledge that comes from reading - into the experience which comes from the life of these things. The children will not enquire about what you are quoting from a book; they will enquire about what comes out in your life.

R.T. Yes, that is right. While there is nothing wrong in trying to prove things from ministry, it is far better to point to Scripture that you have gone through experience with Christ and the Spirit. I think that this time spent at Gilgal was all in view of that, in making them enter into the meaning of these stones that were taken up, that came out of the Jordan, and they are a witness on dry land that Israel came over this Jordan because God dried up the waters. How much He had in mind for us! And these stones are to be a witness that our life is now in Him.

C.C.I. Do you think the forty days the Lord spent before His being received up into heaven would be like a lodging-place for the disciples so as to get into their minds a new position and a new

condition of things into which He is entering and which we are to enter with Him?

R.T. Yes, I think it links with what we were saying earlier as to inducing confidence, that He had not only broken the power of death but as risen He was identifying them with Him in the power of that risen life. Think of Him coming in in these days among them! It has been said that it was to accustom them to spirituality, and that is what these exercises are doing, they are helping us to be more spiritual, to remove from our place, helping us to have confidence in Christ and the Spirit that we may be doing things spiritually rather than by natural power which may mark us.

S.D.K.R. What has been said would not in any way discourage us from reading the ministry, because it keeps our minds occupied, does it not?

R.T. I think it would encourage us to read the ministry because you begin to think about something and you say, Well, what did so-and-so say about that, and the ministry leads you forward. I think that is all part of, Think of what I say. That would all connect with the lodging-place - "Think of what I say, for the Lord will give thee understanding in all things" (2 Tim 2: 7), and the Spirit very much enters into the lodging-place, and it strengthens us in a formative way. As has been said, it is formation that is marking these stones, it is some thing that is formed, formed in His death, and they are a witness now to the power of His life.

S.D.K.R. Would stone bring in the thought of permanency?

R.T. Yes, and divine workmanship; no man had any hand in it. They are a witness. So it is to be in the saints.

R.H.B. I was wondering how the truth is made good in us as you have been saying. We would all desire that; to what extent is that God's sovereign work, and to what extent can we facilitate it?

R.T. I think it is primarily the basis of exercise. God's sovereign work is always there. I think that the soles of the feet being put down

on the land involves exercise, but exercise that is promoted through being attracted to Christ. What do you think?

R.H.B. Yes. The matter of Gilgal in chapter 5 was another thing that they had to do, was it not? That was necessary for their entrance, and it was a very painful matter, yet Joshua was influential in getting all of them to do it. I was wondering if you had some thought about it.

R.T. It does not seem that anybody objected. As you say, it was a painful matter, but I think the place that Christ has in our hearts encourages us to go all the way. There had been neglect - we did not read it all, we read a great deal, but we could get help as we read some more about it ourselves - but some of them had not been circumcised. We might find that among us as we look in our own histories, that there has been neglect about something and that has hindered us from going the whole way; we went part of the way, but what is going to help us to full committal? It is the appreciation of the One who has gone through death, the One who has annulled the power of death, broken its authority, and we beholding Him in the place He has beyond death for ever.

H.A.H. One feature of the feet of the priests was their firmness. Does that link with the reference in Colossians, "the firmness of your faith", chap 2: 5? I wondered if that matter of firmness would enter into what has just been asked.

R.T. Yes; it brings up this matter of stability and confidence that we are speaking of. That would be begotten in our souls in the lodgingplace, that nothing could shake Christ. The whole power of the enemy was against Him; the whole power of the devil was there, yet it could not shake Him - death had to bow. The waters were driven back, there was dry ground. That is to encourage us. Circumcision is a painful thing, but do I want the man that has been ended? These things test us and we do not say them lightly but to encourage us all to follow the Man who has opened up the land of divine purpose. What they come to eat after the circumcision is the old corn of the land. Nobody had the right to eat the passover who

was not circumcised - you see that in Exodus 12; the males should have been circumcised to eat the passover. Possibly things are kept with us, as it was with them, very formally and very casually, but circumcision underlay the eating of the passover and the manna and the old corn of the land. What an inducement there is to be strengthened in the power of His life!

J.W. In Philippians Paul speaks of the concision. I suppose we do not go the full way, but he says we are the circumcision. Then he speaks of himself as a man who had gone the whole way, he had suffered the loss of all things that he might gain Christ. It is a challenge, but he had come into something far better, had he not?

R.T. He is a beautiful example. We were speaking about it through the week, how much he had to lay aside. He definitely set aside his powers and ability as a man; he says, "but what things were gain to me these I counted, on account of Christ, loss", Phil 3: 7. Well, he had a lot more than any of us have in the way of ability and he deliberately set that aside that he might gain Christ. As you say, we are the circumcision. I think these lodging places would create a desire in us that we want Christ, we want to follow, and we want to live in the place that divine love has prepared for us.

E.C. What was the failure in the matter of continuity in this matter of circumcision, for those who came out were circumcised but the children were not? The truth of the cutting off of the flesh and the fact that in my flesh good does not dwell is to be continued, is it not? Is Joshua's intelligence in setting up those stones making up for this because he says, When the children enquire there is an answer (see chap 4: 6); there is going to be continuity then.

R.T. I think we would very simply and humbly have to feel that there have been failures with us; there may have been the allowing of certain things, but in spite of that there are the stones. How do we measure up? Children may see something not in keeping with the stones but the stones are there. So we are to be a testimony to a risen Christ, and that involves the disallowance of all that man is after the flesh.

F.C.M. Linking with what has been said as to Paul's former self-confidence, every feature of Egypt has gone. That is a fine thing, is it not?

R.T. Yes, it is very impressive the way that it puts it here. It speaks in verse 9: "this day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you". Think of that, the reproach of Egypt had been rolled away from them! The people no longer wanted Egypt; in the wilderness they were hankering after it, but in the experience of Christ becoming, I was going to say, all to me, the reproach of Egypt is rolled away. What attaches to that system of man's ability is not to mark us; we are now identified with Christ, the heavenly One.

C.C.I. Does this involve for us the new man?

R.T. Yes. That is going on to Ephesians, but, as you say, there is the old man: but there is the new man, and the new man needs to be nourished. There is the nourishing here in the passover and the old corn of the land. So, what is our taste? Is it taste for something that is suited to the heavenly land? We spoke about reading the ministry; have we a taste for heavenly food, the old corn of the land - Christ, not only the Saviour who has met our need, the same blessed Person, but the heavenly One? We had no hand in the old corn of the land; it is something of the Father's thoughts about Christ strengthening our hearts that we may be able to walk in this new life. It says, "Put to death"; and, "If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above"; that would be the old corn of the land.

E.C.B. It has been said that eating the old corn of the land is collective, just as the new man is collective. Is that right?

R.T. I think that this whole section is very much collective. There is what enters into our individual experience, but what enters into our individual experience is to put us together. There are twelve stones, made up of one, two and three; but the twelve stones, I think, look on, as does eating of the old corn, to our being set together on heavenly ground and enjoying the inheritance together. We need one another for the inheritance; there is nobody who enjoys it to the

full themselves; to get the full gain of the land and the heavenly position that is ours we need the brethren.

CROYDON

7 May 1988

Key to initials

J.Brown, Grangemouth; R.H.Brown, Barnet; E.C.Burr, London;
E.Croot, Dorking; G.W.Easton, Redbridge; R.W.Flowerdew, London;
S.B.Hewison, Dorking; H.A.Hutson, London; C.C.Ikin, Southend;
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ENCOURAGEMENT

R.Taylor

**2 Corinthians 1: 3-7; Romans 15: 4,5; Hebrews 3: 12, 13;
1 Thessalonians 4: 15-18; 5: 10,11**

It will be obvious from these scriptures that the idea of encouragement is in mind. It is something which we always need - to be encouraged, encouraged of God. It says He is "the God of all encouragement". How able He is to do it! Paul speaks elsewhere about the God who encourages those who are brought low. He has His own way of doing that. He does not encourage us in our ambitions in the flesh; Paul says He encourages those who are brought low (see 2 Cor 7: 6) - brought low, but never too low. God is always ready with encouragement; even from the outset when He met Adam after the fall. He did not say only, Where art thou? He did not only speak to his conscience but He also made coats of skin. When He spoke to Cain He said a sin-offering lies at the door, God would never leave a soul in despair, never. He would never leave a soul overwhelmed by its state, He is the God of all encouragement.

I would like to speak of it in the different ways in which it comes into these scriptures. Here in the first scripture it is Paul speaking of his sufferings. As you read this passage he almost says that the sufferings were worthwhile because of the encouragement that God brought in; that is virtually what he says. I do not know that many of us could speak like that, but that is how Paul is speaking. In chapter 4 he speaks about some of these sufferings: in one of them he says "persecuted, but not abandoned; cast down, but not destroyed" (v 9). There is always encouragement, our way not entirely shut up. What sufferings there were, and Paul was going on from this scripture to be a prisoner, I suppose; but here he is speaking about these times that he had passed through, and he says what a result there was: the "God of all encouragement; who encourages us in all our tribulation" - "in all our tribulation". What times we are in, times of reduction! I think times of reduction are particularly meant to make

way for God to encourage us, to encourage us in Himself. God is very ready to do it. You think of Gideon - he was brought low, he was in the midst of the breakdown, and he says, Where are all these things our fathers spoke about? Where are all the big meetings? It is the same God. Gideon could hardly take it in. When God speaks to him, Gideon says, There is the fleece; if the fleece is wet I will be encouraged, and he began to doubt again and said if the fleece is dry I will be encouraged. Well, God comes down to all these matters. He is ready to encourage us. He came down to Abraham's way of thinking; it says, having no greater to swear by He swore by Himself. He is ready to encourage the believer in the path of faith. Doubts there may be in your heart, exercises and questions about matters; God would seek to beget your confidence through encouraging you, encouraging you to trust in Him, to have faith in Him.

So the tribulations did not overwhelm Paul. Paul and Silas were in prison. What a great encouragement that earthquake was, the doors of the prison opened! I suppose the greatest encouragement was in the jailor, a man and his house saved for the testimony. Think of God working through these tribulations of Paul, what power it gave to his ministry! He speaks about it here: "through the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged of God". None of us could, I suppose, speak about it like Paul, but he is speaking about it himself and he would seem to be encouraging the Corinthians into what he is saying, that, "even as the sufferings of the Christ abound towards us" - that was particularly the apostle, I suppose - "so through the Christ does our encouragement also abound". They were commensurate, indeed the encouragement was greater. We may think of the tribulations being greater, but Paul is saying that the encouragement also abounds, it is greater than the sufferings. What encouragement God is giving to His saints! While there is tribulation, it is all to affect us in bonds of sympathy, to affect us that we may be able to encourage one another. But in the sufferings, may we be helped, dear brethren, to look for the encouragement. The clouds, how heavy they may be, what clouds

may come in and press upon us, but they are balanced - balanced. You look at these clouds up there, some days it looks all clouds, but they are balanced. It speaks about that in the Scriptures: He who balances the clouds (see Job 37: 16). The whole thing is balanced; there is encouragement. The clouds were a great encouragement to one man, he saw a cloud the size of a man's hand and he says, Well, God is going to come in in a great time of rain (see 1 Kings 18: 44). So let us look for encouragement, dear brethren. May we be strengthened. Paul was never without looking for it. It speaks of a door of hope being opened to him; and in these sufferings that abounded in the apostle's case it says, "so through the Christ does our encouragement also abound". There is a blessed, glorious Man who has met every matter, met it in His death, met it in the way He has gone in His sufferings. He has taken the power out of the enemy's hand; the enemy is ever ready to discourage, but Christ, in the way He has gone, has taken the power out of the enemy's hand. Think of the ark in Dagon's house (see 1 Sam 5). In the morning, what was there? The stump. They put it back up thinking there had been an accident, I suppose; next morning the whole thing has crashed again - the God of all encouragement.

What encouragement it must have been to these saints, as it was to Gideon in his exercises, that God is greater; God is greater than the surroundings, He is greater than the pressure. But then He may be in the pressure, He may be in the sufferings to give us to prove the encouragement, "encouragement of God" - "through the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged of God". And it abounds through Christ, that blessed glorious Man, the triumphant One. May our hearts be strengthened in Him in His priestly grace, but encouraged in the place that He fills, the place that He fills under God's eye, the One as to whom it says, "For whatever promises of God there are, in him is the yea, and in him the amen" (2 Cor 1: 20) - whatever the promises of God. Men say, Where is the promise of His coming? Where is the promise? These thoughts may not be outside our own hearts - Where is the promise? Well, it says, they are all in Him, He is the yea and the

amen, the assurance of them all is in Christ, Christ in glory. But then that is to be in my heart, as the apostle says, it is to be for your encouragement. What an encouragement he must have been! Think of a man bound with a chain, somebody going to visit him would come away encouraged. Paul says that he was encouraged. I think that those who visited Paul in prison were encouraged. You say, What encouragement was that? The great vessel of the testimony was in prison not able to visit all these localities which he loved; bound with a chain, restricted, and yet he says he had been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. He said that from the prison; beautiful things you would have heard from Paul in prison, we have some of them in the Scriptures. So he was able to encourage, encourage those who would visit him. May we be helped, dear brethren, in some measure, as having proved the encouragement that flows from Christ, to be an encouragement to one another. It is something that is open to everyone. Christ is available to encourage you, as He would, as He does about our exercises, and He would have it that you may be an encouragement. Would that that desire was in all our hearts, the very youngest, to be an encouragement to the brethren. Some people have been discouraged, and we would have to feel a sense of shame that we may have discouraged some. I do not say that to lighten their responsibility because they each have their responsibility to be encouraged as we have spoken about, but there have been matters that have discouraged some; we should feel the shame of that. Paul would never be a discouragement to anybody. He wrote the first epistle but he did not discourage them and he told them what had to be told. He spoke to them about what they had done wrong, but he did not discourage them: interwoven through these corrective epistles there is the glory of Christ. Think of Paul writing to the Corinthians from that point of view, that Christ "has been made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and holiness, and redemption", 1 Cor 1: 3. He closes the epistle by speaking about the grace of Christ - "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen", 1 Cor 16: 24. Paul had confidence in the work of God, and that is what we want to

encourage, dear brethren, the work of God in one another. Paul's assurance here was that the work of God would prevail in the saints. There may be other matters, those that need to be attended to, but in it all there is to be the encouragement of the work of God. We are not all in the same depths of sufferings at one time, the clouds are balanced - matchless grace! And there is encouragement abounding from Christ, through the saints, for the encouragement of the saints.

Well, in Romans it speaks about the "encouragement of the scriptures". The Scriptures themselves are a great encouragement. No book has been more maligned, no book more set against by the devil than the Holy Scriptures, and here they are in their blessed purity in our hands today - "encouragement of the scriptures". God has seen to it that they are available to be read for our encouragement. To get the encouragement of the Scriptures you would have to read them. It says, "For as many things as have been written before have been written for our instruction, that through endurance and through encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope". I commend it to you, dear brethren; it is a very real matter. Many have proved in the midst of pressures that the Scriptures have their own encouragement. "And when ye turn to the right hand or when ye turn to the left, thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isa 30: 21) - just a verse of scripture brings its own encouragement. The encouragement of the Scriptures is even greater than reading ministry, but, as I say, you have to make way for them, read them, read them often, read them copiously, because a great deal of the encouragement of scripture comes through the setting in which it is. So that we do not just read a verse but read them copiously and see what God is saying. Daniel was a captive, a young man, who proved the encouragement of the Scriptures. It says in the midst of one of his great exercises that he understood by the books. There he was, shut away far from Jerusalem; I suppose he wondered he would ever see it. He felt the breakdown but he was reading - I suppose it would be the Scriptures - and it says, "I Daniel understood by the

books that the number of the years ... was seventy years", Dan 9: 2. What a ray of hope came into his soul: things are not going to be always like this; there is the encouragement of the Scriptures! He understood by what he read, and the Spirit of God giving His own touch to the Scriptures, that God had everything in hand. The book of Daniel finishes: "But do thou go thy way until the end; and thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days", chap 12: 13. I think he is a very striking example to us of the encouragement of the Scriptures. There are other prophets too. They did not have much in the captivity to guide them, but there was the encouragement of God's word. May we, dear brethren, prove it, that through endurance and through encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope, that we might see that the Scriptures are all leading us on to another day, from the very outset of Genesis they are leading on to Christ and the saints in glory. So you need to read them through, not just one verse, but you need to see the bearing of Scripture, that it is leading on to finality. As you read Scripture more you see how God has everything in hand. Man's days are measured; what arrogance and pride marks him! But God has it all in hand - "through encouragement of the scriptures" we can see that, though man will have his day, the end will be Christ's day and the saints with Him. It says, "we might have hope". "Now the God of endurance and of encouragement give you to be like-minded one toward another". There is a great deal that crops up and hinders through dissatisfaction; it spreads very quickly. That would perhaps come more into Hebrews; dissatisfaction and complaining gives room to the devil . We need to encourage ourselves, dear brethren, not only depend on one another. The psalmist says, "Why art thou cast down, my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?" Ps 42: 11. Do you ever say that to yourself? Why are you cast down? Why? What is the reason for it? Dissatisfaction leads to a great deal of murmuring, discontent, sorrow. This chapter speaks about it, the discontent that marked the people. The writer of this chapter says, "see, brethren, lest there be in any one of you a wicked heart of unbelief ... But encourage yourselves each day". We need to have faith. God would encourage and stimulate faith in the believer

so that you are able to encourage yourselves. Just look at your history: is there not a great deal to be encouraged about? The God who took you up, His own sovereign choice, God moving of Himself in His own sovereign ways in selecting you; He is not going to let you down. He is not going to give up. He called us in His grace. Oh, what there is to encourage ourselves about, dear brethren! "But encourage yourselves each day" - something you have to keep at. Dissatisfaction spreads very quickly, it is like a weed, it grows very quickly - "encourage yourselves each day, as long as it is called To-day". Do not go to bed without being encouraged, finish the day with Christ, encourage yourselves each day, "as long as it is called To day" - To-day. It is measured, you see - twenty-four hours measures the day - but do not finish it without encouraging yourself; you will sleep better and you will wake up a great deal better too - encourage yourselves. There are a great many ways of doing it; read the ministry and go to the Scriptures, you will find something; God is ready to give you a touch of encouragement. Encourage yourself; you make way for it, you make time for God to bring in His encouragement, maybe through a letter, may be through the word of another, but encourage yourself; do not let the day close without seeing that you have been with God about matters. God has a great deal to encourage you about. So encourage yourself each day so that you do not get hardened. If you go on in discouragement, the next day it builds up a great deal more; you become a discontent, a complainer, and these things give the enemy great advantage. So it says, "that none of you be hardened". It is very easy, dear brethren, in pressure and in suffering to be hardened. The enemy is ever active to bring in hardness; encourage yourselves to-day "that none of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin". Well, what a wealth there is Just to touch and prove the encouragement that comes from God!

Thessalonians speaks of the great hope that the saints have, speaking of the Lord's soon return in this parenthesis. It says, "the Lord himself": what an encouragement that is! Who else could do it? That same blessed Man who has annulled death has broken the

power of it, "the Lord himself, with an assembling shout, with archangel's voice and with trump of God" - what a Personage, but what a power is going to accompany Him! You think of the powers of evil that are working against the coming of Christ; think of Him meeting them all - "the Lord himself ... assembling shout, ... archangel's voice ... trump of God" - What majesty! The whole power of man, of the devil, sin, will have to give way. What is it all for? It is to raise the saints to be with Christ. The archangel's voice, the trump of God: think of these things invading death; think of the assembling shout and archangel's voice penetrating the realm of death and the tomb. Then "the dead in Christ shall rise first"; no power shall hold them, they are His, dear brethren, He is going to claim us all to be eternally with Himself, the dead in Christ all belong to Him and He knows them all. What a company they are, the dead in Christ! He will have them all, no power will hold them when the time comes; "the Lord himself". Where then the discouragement, dear brethren? These things of time - pains, sorrow, sufferings - are all measured. There will be a time when we will be for ever with Him; it says, "to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall be always with the Lord": 'For ever with the Lord, For ever like Him then, We'll see His face' (Hymn No 12). Oh, what an encouragement! Then it says, "So encourage one another with these words". How much do you speak about it? Do you ever speak about it to persons who are in tribulation? What a thing to encourage yourself with and be able to encourage the brethren about, that we will soon be for ever, for ever, with the Lord. Before that it says that we shall meet Him in the air. You look up sometimes and you think about that, we will rise to meet the Lord in the air. What a distance He is coming; He is coming far further than we will travel when we meet Him; He is coming to meet us in the air, and He will take us to His own abode, to the place where He is supreme. We will have bodies of glory, it says; what a comfort to us in these bodies that we will have bodies of glory. What will they be like? We will be like Him - when we see Him we shall be like Him - "So encourage one another with these words".

In the next chapter it says, "Wherefore encourage one another, and build up each one the other". Paul, in the confidence he has in the work of God and in the saints, says these words, and I would close with them - "encourage one another ... even as also ye do". May we do it more for His Name's sake.

CROYDON

7 May 1988

THE CHILDREN'S DISCOVERIES

It is recorded of a man in the early days of Bible history that he said "I have discovered that God has blessed me for thy sake". In his case the blessing was of material benefit, but his words could be made to relate to the blessings of spiritual life which may still be awaiting discovery by someone reading this. A wellknown hymn tells us to count our many blessings one by one and it will surprise us what the Lord has done. It is for His sake and on account of His atoning work that these blessings may be ours.

The celebrated doctor who found out the use of chloroform as a means of preventing pain when treating injured persons was once asked what was the greatest discovery he had ever made. The unexpected answer was 'that I was a great sinner and that Jesus is a great Saviour'. I do not know at what age he became convicted of sins but I do know that this discovery may be made when quite young. For instance, it seems that Timothy from infancy had known the Scriptures that would make him "wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus". Even if he had only the Old Testament he would early learn from the Day of Atonement the need of someone to bear the sins of many. As he grew up the knowledge of the Lord Jesus as sin-bearer was becoming widespread.

In the history of Joseph there came a time when his brothers discovered to their great surprise that the boy whom they had, years before, sold as a slave was now governor of the land of Egypt. They must at first have feared that Joseph might take revenge on them. Instead of that, however, he told them that God had sent him before his brethren to keep them alive in a time of famine. How much this is like the Lord Jesus who was taken by wicked hands and slain! Yet it was God's way - and the only possible way - whereby even those who slew Him could, on conviction and repentance as in the case of Joseph's brethren, be entirely forgiven. Jesus is truly a great Saviour. Is He yours?

J.C.Evershed