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INCREASE IN SPIRITUALITY

PROCESSIONS

CHILDREN AND BIRD-LIFE

INCREASE IN SPIRITUALITY

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J.R.C. I wondered if we could get some help from these scriptures as to increase in spirituality. It has already been said that there is an end which ministry should reach with us - "until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ", Eph 4: 13. I think that would underline for us that there is a necessary progress with us. How deep that might be with any one is a question. For myself I would like to feel a bit more in regard to being spiritual; it is not something that is beyond us and it is not something that we should be afraid of. I think the Spirit of God would encourage us to be more spiritual. We would desire that even the young ones here might be encouraged on this line because I believe it leads to manhood according to God. Certain things have to be adjusted in our lives - maybe that is constant with many of us.

I have suggested these scriptures so that we might see that certain things have to be relegated to where they belong. It says in Galatians that the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. In these scriptures in John, there is a line in chapter 2 which can be a hindrance to what is spiritual. What is of the family can be a deterrent. Not that there is anything wrong in the family thought but it may be that we can overplay that and allow its influence to divert us from being spiritual. It is interesting in these scriptures that it speaks about His disciples here, and again in chapter 4, and in chapter 6 something is reached - it comes to the twelve. I think that would show us that there was progress in the character of things, so that 'the twelve' would represent what is spiritual. Is that all right?

C.F.D. Yes, I think it is very suggestive. You say that we might become more spiritual: maybe you would tell us what that conveys.

J.R.C. I think we want to see that spirituality is not for our own end; it is in order that we might be able to appreciate and respond to

divine Persons in a more intelligent way, with the underlying affections that go with it. It is not an assumed state, it is not something that we build up or try to build up; it would be the outcome in persons who have surrendered to Christ and who are subject to the Spirit and who have one outlook in regard to the Father.

C.F.D. That helps. All of us sometimes use expressions of this kind and maybe some of us do not grasp what they mean. But being spiritual stands over against what I am naturally, does it not, and that would involve the line of displacement to which you have referred.

J.R.C. I think that is right: so we would desire that the negative line of what is displaced - which is necessary - would immediately make way for something for the pleasure of God.

J.A.P. I hope it is not anticipating but in John 6 it says "It is the Spirit which quickens, the flesh profits nothing: the words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life" (v 63). I think that could be opened up a little just what it means to be spiritual. Is it the Spirit coming into the heart of the Christian and being enlarged in him?

J.R.C. That is right, especially on this line of negating what is right in its own sense but has no place spiritually. There is an area here in John 2 where things were right; there was nothing wrong with what was proceeding, but there was something that seemed to indicate that the Lord was like an addition to what was proceeding and was there in case something went wrong. I think we want to see in the chapter that the way through this is that these matters are kept under control. Our families can be very indicative to us (I am saying that sympathetically, not to you but to myself) and there is nothing wrong with the family thought - we thank God for it - but if I allow too much on that line it can intrude on what is to be a spiritual result in my life, do you think?

J.A.P. I have felt that for some years. I do not have my family with me here this morning but I do have my family here, that is, the family in which God has put me.

J.R.C. Yes. So we look on one another and find a line of compensation for things where, as you say, sorrow has come into

practically every household. You look at the local brethren and see what the Lord would give you for comfort. But along with that you can see the substantiality of what is spiritual emerging and that is what the Lord is after. I was impressed by the line of that hymn, that we should be subject-minded (No.385). Mary here had the right idea; she came to it: "Whatever he may say to you, do". I think that would be a beginning for all of us in regard to spirituality, that we surrender our own thoughts, our own ideas, our own wills.

G.H. You said that the thought of disciples is mentioned quite a bit but that in John 6 it is the twelve. What do you have in mind?

J.R.C. I think there is indicated in these scriptures, especially in John 6 - great chapter that that is - something secured substantially in these persons who can be designated 'the twelve'. It is disciples here in chapter 2 and it is disciples in chapter 4, and in each of these scriptures they had to learn something of what the flesh is; not the gross side of things but something that is just in the ordinary course of life. If we bring John 4 into what we are speaking about (and we do not want to be sectional as we read the scriptures but to get the trend of this) you have twelve men, who all went away to get food and they left the Lord. What emerges is 'the will of Him that has sent Me'; that is that the substantiality of what the Lord would say is more important than material things. I think we have to learn that.

L.McF. It says in verse 3, "And wine being deficient, the mother of Jesus says to him, They have no wine". That seemed to be a directive. Is that what you are getting at? When we come into the assembly it is where the Spirit of God dominates and we need to realise that and be careful, do you think?

J.R.C. That is right. Therefore, if matters are proceeding in the assembly, we do not want to use whatever influence we may have in a family setting to try and divert or to further what is proceeding, as Mary here; she can see something that is needed and she tries to use her influence in regard to what is natural. That will never do as regards divine things. Is that in your mind?

L.McF. Well, we are all in danger of getting in the way of the Spirit; He is to have the right of way. So the Lord had to speak to her; He said, "What have I to do with thee, woman?" But she was adjusted.

J.R.C. Exactly. I think there is just some glimmer here - and it may be just a little glimmer in our own lives too - "Whatever he may say to you do". Something takes over in our lives. Well, the Lord will have His way, and it is always that we submit ourselves, be subject-minded to the Lord. At that point there is a process begun, as indicated to us here, of displacement, and what comes in when natural matters are displaced is what is spiritual. "That which is spiritual was not first, but that which is natural, then that which is spiritual", 1 Cor 15: 46.

S.E.H. Would you say that not only is Mary adjusted but she brings the servants in, she influences the servants so that they not only fill the water vessels but they fill them to the brim?

J.R.C. I think that is fine. Do you not feel sometimes that we even get adjustment as we come together - a spiritual touch from someone sets something on and we fall into line. That is how it works here, the influence spreads spiritually. We can look back in history and see how the assembly and what was of the assembly was influenced by that which was personal and we ought to avoid that kind of thing; it is not right. If we have any influence at all in regard to what is of the assembly it should be spiritual and our power correspondingly moral. We have no power in the assembly but what is moral. Persons may be able, they can have a lot of ability, they can be set up with all sorts of resources in themselves, but any power anyone has in the assembly should be moral power.

T.E.D. Is a feature of spirituality restfulness and learning to submit to the Lord?

J.R.C. That is good. Say some more.

T.E.D. I was thinking of the household setting in Bethany. One was ready to sit at the feet of Jesus and in that household that influence spread, so that John's presentation of the household is that provision is there for Christ.

J.R.C. That is very good. That was the retreat, you might say, that the Lord Jesus had - that place where persons were in subjection to Himself and there was a provision spiritually which was for His enjoyment. In Luke's gospel He went out as far as Bethany and was taken up from there (see chap 24: 50,51). What an area that was of something substantial in the saints in spirituality!

C.F.D. Is the filling of these water vessels to the brim a question of where we begin in this process that you are referring to?

J.R.C. I wondered that. Would you say something more about it?

C.F.D. It is interesting that the Lord says to them, "Fill the water-vessels with water". You might say it is a spiritual beginning, and I think that if our spiritual beginnings were right we would begin by being filled with the idea of the death of Christ, and if we can get full of that it will displace these other things that get in the way, do you think?

J.R.C. I am sure that would be right. So that from that source, from that background, there is a drawing out which is for the edification of all that were in that company. We do not want to draw out from persons what is merely a kind of mental ability in things: I say that to myself as much as to any of the brethren. We want to be able to see and recognise and make way for spiritual touches from one another, because that is what the Lord would have in circulation. As you say, the death of Christ cuts across everything. It was written on the cross, This is Jesus; it was written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. That is the whole thing embraced in the death of Christ, and the writing would show the totality of that, that that Man went into death in its completeness.

G.H. I was wondering whether Bethany was restful; and John himself who wrote this precious gospel was marked by being restful, being a spiritual man. Is that right?

J.R.C. That is fine, because if you go through the gospel you have the disciple that Jesus loved. Now can I make this suggestion? - and it is by no means original - every one of us, I am sure, would desire to have the features of John in our lives and in our hearts.

Maybe there is a lot of Peter in every one of us. In the last chapter the Lord regulates Peter; He says, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me" (v 22). In other words, Peter, you just do as I tell you. But John is in that restful state, there is no correction, and I thoroughly believe that John would never be tempted from the position of affection that he had in Christ's heart by anything of this world. Therefore the effect of the death of Jesus should be total with every one of us.

A.G.S. I suppose it is right to say that John profited much by leaning on the breast of Jesus. It is the best place to be.

J.R.C. Absolutely so. May He become more attractive to every one of us.

A.G.S. So we should think more of the Lord Jesus and spend more time in His presence in spirit, and by faith draw more and more from Him day by day.

J.R.C. That is good. So that continues, shall I say - the work of displacement in ourselves as to anything that we may be allowing in ourselves, and it makes way for this atmosphere, this attitude of the enjoyment of the love of Jesus. You get that impression from Mr Darby's hymns, how he resorted, even in his composition of these lovely hymns, to the affections that he knew were for him personally; many of his hymns are written in the first person. That is something for us. Young people, be encouraged in the fact that you do not just hide in a number but that the Lord has a place for you in His affections.

G.H. As you look at Mr Darby's hymns, there was a man who had a sense of being restful.

J.R.C. Exactly so. He had gone through and did go through conflict in regard to the testimony such as we have never touched. He was constant in his fight against all that was antagonistic to Christ but his source of power and his source of life was the love of Jesus.

L.McF. In verse 6 we come to the stone water-vessels; they are standing. It raises the question as to our being available, whether I am that in the locality and available there for the Lord's service.

J.R.C. That is a word for us. It would keep us from being haphazard in our approach to what is collective for the Lord; they are standing here, they are available for the Lord. We would encourage one another in that regard that the Lord can use us as we make ourselves available to Him. He is not desirous of having to bend us, to break us in order to bring us into this place of intimacy in His affections; He is desirous that we may make ourselves available for this. Bethany has already been mentioned; it was composed of persons to whom Christ was pre-eminent.

L.McF. So there is room for the younger people; you get the measure.

J.R.C. That is right. As you say, "two or three measures". So we should all feel that we have a place in this. We do not want to postpone the thought of reaching spirituality until we are old age pensioners; I do not think that is the idea at all. We want to be in this vitally and early in substance.

J.A.P. Does the water here also have the significance of washing and cleansing? These relationships that you have been speaking of - I find that almost daily that these things have to be washed out, otherwise they affect us. So the water is not only for refreshment but it is available in this marriage, the family setting, to keep husbands and wives and children and matters of the testimony right. What an exercise that is!

J.R.C. That is very true and very searching. In other words, there is the practical effect of the water on every one of us and in our circumstances. Where that is so these vessels are filled, filled to the brim, it says. That was total displacement of all these matters that would work against what is spiritual, and there is a drawing out from that which means matters proceed as the Lord would have it, not as I would have it, which can be quite searching.

Now I just want to go on. The disciples were with Him, they learned something on that occasion, they believed in Him. There was something started, something generated there, something furthered; it says, "they believed on him". Now when we get to

chapter 4 there are lines of truth running through which are very important in many respects and we could not possibly cover them all, but what I am seeking to get out of it is that the disciples saw what was happening here and they had their eyes elevated I think, in some measure at least, to the importance of what the Lord directs them to in what was spiritual. Natural resources, beloved brethren, may make us feel safe; we may have a certain amount of natural resources and can rely on that and add on a bit which we think in regard to what is for the Lord, and feel that we are getting on not too badly. I do not think that that is how it works.

S.E.MacC. There is a real need of spiritual growth with us. I wondered whether that does not go along with what you are presenting.

J.R.C. I think that would be right because growth means that there is something established. We hear of things being damaged as they are growing up, but I think if there is something arrived at basically in chapter 2, there is going to be steady spiritual growth. Again, I say, beloved brethren, chapter 6 brings in the twelve, and that brings us all in in that regard, that there is maturity there something reached for God.

S.E.MacC. It is often the case - at least with myself - that you can go a long time and not experience the growth I am sure the Lord is looking for.

J.R.C. I am sure that would be right. You take this instance of which we read in chapter 4; just take the literality of it. Here is the Lord Jesus weary with the way He had come. This is the humanity of Jesus here at that point - weary with the way He had come, and then this woman comes. There is a little insert here in verse 8: "(for his disciples had gone away into the city that they might buy provisions)". In other words they thought more about what natural resources required - food - than what the Lord's needs were, because it is already stated that He must needs pass through Samaria. The Lord was going to effect something. Let us be sympathetic with what is proceeding amongst us, let us get to the

substantiality of growth. Take it as it is, beloved brethren, twelve men gone away for food and the Lord is left alone.

G.H. The thought of maturity, the thought of men, is quite prominent in John's gospel; the Lord said "the men whom thou gavest me" chap 17: 6. Would that be the idea of growth, arriving at spiritual maturity?

J.R.C. That is right - the full-grown man, Christ represented in manhood in persons. Do not let us therefore fall back on natural resources as a substitute for spirituality.

J.A.P. I am very searched by what you say, that these men were away when the Lord was speaking to this woman, but the joy of it is that they were recovered.

J.R.C. That is the constant thing that we come to in these chapters, there is something going on. In chapter 6 - we keep it in our mind - many went away; the Lord said to the disciples, "Will ye also go away?" But some stay. So when we come out on Monday night, and Tuesday night and Wednesday night, whenever the meetings are, you say, Here are persons in whom I can see spiritual growth, and you seek to be with them and learn together.

T.E.D. They are disciples who go away in chapter 6. Have you something to say as to that?

J.R.C. Well, there could be abnormality. Verse 60 speaks of "Many therefore of his disciples having heard it said, This word is hard. A certain process goes on in spirituality and there are persons who are not prepared for what is maybe a little bit more rigorous. We have to learn to value one another that we have been held in the mercy of God'. the grace of God has kept us to this present moment. It is not to our own credit.

T.E.D. I was calling to mind a time in the Acts when Paul had to separate the disciples into the school of Tyrannus (see chap 19: 9).

There is the need for progress and growth amongst us, and spirituality would be prepared for the steps of growth, would you say, in view of manhood and maturity that you mentioned earlier?

J.R.C. That is right, especially as we pay attention to what the Lord would say to us in these varied circumstances. In chapter 4 the disciples come to Him. Again they are just talking about ordinary resources; the Lord says, "My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me, and that I should finish his work". That would steady us, to see how the Lord sets the thing out in His perfection and fulness, that there was with Him a complete committal to the will of God.

A.G.S. "Food to eat which ye do not know" is spiritual food, is it not? If we were occupied more with that we would be better off spiritually, would we not?

J.R.C. That is it: we know these things. I say humbly, and carefully too, so many times we revert from that into an area of things which perhaps we feel a bit more sure about in regard to natural things. So let us see to it that if the Lord gives us a touch to direct us in regard to what is spiritual, we hold on to that, and as was said earlier, the influence of it becomes more apparent.

K.N.P. I was thinking about the reference where the disciples all went to their own homes but Jesus went to the mount of Olives; it was where He obtained something from the Father that brings about this growth.

J.R.C. That is good. They all went to their own homes. It just shows you how we can revert to an area where we feel a bit more at ease. But I think spirituality means that we are at ease in the arrangements that divine Persons make. The Lord loved the mount of Olives in that regard.

K.N.P. That was an elevated area, opposed to what is natural which is something that we tend to resort to. But do you think that what is elevated is where God is and where we grow?

J.R.C. That is just it. And the preparedness - and I would say this carefully - the Lord Jesus shows us the pattern of things; He spent the night in prayer, it says, on one occasion (see Luke 6: 12). Are we able for that kind of thing? I have never done that, have you?

S.E.H. I have not, but I was thinking of how again here the Lord points them to other food than what they had brought. They said, "Rabbi, eat", but He points to the harvest; He says, The fields are already white to harvest. Could you say something about that.

J.R.C. Well, the harvest is what is going to be for the divine pleasure in its fulness and that should be constantly with us. We have to work away in our own localities in a small insignificant way but it is part of the divine harvest. The Lord would say, Look, there is something there, something for the divine pleasure. Let us be in it more.

C.F.D. So the disciples did not see this woman as she really was. She was part of the divine harvest that we have just been speaking about. So she goes through the process. Her moral adjustment would show that the water is having its effect and then she arrives at "Is not he the Christ?". How rapid she is in this process of growing!

J.R.C. That is very fine. You get twelve men away looking after what they thought was necessary but there is a woman secured; the moral process working in her deepened, and from that point on she is secured for the testimony. Then it goes on to say that the disciples wondered that He spoke with the woman; that is what they thought. But she is a vessel secured in regard to the testimony, which widens out in influence amongst all these men: "Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ? They went out of the city and came to him". What a result! I do not think spirituality with us should be something we are frightened of, something we do not think we can attain to, but I think it is the basis of effectiveness in testimony.

G.D.P. You have been speaking about progress and I wondered if Jacob first made progress spiritually when he came to Bethel the second time as over against the first time when he was concerned about God adding to him, giving him what is material, but that receded when he came to Bethel the second time.

J.R.C. That is good; you mean there is something that superseded what had already been there. He was wealthy, he had plenty of everything that was needful, his resources were immense. But these

did not add to him spiritually until he had that touch with God again.

We want to see that, and again I say, do not let us retreat into the area of things in which we might feel more at home. Mr Stoney speaks about being more at home in the spiritual sphere than we are in the things that are ordinary. That is a testing thing.

G.D.P. So Paul tells the Galatians, "having begun in Spirit, are ye going to be made perfect in flesh?" Gal 3: 3.

J.R.C. Yes, they revert to something. But let us be encouraged to think that in each of these scriptures, despite persons going back there is a product secured, twelve - representative of what was here for God.

Now in chapter 6 "Jesus therefore said to the twelve". It uses this word "to the twelve". They did not call themselves that but I think in the light of all that had proceeded in this chapter there was progress in these persons and the Lord knew it was there. Peter takes it upon himself in a right sense to speak for the twelve - and what he says here must have rejoiced the heart of the Lord Jesus the substantiality of what came out here. It is not in revelation as in Matthew 16, it is the idea of experience, and I think we want to see to that, beloved brethren - there is something that comes from experience in divine things which cannot be gainsaid.

J.A.P. Peter said, "To whom shall we go?" I have seen people go out, and you have, but where are they going? So Peter thought that matter through. I might leave here but where will I go? He says, I cannot go, there is no other place but to be with Thee, Lord. It might be a simple committal like that.

J.R.C. I think that is more than a simple committal, I think that is a one hundred per cent committal. But what I want to come to is just that side of things, to see that there is really no option, there is no substitute. Persons say, I am going on with the Lord, but are they? If they are in an isolated position how can they be so? I am not speaking about persons who have been put in a position such as John in Patmos and that kind of thing; such must know the presence of the Lord, but that is the Lord's arrangement. But in the normal

course of things there is no thought of isolationism in Christianity. This is where we learn and this is where things are made real to us and this is where the presence of the Lord becomes a known matter. So Peter says, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal". Here is the whole administration of all that is for God's pleasure. Enjoyment of eternal life presently is in the Lord's hand and Peter knew that.

J.A.P. We had meetings in London, Ontario with Mr Taylor during the war when the young brothers for the most part were away - I was not - but we began with Psalm 42: "As the heart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee", that that should be the inclination of the Christian, that he should be assembled with his brethren if he can.

J.R.C. That is right. I think that is a needed word for us. Many went away, many therefore who heard these words, and those are the words that preceded here, because the teaching in John 6 was to all. "Many therefore ... having heard it said, This word is hard; who can hear it?" Well, here is a nucleus that heard it and are detained in its presence; my desire is to be amongst that company, nowhere else, keeping in mind what was said earlier that it is the Spirit which quickens, the flesh profits nothing. So here you have the sense of the resource that is in divine Persons for us as distinct and apart from anything in the way of human ability.

J.A.P. You said the disciples were mature men. What does that mean?

J.R.C. I think it leads back to what we spoke about in regard to there being steady growth with us; there is something in the way of maturity. Do you agree with that?

J.A.P. Yes, I do.

J.R.C. None of us, I think I would be safe in saying, have reached fulness. We may get a touch of it but none of us are full as we should be. I would like to feel that there is room made with all of us in regard to steady growth in spirituality. Now this is not, beloved brethren, just for the brothers; the background of spirituality involves

the sisters. What is here represents the line of taking on responsibility and it is the line of speaking, but nevertheless I think all of us, brothers and sisters, should be united in that we can say, Lord to whom shall we go, Thou hast words of life eternal. That is for all of us to enter into.

L.McF. Just to confirm what you are saying, it goes on to say, "and we have believed and known that thou art the holy one of God". That is maturity and there is attachment here to the Lord Himself.

J.R.C. That is it. And as attached to Him you are a contributor to the whole sphere of things which is under the Lord's hand as the Holy One of God in regard to the service of God. That is something not to reach up to but to experience. I think Peter represents the line of experience here; he knew his position in this divine arrangement.

C.S.E. I wondered if the history of Ruth illustrates what you are bringing before us as to growth. She was one who was marked by committal in the beginning, and later on it says of her that her sitting in the house has been little. She was diligent in what she had to do and that led her to Boaz the man of worth, and the result was that a royal seed was secured. We can come in on the ground of committal and then see where that leads to. I thought that that would be a word for all of us.

J.R.C. I am sure that is right. So we want to be attracted into things, especially in regard to what is stressed in the book of Ruth, that is the local company. It is Naomi, the side of things which is unattractive, it is in sorrow, in suffering; but Boaz makes up for everything that might be on that line in the way of a spiritual touch to her. And that young person that was spoken about came into it and knew it and grew in it. It says in chapter 3, Hold out thy cloak, and he measured into it six measures of barley. I think it gives the idea that the Lord is looking for us to have capacity for things, not capacity for this world at all - that should be finished as far as we are concerned - the capacity we want is spirituality. And she took it and she carried it, it says. Now I think it would be right to say in connection with what you said that none of us could carry or wear

Paul's cloak. Bring the cloak, he says, which I left in Troas (see 2 Tim 4: 13). Every one of us has a measure, two or three, but let it be a full measure, especially spiritually.

J.A.P. Make that a little clearer about the cloak.

J.R.C. It is really the persons themselves, is it not? There is no use us trying to imitate or copy, I think spirituality means personality in a person. Therefore would you say it represents something spiritually personally? We have all known brothers and sisters who represented spiritual personality. In measure, that should be our attitude and influence amongst the local brethren . We should value one another like that.

T.E.D. Is there an interesting word in that verse in Ruth 3: 15? "He measured six measures of barley and laid it on her". Is the Lord laying something on us as to this matter of spirituality that we should be exercised to follow through as to a deepening in relation to it?

J.R.C. That is a good touch - "laid it on her". I think we put up in our own minds too many resistances to progress in divine things - we have this to see to and we have that to do. What the Lord is laying on us is the emergence of a personality that He can put something on and we can carry it.

C.G. "If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above, where the Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God: have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth", Col 3: 1,2. Would that suggest spirituality, having your mind on things above and not on material things?

J.R.C . I am sure that is right. Therefore that is what we want to make way for, and where it is made way for there is a stature in manhood, as has already been mentioned at the end of John 6, which is a most delightful thing, Peter speaking for the twelve. In other words he takes on as the spokesman not out of turn, it was absolutely right what he said here. He had come to something in his life when he recognised that every resource was in Christ, the whole

divine arrangement, the true. Aaron was there, and everything proceeding Godward was in the hands of Jesus.

G.H. This matter of spiritual influence - think of a man like Peter, he cast his shadow and people were healed. You experience that you come into the presence of certain spiritual persons and you feel something.

J.R.C. That is good. Well, we should be able to recognise it in persons and again I say this does not in any way exclude sisters. I can say it, and no doubt you can say it too, that you have had a touch from a spiritual sister; she has had something in regard to her communion with Christ which works out that you recognise spirituality. May that be more.

The company in John 20 is a kind of end product of what was here. There is no need to correct anything, there is evident intelligence as to what is needful in the day they were in, the doors shut and so on, and on the first day of the week Jesus comes in there, and they are able not only to apprehend that the Lord is there but there is way made for Him in everything. Now as in that area there is a touch here that may be we might get: He breathed into them. I think there is maturity here, but the touch of maturity means that the Spirit comes into persons. Now this prefigures Acts 2; there is a touch here of what is characteristic in persons of this standing, that they have the Spirit of God.

T.E.D. This is that what is of Christ is to continue here in His absence. I was thinking of the great needs that there are among us, how "ye who are spiritual restore such a one" Gal 6: 1. The availability to serve the interests of Christ in His absence would be through this impartation of what is from Himself.

J.R.C. I think that is very fine. As has often been said, "whosoever sins ye remit" is the character of what proceeds in the assembly presently; it is marked by the grace of the Lord Jesus, it is marked by the communion of the Spirit. So that our attitude first of all is remission. That is the gospel demonstrated in persons. The other line may have to proceed but that should be done in the spirit of that

Man. So we are capacitated by Him and by the Spirit in regard to all that is needful in the assembly - He breathed into them.

S.E.MacC. You spoke at the outset of the influence of the family at the very beginning - at the beginning of signs - but then it would go on to discipleship and then the twelve and now here it is "my brethren". Is there something in that?

J.R.C. I am sure that is right. What you feel is that the Lord's affections were in that "my brethren". Do you think so?

S.E.MacC. I think so. It is the accumulation of all that is experienced and brought together here now in this wonderful section.

J.R.C. That is very good. So where do we experience that but as together? We can say, Well, a person isolated by illness and so on gets a special touch from the Lord - of that I am sure - but the normal course of working things out involves the local company and we ought to make way for that more - "my brethren". Now these words are said oftentimes, but let us realise that the Lord intensely values the product that makes us up in every place which is in maturity for Himself; He can say "my brethren". That leads us on to the whole divine realm as under the hand of the One about whom we have been speaking in chapter 6.

G.D.P. The doors shut would keep out all the other things that would crowd in on us.

J.R.C. Exactly. You might say spirituality would know what was needed for the moment.

L.D.P. I have been wondering as to the peace that the Lord mentions twice. He came and stood in the midst and said, Peace be to you; and after showing them His hands and His side they rejoiced and He again says, Peace.

J.R.C. I think it is a very warming and rewarding thing to get a sense in our souls that we are in an area of peace which cannot be disturbed. Maybe it takes a second time before we really realise it - "Peace be to you"; and then He goes on to speak about "as the

Father sent me forth". What we can see in that is that there is an area which the Lord appreciates, and you might say He Himself is bringing in the element of peace. So we could use it to apply it morally: as coming into the local company are we known as men of peace, men who would seek to promote peace amongst the brethren, not peace at any price but an atmosphere of peace. Do we bring peace into our households when we come home at night? It is as practical as that. What do you say?

C.F.D. Yes. So the Spirit of the heavenly Man would produce the line of peacefulness in the heart. The Lord brings that in in the beginning of Matthew at the mount of legislation; He brings in the thought of a man of peace. That is what is produced by the indwelling of the Spirit of God, do you think?

J.R.C. I think that is fine. So that a touch of spirituality with every one of us would regulate us more in what we necessarily revert to in regard to what is right - our homes, our families, our work, wherever we have to go. There should be a spiritual influence even in an antagonistic position.

C.F.D. We speak about these things in the collective setting here in the temple, but when I go back to my home and back to my business I am to reflect the fact that I have had to do with spiritual things and I am very careful as to what I do, that I do not bring any reflection on what we have been speaking about as to spirituality, do you think?

J.R.C. That is the whole bearing of the truth worked out morally in our lives, and I think we want to be encouraged to see that we do not shape up our lives to say, Well, I am a bit spiritual on Lord's Day and then I go to my work, but by Friday I am less spiritual than I was on Lord's Day. I do not think that would be the idea at all. I think you are that kind of man in regard to every circumstance that you take on.

D.McF. I was thinking about the thought of rejoicing here; it says "The disciples rejoiced therefore". In chapter 4 it says that "he that sows and he that reaps may rejoice together" (v 36). I thought you could say something about that.

J.R.C. It brings in the mutuality of things, that is that the assembly is not something in which everybody is the same and all that kind of thing. The Lord has done something in you, He has done something in myself; measure comes in - we know that - but it all leads to this mutual state amongst us where they rejoice. Now that would be a Philippian touch for us for the rest of the week. The day of privilege is before us; we would have happiness and joy in regard to what we have enjoyed spiritually so that it permeates through whatever we touch in the days which follow.

T.E.D. You spoke of a touch of spirituality: is there one in the next chapter? One went fishing but John says "It is the Lord". Is that the spiritual touch which was needed at that time and the spiritual person discerns the presence of the Lord?

J.R.C. That would be so; and do you not think that that helps us in regard to every matter, even in our localities, that someone can say, It is the Lord. The recognition of that, not just in the word of it but in the effect of it, (to revert to this idea that has been mentioned) brings in a peaceful atmosphere amongst us. We can so readily develop a kind of tension in the meeting; maybe we do not mean to, but we want to get away from that, that we are known as persons who bring peace in and recognition of the Lord.

G.D.P. John says "I became in the Spirit on the Lord's Day", Rev 1: 10. Is not that because he was in the joy of things all along even though he was on the isle of Patmos?

J.R.C. Very good. So spirituality is superior to circumstances.

PLAINFIELD

26 September 1987

Key to initials

J.R.Cumming, Edinburgh; C.F.Dadd, Plainfield; T.E.Druckenmiller, Plainfield; C.S.Elliott, New York; C.Greenidge, Plainfield;

G.Hesterman, Plainfield; S.E.Hesterman, Plainfield; D.McFarlane, New York; L.McFarlane, New York; S.E.MacCready, Cape May; G.D.Pfingst, Plainfield; J.A.Petersen, Plainfield; K.N.Pye, New York; A.G.Spooner, New York

PROCESSIONS

A.C.Craig

Luke 7: 11-15; Genesis 5: 21-24

One of the greatest deceptions that the god of this world has accomplished up to the present time is that man is an independent creature. That was instilled into him almost from the start: hence you have the free thinkers, the atheists, and all the other people who reject God. Now what everyone should realise, dear friends, is that you are in a procession and you are being carried on. There are two processions - that is a scriptural term, I have not coined it for the sake of this meeting: the idea of a procession belongs to Scripture; you will find it in the book of Nehemiah (see chap 12: 31). There were two processions there, they went in opposite directions. There are two processions in this scripture in Luke and there are two processions in Genesis 5, and you are in one of them. You are being carried along not only by force of the crowd but according to your own desire and choice: but you can rectify that at any moment.

That proves that you are a responsible creature. Every rational being has to say to God, every intelligent creature has to answer to God, there is no escaping that; "each of us shall give an account concerning himself to God", Rom 14: 12.

Now there are two processions, the procession of death and the procession of life. You get the doctrine of that in Romans 5, but I do not want to engage you entirely with doctrine, I want to present Jesus to you as the great Leader in the procession of life. He wants you in it and He would work with you, He has wrought that you might come in willingly into this procession of life, transfer from the procession of death into the procession of life. In Romans 5 - just to comment on it - you have two great monarchs. Death is one: did you ever realise that death is a monarch? "Death reigned" (vv 14,17), it says. Fancy being in a realm, in a kingdom, where death is on the throne! Now that is the situation; you did not bring that about but you are in it. As away from Christ, not knowing Him, you are in this realm where death reigns. But then there is another monarch in that chapter - grace reigns: "so also grace might reign through

righteousness to eternal life" (v 21). Oh, what a wonder, what a privilege to be in the realm where grace reigns.

In 2 Corinthians 4 there are two gods. "The god of this world has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving" (v 4). Notice that it does not say that he blinds the thoughts of all. There is not any book in the world more accurate than Scripture. Study every word. He blinds the thoughts of the unbelieving; the state of unbelieving gives him the right, the capacity, the opening, to draw down the blinds.

The state of unbelieving blinds their thoughts "so that the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ ... should not shine forth for them" and they should be saved. He is a great deceiver; he leads the procession of death. But another God is there; "the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine" (v 6). Oh, what a God He is! He would shine into your heart today. O that you would let Him! That is my prayer for you, that you would let Him shine in your heart.

Here in Luke there are two processions. It says "afterwards he went into a city called Nain, and many of his disciples and a great crowd went with him". That is the procession of life. Jesus leads it.

'Many of His disciples': are you included in them? Can you count yourself as one of the disciples of Jesus? It is your privilege, your opportunity, and there are tremendous consequences if you do not.

We have often said in the gospel that there is no alternative; there is a consequence but there is no alternative. God does not come out like Pilate did and present Christ or Barabbas; God does not do that. God comes out and presents Christ, and He commands you to accept that. That is really a royal edict; the edicts that come from God are all royal and to be obeyed. It is often said, The Queen of England does not go round asking everybody if they will accept this edict or accept that one. It goes out from the throne and that is it! And if not there is the consequence.

But tonight is your opportunity to be transferred into the procession of life. Jesus leads it; He is effective. It says, "as he drew near to the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother, and she a widow, and a very

considerable crowd of the city was with her" - another procession. Many disciples and a great crowd, and then a considerable crowd.

Now which one are you in? That is the question. Do not be deceived. This is serious, there are great issues at stake - life or death. And the Lord, notice that now! Not Jesus. Throughout this gospel it is Jesus, Jesus, Jesus - and the Lord, Ah! now we have come to something, come to the Lord. How will the procession of death fare in His presence? It says, "And the Lord, seeing her". Who is He the Lord of? He is "gone into heaven, angels and authorities and powers being subjected to him", 1 Pet 3: 22. He is Lord, over angels, over men, over all; He is LORD of all and He "was moved with compassion for her, and said to her, Weep not; and coming up he touched the bier". Did you ever hear of the procession of death being interrupted, being halted? Every burial leads one way, on to the cemetery, on to the crematorium; did you ever see one being halted? Did you ever realise that the great procession of death right down from Genesis 3 has been halted? Who did it? Jesus! The Lord did it. He has halted the procession of death. He has come in. It says, "the Lord ... moved with compassion ... coming up ... touched the bier". Who dare do that but the Lord! Who has power to do that but the Lord? As I said, He touched that bier, there was not another man in the whole wide world, then or now, who could have touched that bier and halted that procession. There is a lot involved in this, that he touched the bier. You know, dear friends, where He really touched the bier was at the cross; He came into immediate contact with death itself, facing it in the awful question that came up in Gethsemane, going on to the cross and settling that question as to death. Death! There is not the smallest creature in God's world, in this wide creation, that does not fear death. You lift a stone and the ants will scurry away. What are they wanting to do? To preserve their life. Everything is set for the preservation of its life. This blessed Man, the Lord, came into the place where man was, where death had gotten him.

Death is viewed in two ways in Scripture. In Genesis it is as a penalty. In this chapter we have read from, it says time and again

"and he died", that is death as a penalty. And Genesis finishes with a man in a coffin, the standing testimony that man is under a penalty. That was the word in Genesis 2: 17 "in the day that thou eatest of it thou shalt certainly die". That is a penalty; there was no penalty before. But then in Exodus death is looked at as a power under which God's people were and from which they needed extricating.

They could not meet the penalty in Genesis, neither could they meet the great question of death as a power - Pharaoh, the taskmasters, the Red Sea, and much more. All that brings up death as a power which would hold the people in bondage. Jesus met both. He bore the penalty, He has been into death. He exposed Himself to the judgment of God for three hours in the deepest darkness. There He was, this blessed Man, the sinless One, the Lamb of God without blemish, without spot, and there He is for three hours, and He is under the judgment of God. Never before, in all His life, through Gethsemane, was He under the judgment of God. In the three hours of daylight on the cross He is not under the judgment of God; He was made sport of in every way, He was jeered at on the cross, but in those three hours of darkness He is under the judgment of God.

Can you say that He was there for you? I can say, He was there for me. Now that is one important matter in the glad tidings - God comes out and He presents His glad tidings to everybody, He wants everybody to be saved, but the point comes when I, an individual, a responsible creature, have to think for myself and decide for myself, and bring myself into it. I can tell you, dear friends, that during those hours of darkness the blessed Son of God, the sinless Jesus, the faultless Jesus, - that is what Pilate said about Him; "Lo, I bring him out to you, that ye may know that I find in him no fault whatever", John 19: 4. Thank God! What a Saviour! What a wonderful Saviour is Jesus! "I find no fault in him whatever". What fault do you find in Jesus? Why do you not join the procession of life that He leads? What have you against Him? What fault do you find in Him? Pilate, a great lawyer, one of Rome's best, sent to Palestine at such a time, found no fault whatever in Him. In those three, hours, dear friends, He suffered the judgment of God, bore it away, exhausted it. We often say that, and it is right that we should say it, He exhausted it.

The judgment came and went and He was still there when it had passed away. The sacrifice was more than the judgment. Thank God, He was still there! He settled the question of our liabilities; one of our liabilities was the judgment of God. That faces everybody, every rational creature - "it is the portion of men once to die, and after this judgment", Heb 9: 27. There is no escaping it. So there is the blessed substitute on the cross and He accepts this liability - judgment - for His people. I stand before you, dear friends, as without one tremor, not one fear, in facing the day of judgment.

Why? because I know in the depth of my heart that this blessed One accepted judgment for me. I stand before you as one who has been completely absolved from every element or trace of judgment. All the glory be to Him! He exhausted it and we are to have no fear; we are to have boldness; John says "that we may have boldness in the day of judgment", 1 John 4: 7. Not only is the judgment gone but we are justified in view of that day.

Not only through His death, His sufferings, but He shed His precious blood that our sins might be forgiven; but He rises, and this is where He breaks up the whole power of death. He annulled death as a penalty in accepting it; He went into death, one on whom death had no claim, death did not lie on Him, and the One free from it goes into it, annuls it, accepts the penalty. But then in rising He breaks up the whole power of death. In the gospel you have that - Mark says "He is risen, he is not here", chap 16: 6. Wonderful! Oh He is a wonderful Saviour! "He is not here, but is risen", Luke 24: 6. That means that the whole domain of death is exposed, broken up; and therein has He established His right, in His death and resurrection, to take His people out and one day to take them to glory. All that lies in the fact that he has touched the bier and has ascended on high.

That is the point, dear friends, when He touched the bier. I think you will agree with me that that was the time when He actually came into touch with the thing itself. "And the bearers stopped. And he said, Youth, I say to thee, Wake up". Think of that - "Wake up"! He would act on you, the blessed Son of God would act on you in this meeting here. I have commended Him to you in the way that He has

undertaken to work, accepting the penalty and broken the power. You must admit that He has been commended to you. Now act on it: "Youth, I say to thee, Wake up". Oh, think that that blessed voice of One standing, heading this procession, calls you. Will you not hear that voice today in this very room, coming through these words, "Youth, I say to thee, Wake up"? Do not be deceived, let not the god of this world deceive you, wake up! It is not told us what he answered. I would suggest that the first thing he said would be, I am the Lord's. That is scriptural: "One shall say, I am Jehovah's", Isa 44: 5. Have you ever said that? Oh, say it! Would you not like to join the procession?

Now, we are near the end of the meeting, you could stand up and say it, I am the Lord's. No one will stop you, everybody will rejoice. And it says in that chapter: "another shall write with his hand". So the next thing, I think, a person would ask, would be, I want the Spirit. The first thing is, I am the Lord's, then he would request to have the Spirit - one of God's greatest gifts, indeed it is called "the gift of God" twice in scripture. "If thou knewest the gift of God" (John 4: 10), that involves the living water, that involves the Spirit. In the Acts Simon said "Give to me also this power", chap 8: 19. Peter answers "Thou hast thought that the gift of God can be obtained by money". It can be for asking; you ask for the Spirit. Then you would say after that, I think, I want to break bread. It is just a consequence of the Lord acting. It is inconceivable that you would not reach that end. The Lord acts on someone when they get their sins forgiven and it must come to that. I do not think that is a stretch of imagination because it is just the normal sequence. I know it because I did it. I have no right to stand before you without having some experience.

Well now, we come to this other scripture; it is a beautiful scripture. There is a great procession of death proceeding, time after time it says "and he died ... and he died". Oh what a solemn procession! a sad and solemn procession until God intervenes. Publicly the thing goes on and on and on and it would appear as if there had been no death of Christ, there had been no interruption to

the reign of death. God in His wisdom allows that to go on. For what reason? To bring out in His people, during this long period, the activity of faith. God could have accomplished all with one stroke, but He extended out over a long period that there might be the exercise of faith, and people coming into blessing on that ground.

What a sorrowful picture that "he died ... and he died", and in the midst of it there is an interruption. Right in the middle of it, so to speak, there is an interruption, God takes away a man without dying. Do you know that there are people in this world who are going to be taken away without dying? They are! Will you be amongst them? That is a great question. You think of God intervening in a chapter like this and He takes away Enoch - "he was not, for God took him".

It begins by you taking Christ as your Saviour; do it today, accept him as your Saviour, and then too when the time comes you will be taken away. Christ has established His right to do it in His death. In the interruption of the procession of death, in Him going into it, He has established His right to redeem His people and that involves taking them to glory. He has the right to intervene.

In our reading in the home this morning we read about Jonah; for three days and three nights he was in the belly of the great fish, and it says "thus shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights", Matt 12: 40. Going into there He secures the titles to everything, and one day, according to the book of Revelation, He will exercise those rights and those titles, and one of them is that He will take away His people - the rapture as we call it, the translating of His people, Enoch is a type of that. The right to do it is established in the death of Christ, in that He has secured the titles. Then there will be a great public interruption of the reign of death. Not that the thing itself will be public, but there will be a great miss. People will have disappeared out of this world. I hope you are amongst them! It is up to you. Exercise faith in Christ, come into the good of His death and His blood shed, get the forgiveness of your sins, and too, get the gift of the Spirit, come into the great blessings of eternal life and sonship, "and boast in hope of the glory of God", Rom 5: 2. That is the rapture, boasting in hope of the glory of God.

It is all yours, but presented to you for your acceptance. You dare not refuse it. I tell you, you dare not refuse it. There is a consequence - judgment! May He give you faith to trust Christ today and to align yourself in the procession of which He is Head.

MELBOURNE

6 April 1987

CHILDREN AND BIRD-LIFE

The interest, full of divine care, that God takes in His feathered creation is seen, for example, in the law as to a nest "with young or with eggs". Whether the nest should be in a tree or as some birds build them, on the ground, the mother-bird must not in any way be taken. The writer of one of the Psalms, longing at that time for the satisfaction of the living God's presence, rather envied the security and restfulness of the sparrows and the swallows. In the case of sparrows, Jesus referred to both the retail price and the wholesale price, which was of course relatively lower. Although they were so common and cheap the Master's teaching was that one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father". He used a word meaning 'little sparrows' - how much more will He care for us! Another bird that is mentioned in different connections in the Scriptures is the stork. For one thing, like the turtle-dove and the crane, it knows its appointed time of migration to Palestine. In contrast to this, God's people Israel had not the movement of heart towards Him which they should have had - but how responsive are we? The stork builds its nest high up in the sturdy fir trees and is a bird said to be remarkable for its tender care of the young and also of the aged! Also, in speaking to Job out of the whirlwind, God spoke of the pinion, or flight-wing, and the plumage of the stork.

It is very touching that Mary, the mother of Jesus, brought for herself to the temple two turtle-doves or two young pigeons, as required by the law of Moses. This was the provision for extreme poverty, whereas some mothers could afford to bring a sheep as a sacrifice. In the words of another, 'Things in Israel were in such disorder that the mother of the heir to David's throne was able to bring only two little birds; it was in such circumstances that God brought His supreme grace into the world'. Have you thanked Him for Jesus?

J.C.Evershed