

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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Contents

THE SPIRIT IN THE HOUSE

THE SAVIOUR'S LONGINGS

A LITTLE CHILD'S ENQUIRY

THE CHILDREN'S WRITING

THE SPIRIT IN THE HOUSE

Revelation 1: 9-12; Genesis 24: 53; Psalm 45: 13,14; Ephesians 2: 18 ,19; 3: 14-19

R.T. I was thinking of this expression that John uses, "I became in the Spirit on the Lord's day". We were speaking yesterday of the Spirit bringing of the things of Christ to us. I just felt that this morning there may be profit in thinking of the Spirit in the house - if I could use that expression - His activities in the house. If you look at the temple, there was a good deal of olive-wood and cypress. I think that these woods would have some reference to the Spirit, particularly in the doors and the porches, suggesting as you come into this divine area that the Spirit is known in His fulness. And as we apprehend who He is we would be helped in the service in the house where there is nothing to disturb. I was thinking of Rebecca; the Spirit there would help us in promoting affections for Christ, and in relation to the Father He would help us in intelligence as to what is suited to sonship and the Father's praise. These thoughts are very fragmentary and the scriptures maybe not too clear, but I believe the Lord and the Spirit would help us, as we go on, to get some impression as to what John means, "I became in the Spirit on the Lord's day" - two things which seem to be connected. Maybe in our minds at times we have thought of this as something that was for John, and I have no doubt there is a distinctiveness about the matter as applying to him and in what was being opened up. It is very interesting if you look at the footnote; it will lead you to Simeon in Luke - "he came in the Spirit into the temple" (chap 2: 27). So it comes very near to us, perhaps nearer than we have thought about, the ability just to be, shall I say, transported (however short it may be) into a realm that is spiritual. I believe there is a need for it among us. The surroundings that we are in, as we see here, would be no drawback. We think of many of our brethren in very small companies, and many pressures, but they have no hindrance to becoming in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and maybe at any time when we have entrance and access into the divine presence.

E.P. Would you say just a little more as to the matter of the house. I notice that in Genesis 24 it says "I have prepared the house" (v 31).

R.T. We may be more at home with the Spirit's activities in the wilderness, that is all I would distinguish. He comes down to our needs, He comes down to help us in these things, but His activities in the house are somewhat different. Our needs have been met and the servant is employing this clothing in relation to Rebecca. There are certain finer touches in the house. There is nothing to disturb becoming in the Spirit on the Lord's day. The disturbing elements are without, you may say, and the Spirit has great liberty in helping us in assembly affection for Christ and sonship's intelligence in relation to the Father.

E.P. In Genesis 24 it says "he ungirded the camels" (v 32). That would, so to speak, set the desert side on one side for the moment. Is that what you have in mind?

R.T. Yes. He has endeared Himself to us in those wilderness surroundings, He has made Himself indispensable to us, but then He has another service, and that is to help us in responsiveness and to fill the house. The fragrance of the Spirit's activities enters into the eternal praise of God.

D.J.H. Is it necessary for us to be rightly with Him in the wilderness in order to be able to enter into this? I was thinking of verse 9 coming first as to John being there "in Jesus ... for the word of God", and so on.

R.T. Yes. I think that what we were speaking of yesterday would settle that side of things: there is a divine Person come here who is more than able for the wilderness and the circumstances that we may be found in. John would seem to be restful; he has confidence in divine love. He just says "I became in the Spirit". It seemed to be a very easy transfer. These things may help us in all our assemblings. What burdens we carry, but the Spirit is able to transport us and help us into an area of things where sin has never come.

E.C.B. The olive-wood does not belong to the wilderness; it belongs to the setting where there is finality, the ark at rest, the kingdom immensely rich, sacrifices immensely full, no evil or adversary. Does that fit with your thought?

R.T. Yes, we come into something that has been divinely prepared. The Spirit took on a different character as they came into the land. They came into a place where they did not need to dig, there were hills full of copper and iron, there were wells that were springing forth, there were houses that they did not build - Deuteronomy is a very attractive book to me - "cities which thou buildedst not", chap 6: 10. How different from the wilderness with its toil and exercises; in the land they came into things that they had no hand in, and they entered in to enjoy them. I think becoming in the Spirit on the Lord's day would be something like that. We come into a realm where we prove the Spirit's grace to help us to be at home and function in liberty in a scene that is all divine.

E.C.B. So in Deuteronomy 8: 7 he says that God has brought you into a good land, and immediately goes on to speak about the waterbrooks and the springs.

R.T. A beautiful chapter that! It is wonderful to think of Moses speaking like that. He was never going to be living in it, but how he looked forward to the beauty of that land. He knew he would not dwell there but he made it attractive to the people so that they would want to go in. Do you think that becoming in the Spirit on the Lord's day is something open to us, something that we should have our thoughts expanded about?

E.C.B. I think it is something that is not a private experience to John, but it all connects with what we speak of as the out-of-the-world condition, and I think it is the only sphere where we touch real impressions of the assembly.

R.T. So we need to think like this, particularly on the Lord's day. As was said, the wilderness matters have been settled; we do not go on in disturbances and matters that the Spirit is able to settle, in view of being easily transported. Ezekiel had a very trying life. He speaks

about being lifted up by one of his locks (see chap 8: 3). He comes into an area of things like John who "became in the Spirit on the Lord's day". What happenings there are through the book! What the Lord and the Spirit would lead us into as we set ourselves and seek to prove His grace in service!

E.P. Do you see a connection in chapter 4 where John says "I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven", then the word saying "Come up here" (v 1), and then verse 2: "Immediately I became in the Spirit"?

R.T. Yes, I think that is a helpful reference. He saw a door. Very fine that, is it not? You see a door opened, "a door opened in heaven". It is beckoning us in, the Spirit is leading us into heaven and all that is current and active there. So that our service in the house is spiritual. It is not a question of our memories or what we are as after nature, but the service in the house is entirely spiritual, and it will be so in the day to come. Everything will be carried out in what is spiritual. It tests us, but it should strengthen us in the Spirit's grace so that we know something of it now.

R.W.F. It is difficult to think that there was any lack with John on the other six days of the week. Do you think that the Spirit provides a special access of power, and that in the setting of the house? There is a reserve of power with the Spirit to help us in spiritual things.

R.T. I think it means that in the six days, or any day, we have easy relationships with the Spirit; and He helps us as to these exercises; then it becomes an easy matter: "I became in the Spirit on the Lord's day". It is a door opened, drawing us into things in which we had no hand, and yet we are prepared and strengthened in view of functioning there in spiritual liberty.

G.A.P. Does it relate to our feelings and affections, and our souls, in that regard, rather more than the mind?

R.T. Yes, I think so. It speaks of the inner man in Ephesians 3: 16. We all know what our bodies are like, and what weakness there is, and what limitations John was in here, but he became in Spirit; it is

the inner man responsive to the Spirit's leading to help us into this heavenly realm.

J.A.B. There is communication, is there not, as there was also with Simeon: "it was ... communicated to him by the Holy Spirit", Luke 2: 26? There is the voice here too.

R.T. Yes. Immediately John is ready for it. He is not worrying about what is going to happen tomorrow, and other things that may come up. These things may be allowed to intrude. I think we all know our weakness - at least, I feel it very severely at times - but the Spirit would help us to be sustained and have entrance into the realm that is spiritual. So John is interested: "I heard behind me a great voice", and he "turned back to see the voice which spoke with me". He is attracted into these things. We are helped in our souls, as well as in our minds, to follow the Spirit's activities in the house, in view of being enlarged, and in view of the Father and Christ and the Spirit Himself having Their full portion.

E.C.B. As to the other six days to which reference was made, you might wonder how one could get through the rest of this book without this experience. John is even able to say "I saw a beast rising out of the sea" (chap 13: 1) and he is undisturbed.

R.T. Well, there is something he saw before that which I think gives a key to the whole book: he saw "a Lamb standing, as slain", chap 5: 6. I think the key to the book is chapter 5. There was Someone worthy. "Who is worthy?"; it says "no one was able" (v 3), but there was a Lamb, having all that was needed to deal with everything that was coming in in the book. The Spirit gave John entrance into that. So there was experience, experience on the first day of the week.

The six days lead up to the first day, but also the first day gives character to the six days, that we are not only going in but we are coming out in the wealth and experience of our heavenly part.

E.C.B. Just referring to Solomon's temple, you come out from "the settled place of thy dwelling", 2 Chron 6: 30, etc.

R.T. You come out to bless, you come out to be an overcomer, you come out in triumph. So the clothing and the things that the servant

brought to Rebecca were all in view of her being responsive to Isaac. The verse in the Psalm - the king's daughter all glorious within, it is within the apartments; the Spirit supplies what is suited, the silver and gold and clothing. It was all for Isaac's eye. It was in view of her being at home in the heavenly realm.

E.C.B. Do you have in mind that these are not exactly travelling clothes; they are clothes for Isaac's presence?

R.T. That is right; that is what they are for; they would have been out of keeping anywhere else. The servant brought them forth.

Rebecca had never seen anything like them before and she is drawn to the heavenly one, and the servant is showing her what is suited to being within the royal apartments. "Things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not come into man's heart" (1 Cor 2: 9) we are brought into, and yet we are there perfectly at rest and at home to function for the divine pleasure.

E.P. We had a word this morning on John 16 where the Lord says "he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you. All things that the Father has are mine; on account of this I have said that he receives of mine and shall announce it to you" (vv 14, 15). "All things": that would be these things that the servant brought out.

They came from the father, did they not?

R.T. Yes, and they were only for Rebecca. "He gave to her brother, and to her mother, precious things", but these things were entirely for her in view of Isaac's heart being satisfied. I was thinking that, in its application, it would apply to assembly affections being developed for Christ glorified.

D.J.H. The next verse is "Send me away to my master". Would that involve becoming in Spirit, going through that door that we were speaking of?

R.T. Very good. So she says "I will go". It is a very exercising side of things: are we disposed to allow ourselves to go in? It is not in any fleshly activity but in confidence in the Spirit; we are drawn to Him and relying on Him to experience the liberty that is our portion in the house.

J.S.G. I was thinking about what you said as to this young woman and the impression that these things would give her. It must have given her a great impression of the one to whom she was to be united, that the elevation and glory of these things had come from where he was.

R.T. Yes. It is so beautifully presented that she said "I will go". What a journey she was going to take! She was going to leave her parents, she was going to leave her country, but the man had been so perfectly presented to her that without hesitation (I do not say without feeling) she says "I will go". That is becoming in Spirit, I think; the pull of these other things is overcome in the Spirit's grace and the power of His service, and we are drawn in to find our place in union with Christ.

E.P. Are you suggesting that there is such a thing as committal to the Spirit?

R.T. Oh, I think it is at the threshold of spiritual experience. What do you say about it?

E.P. I think it is of all moment, especially in the light of the scripture you brought before us yesterday from 1 Corinthians 2. It seems to me that unless we are definite and specific in our committal to the Spirit, that realm of things of which you speak is not really open to us, because it is not understood except through the Spirit. Do you go with that?

R.T. Yes, and as was said yesterday, He is God; who He is, His deity and the greatness of His person are to help us to be committed to Him. But then He would lead us on to see what He has in view, and He would have us adorned. The king's daughter is perfectly at home in the royal apartments. There may be a certain official side about the royal apartments, but I was only thinking of it in connecting it with Rebecca: "All glorious is the king's daughter within; her clothing is of wrought gold"; she is entirely suited to the palace and the heavenly one, brought in in raiment of embroidery. There has been a great deal of spiritual expenditure in view of this clothing and those garments being worn and being for the eye of the king.

H.A.H. Have you any thought as to why the silver comes first in the Genesis scripture? I wondered whether there was any suggestion of what we have in Ephesians 1, that from our side "we have redemption through his blood" (v 7).

R.T. There are volumes in all these things, silver, as you say, reminding us of the glory of redemption, the wealth of it. It is not just a question of the settlement of sins; redemption is a great love matter, that we were loved so much that He paid such a price to have us liberated. The sense of that helps us to leave country and environment. The Spirit bringing the love of Christ into our hearts would help us to say "I will go".

E.C.B. Does what you get in Genesis 24 and Psalm 45 remind us of Esther? It says "she required nothing but what ... the king's chamberlain ... appointed" (Esth 2: 15), and then she was fit for the royal apartments.

R.T. Yes, that verse came into my mind too. It just amplifies this service, the Spirit's activities in view of developing assembly responsiveness. The clothing, and silver and gold articles, I think we could speak of as being developed assembly affection, things that are wrought in the bride in view of being responsive and in view of being at home alongside the heavenly Man.

E.C.B. "Upon thy right hand ... the queen", Ps 45: 9?

R.T. Yes, that is very touching, I think. One of the great points of Christ having the assembly is that He is no longer alone. He was once alone, but the Spirit's activity has brought the bride to the Bridegroom and He is no longer alone. What a comfort to His heart! What a matter, that He has a vessel in the assembly that can be with Him in the whole sphere of divine administration, and He has one that can be with Him in view of the whole praise of God being eternally secured.

E.C.B. Is it right that, while we apply these scriptures especially in relation to the assembly, some comparable service will be carried out in respect of Israel? "Let the beauty of Jehovah our God be upon us", Ps 90: 17. I was thinking of the way in which the Spirit in

different ways will have to do with every family to make them suited for the position they are to hold in relation to Christ.

R.T. Yes, I think there is something of that in Ephesians: "of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named", chap 3: 15.

Does the idea of the Father naming every family connect with what you are saying?

E.C.B. Yes, I think it does. I have often felt myself the need for expansion in relation to what the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit have in relation to families other than the assembly . The assembly is intended to be intelligent about them, is it not? Ephesians 3 is about that: "my intelligence in the mystery" (v 4).

R.T. Do you think they will all come into their place as Christ has the assembly? The great thing in the Spirit's service is that the heavenly Man may have, as you said, at His right hand the assembly. Christ has the assembly, and as that takes place I think the whole plan will unfold. Indeed, as you read through Revelation, you can see that as Christ comes on to view everything falls into its place. That is the new covenant. As Christ takes things up, every family will come into its place. But the great prime central thing, you may say, is Christ and the assembly.

E.C.B . So we might say that the other families do not yet understand what the precious things are that have been provided for them.

R,T, No, that is right. So it is the Spirit's day, and it is the assembly time. Rebecca appreciated these things, but others will yet come into the gladness and fulness of what divine love has purposed.

J.S.G. In the Psalm the language seems to flow on from kings' daughters to "the king's daughter", as if on the one hand this glorious person is accustomed to elevated companionship, but there is one that is unique. Is that your thought?

R.T. Yes. I think verse 14 is very beautiful, and it just bears on what we are saying. "She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of embroidery": that is one thing. "The virgins behind her" would be like

the other families. They will be brought into their place; they will all have their own beauty and their own precious distinctiveness, but the great point of the Spirit's activities at the moment is that "She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of embroidery". You can help us.

H.J.T. I think it is a most stimulating line. I was just pondering, earlier in Ephesians, the blessedness of the mercy that has reached us, that we are brought into these great and glorious things.

R.T. Yes, the Spirit has brought all these things. He has brought the silver - redemption, gold - the love of God; He has brought all these things within our reach, and it is all to stimulate us to come into the house, to be where the King is, to be His companion, to be in response to the feelings and longings of His heart.

B.W.W. And is that particularly for the King?

R.T. Yes. Think of the blessed Spirit serving in view of Christ being satisfied. It reminds us of the mutual relationships that exist between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, serving in wonderful grace love to One Another. The Spirit's appreciation of Christ is something He would convey to us. It says, as the Lord came on to view from the waters of baptism, that the Spirit descended as a dove and abode upon Him (see John 1: 32). There is some reference there to the Spirit's appreciation of Christ, that glorious Man, that He would identify Himself so completely with Him. I think the Spirit would promote the glory of Christ in our affections in view of our being at home in His surroundings.

R.W.F. In that connection, there is a fine verse at the end of Genesis 24: "the servant told Isaac all things that he had done" (v 66).

R.T. Yes, very beautiful! As you visualise that, how it would enlarge Isaac's appreciation of Rebecca; it is not only what the servant had done but how she had responded. Think of him going over that incident when she drew for all the camels. Think of the Spirit going over how readily she said "I will go", in the presence of elements that would hold her. How all that would endear Rebecca to Isaac's heart!

K.J.M. I was thinking of this clothing. We perhaps are content with purely functional clothing, but this has some artistic work about it, has it not?

R.T. Yes; "raiment of embroidery", I think, alludes to how the Spirit has been speaking about Christ. In the anti-type He brought it out from heaven. "Raiment of embroidery" suggests that a great deal of detail has gone into it. How the Spirit has served in this kind of detail, not in view of us being adorned here but of being adorned suited to be in the King's palace.

K.J.M. Is there any link between that and the wedding garment?

R.T. Yes, I am sure there is. Tell us more about it.

K.J.M. It just occurred to me that it was not just an ordinary garment, it was something suitable for God's presence.

R.T. Very good. So if there was somebody there without it, how out of place they were, and made to feel it. But here it is entirely suited for the heavenly realm: "All glorious is the king's daughter within; her clothing is of wrought gold"; and then embroidery, everything there so that at the time of union there is no disparity, there is nothing inferior between the Bridegroom and the bride. The Spirit would help us to respond in that kind of affection, that we do not feel that we are strangers there, but we are brought in to have the feelings suited to the environment that we are in.

D.J.H. It is woven into the fabric, is it not? It is really in the fabric of the assembly, you might say; there is something there substantially, woven in, which would be for Christ.

R.T. Yes; it reminds you of Revelation "as a bride adorned for her husband", chap 21: 2. It speaks about "Her shining", chap 21: 11. It is undoubtedly a reflected glory that the assembly will ever have, but it says "Her shining". There is something there that is entirely suited to Christ, the glorious One. These things will help us to be expanded in our appreciation of the Spirit's service, that Christ's portion in union may be fuller and we may be stimulated and strengthened in it.

E.C.B. Our brother used the expression 'it is not just functional clothing'. I think we have to get beyond that even in the service - just to function. What we need is embroidery.

R.T. Yes, tell us some more about it.

E.C.B. It is very easy to say. The time to address the Spirit is come, so we address the Spirit; and, Now we go to the Father - phase 1, 2 and 3 - but we want embroidery, do we not, - what the Spirit has wrought in us, and we thus get some more personal expression in the meeting.

R.T. Yes. I think it all starts with being in Spirit on the Lord's day. There is a certain preparedness to be in the flow, to be carried into the stream, and as you say, it is not an organised or man-made service that we are having part in, but there is a glorious, blessed divine Person who is leading us, strengthening us to be at home in these heavenly responses.

R.W.F. Does "let a man prove himself" (1 Cor 11: 28) have to do with the fine work, the embroidery? There is what is negative that has to be seen to, but "let a man prove himself" is in view of what is positive, do you think?

R.T. Yes, I think that would all have in view the material that can take on an impression. Embroidery, I think, requires impressionable material. The exercise is that we are to be impressionable, and that is just what Paul was saying to Corinth - "fleshy tables of the heart", 2 Cor 3: 3. There is something there that is divinely impressionable in view of the Spirit leaving His own mark. Embroidery is very skilful work; it is for the King's eye and in view of our being suited to this heavenly realm.

J.R.W. There is much detail in this psalm. I wondered what the companions would represent.

R.T. Well, they all have their place, and the Spirit would have to do with every family; I thought it would bear that application. "She shall be brought unto the king": it is obvious that she is the bride, to bring it to our language. But then the whole scene is adorned in perfect

suitability; the virgins, her companions - these various families, perhaps we could read into it, but they are all suited in their own place. There is nothing jarring about it, every one is suited in its own place to the heavenly realm.

E.C.B. Would they correspond to Rebecca's maids, a company which is as willing as she is?

R.T. Very good, and each has the Spirit's service to fill out their own place. The virgins suggest the protective service of the Spirit in view of persons being preserved through a dispensation perhaps not so enlightened as ours, yet persecuted perhaps more than we have known. These families will all be there, a tribute to the Spirit's own work, but there at home in the presence of the King, that He may have everything suited to His taste.

H.A.H. There is one family mentioned in Revelation 14, that "they are blameless" (v 5), this thought of purity entering into that, do you think?

R.T. Very good. You can see that that is a very distinct tribute to the service of the Spirit to that family, as it will be to all the families. What pressures these families will go through! But the Spirit will preserve what is virgin and what is suited to Christ.

In Ephesians I thought it might just help us as to sonship's feelings and affections in view of the Father. It says "through him (Christ) we have both access by one Spirit to the Father". It reminds you of the olive-wood doors, but it is not only a question of passing through the door and leaving it. The idea of access, I think, is that we are made suitable, "access by one Spirit to the Father". We are to have sonship's intelligence and sonship's feelings in view of the Father having His portion from His sons.

H.A.H. Those doors were folding doors, were they not? Is the idea in that that there is room for expansion?

R.T. Yes, they will expand to bring in the virgins, the companions. The doors will expand to bring the whole thing in to God's own abode. "The Spirit of his Son" (Gal 4: 6) is not just the title to

sonship but the Spirit of His Son in our hearts. He gives us the feelings which are suited to being sons of God.

J.S.G. The idea of qualification for access comes in in the book of Esther, does it not? Does this mean that neither Jew nor Gentile is at any disadvantage at all? There is total liberty through God's grace in that the Spirit is given in view of liberty in the Father's presence.

R.T. Yes, all that is characteristic of Jew or Gentile, or any other nation, is overcome, is it not? The Spirit's grace has overcome all that and has produced a personality in sonship that has access by the Spirit to function in the Father's presence.

R.W.F. You could understand that the Gentiles have a greater appreciation of the Spirit's service because of the distance involved; Gentiles are those afar off. You spoke of the Spirit as power for transport. Do you think that we of the Gentiles should have a particular appreciation of the power of the Spirit, to the point of the most privileged access?

R.T. Yes. "Remember that ye, once nations in the flesh ... strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; but now in Christ Jesus ye who once were afar off are become nigh by the blood of the Christ", Eph 2: 11-13. What impressionable material for the Spirit to take to clothe with sonship's feelings, that we may function before the Father's face! So it says "to be strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man", to be before the Father to apprehend things that were purposed before time began, and yet able to serve acceptably in the feelings of sonship in the presence of such glory.

B.W.W. Does your expression 'before time began' bring out the greatness of God Himself? There is what is being worked out in the time scene, what has been worked out, what is being worked out and what will yet be in relation to those families for which the end is going to be very glorious. If we could take it in a little more would it help us as to patience in time now?

R.T. Yes. I think one of the great features, as was said earlier in the reading, is confidence in the Spirit; confidence in Him as to matters

in time, as you say, because He has eternity in view. Here it is "strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man". I think the inner man would refer to what is divine workmanship - that is suited to be conducted into this area to be functioning intelligently in sonship's feelings before the Father.

D.J.H. It is "according to the riches of his glory". Is that like the wealth - "All things that the Father has" - the riches of which we have been speaking, all now in view of the Father?

R.T. It reminds you of the scripture to which we referred yesterday, the Spirit searching the depths of God (see 1 Cor 2: 10); they are all under His control. He would strengthen us with power, He would give us the words the feelings, expressions that are suited to the activity of sons in the presence of the Father.

D.J.H. These expressions are meaningless in the world, are they not? They are spiritual, conveyed by spiritual means. "The riches of his glory" is a wonderful expression; it is understandable only in the spiritual realm is it not?

R.T. Yes. "The riches of his grace" (Eph 1: 7), "the glory of his grace" (v 6); such expressions cast us on the Spirit of God for help to understand them. Here there is the suggestion that persons are strengthened divinely strengthened to be at home and functioning in the Father's presence.

E.C.B. Is the inner man what will ultimately go through into the actuality of these circumstances? It is not here, as in Romans 7 and 2 Corinthians 4, contrasted with the outward man; it is just the inner man. Is that what goes through?

R.T. That is what will take on glory, because the service eternally will be spiritual and it will be connected with the inner man, I think.

E.C.B. I wondered that, in connection with "there is ... a spiritual one (body)", 1 Cor 15: 44. Flesh and blood does not inherit this realm.

R.T. That is substantial. We are apt to think of spiritual as being something that is not substantial. I think that the experiences with the Spirit produce something that is substantial, and yet it is spiritual,

and it is at home in the presence of divine Persons. Think of a divine Person, the Holy Spirit of God, being alongside of us and strengthening us in view of the Father's name being praised with suitable feelings and suitable expressions. So we do not go back to formality, things that are right but which may not be just what is proper to the Father's name and the feelings of the house at that moment. We are very cast on the Spirit that right things are said at the right time, and they have a right ring about them.

M.J.S. Do you think that we do not value enough the power that is mentioned here that is available to us? I was thinking of the way the Lord sent His disciples out with power.

R.T. Yes; it says "to be strengthened with power". You feel you are not able to get up sometimes, but the Spirit would strengthen you with power in the inner man, so that we may - and I am sure we have experienced it - that as you are on your feet something else comes into your mind; that is the Spirit strengthening with power; He knows what is suited to the Father's name. Are we amenable? Do we become in Spirit on the Lord's day? Do we come into a realm where the Spirit pervades, so that we can prove His service as inside, strengthening us, that the Father's name is praised?

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Key to initials

(All local unless otherwise stated)

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THE SAVIOUR'S LONGINGS

David Robertson

Song of Songs 2: 10-13; 3: 4

One has a desire that I might be able to impart to you in some simple way something as to the Saviour's longings. How He is longing for your confidence, longing for your trust, longing for your affections, longing for you! We can say these things without any doubt as knowing the heart of the Saviour. No one can preach the gospel unless he himself knows the heart of the Saviour. The gospel comes from the heart of the Saviour, the Lord Jesus; and one has a simple impression just to seek grace and help to convey something of the intense desires He has towards you at this time. His work is finished; the Saviour's work is finished. It needs no repeating. It stands in its grandeur for the whole of time and for eternity. It says here, "the winter is past, the rain is over". The Saviour has borne the blast of divine judgment against sins and sin. He Himself has borne it, He has endured it - that winter. We sometimes speak of the cry of the Saviour on the cross - and oh what feelings are in that cry! "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?", Mark 15: 34. Think of the anguish of the Saviour as being forsaken of God, forsaken upon the cross as He undertook the removal, the bearing away under divine wrath, of the whole question of sin and sins in order that God's heart might be liberated towards the sinner - in the blessing of the sinner in righteousness, and that the appeal of the Saviour might be able to go out now and be answered to in the hearts of repentant sinners. There is only one cry from the sinner that can provide an answer to the Saviour's cry on the cross, and it is the cry of the repentant one. Oh that you might be included in that answer today, to provide joy for the heart of the Saviour! You might ask; What, could I provide joy for the heart of the Saviour? You could. If you have not confided in Him, if you have not put your trust in Him, you can do so now, and provide joy for the Saviour. Oh dear friend, the Saviour is longing for you. No matter how deep your longing for satisfaction might be - you may have some sense of your need, the Holy Spirit may have been working in your heart convicting you as to your need, the need of the Saviour, the need of salvation, the need of forgiveness - I can tell you this: His longings exceed yours. His longings for you far exceed whatever longings you may have for Him.

As I say, His work is over; it never needs to be repeated. God's holy claims relative to sin and sins are forever satisfied. The blood is on the mercy-seat before the eye of God, and it is seven times before it. It speaks of the holy plenitude of divine righteousness before God. As the word says: "righteousness of God, which is towards all, and upon all those that believe", Rom 3: 22. It is towards all men, but it is upon all those who believe. It is what God has found in the way of holy satisfaction in the work of Christ that provides the basis for divine blessing to flow out to the sinner in this day of grace. And it is flowing: one is conscious of it, and I have no doubt many hearts are conscious of it - the flow of divine blessing.

Some of our hearts are in the joy of it. It causes a spring, an inward felicity, a happiness that is deep and eternal, to know the divine blessing that is the result of the Saviour's blood and the work of the cross of Calvary. Are you thankful for it? Peter says, "who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree", 1 Pet 2: 24. Are you in that 'our' - "our sins"? Have you thanked the Saviour for it? Has He gained your confidence? Has He won your heart? Oh He is worthy of it! There is no one more worthy of it than the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh I long that I may impart just this simple impression, that the Saviour is longing for you. The Holy Spirit may have been prompting you, and the Saviour is now appealing that the final barrier might be brought down. Will you have Him? Will you yield to Him? We sometimes sing -

'Wilt thou yield to love's entreaty?

Canst thou turn away ? (Hymn 321)

To whom will you turn? Oh, you say the world is the answer. An empty world! It is full of needy souls; it is full of souls that may be rushing on into eternity without the knowledge of God. How the happenings of the past days have brought that freshly to bear upon us, men rushing on heedless - it may be even careless - and in a moment ushered into eternity. What about you, dear friend? Have you an eternal link with the Saviour? Have you yielded to His claims, His appeals? "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and

I will give you rest", Matt 11: 28. The Saviour longs to impart that rest to you.

This word says, "my beloved spake and said unto me". Oh that that might be your experience today, that the Lord Jesus Christ, the beloved of everyone who has known Him as Saviour, and has needed His work for salvation, and who has turned to Him with simple confidence and trust for their present and eternal salvation - they know who the Beloved is. It can only be the Lord Jesus, and He is speaking to you, speaking that He might get through to your heart and claim it for Himself. He longs for you. He would assure you that the work is all finished, the judgment is all borne; God is propitious towards you. He longs for your salvation. The Spirit of God is operating in grace to break down your heart, to break down - it may be - your will, and to secure you as a trophy of divine grace.

And the Saviour is appealing, as I say, on the basis of this Scripture: "my beloved spake and said unto me". Then it says, "the flowers appear on the earth"; it is the time of the harvest, the time of the flowers, it is the time when there is a response to the glory and richness of divine grace presented in the Saviour. .

I was thinking also of the middle of verse 14; it says, "let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice". It is the Lord Jesus using these words, "let me see thy countenance". Are you able to look into His face? He longs that He might have an unclouded view of you, that there might be that intimacy of relationship which will exist eternally between the ransomed soul and the Saviour. Eternity will be a wonderful scene of innumerable hosts, but each soul, each individual, who has come to know the Saviour will retain his or her own personal link with Him. Have you got it? Do you know it? Have you a definite personal link with the Lord Jesus? He longs that you may have it. I believe that the heart of the Lord Jesus can well be grieved by persons who refuse to submit to Him, who refuse to yield to Him. Now it is a solemn time, the preaching of the glad tidings, because the opportunity comes; it comes to you as it has come to all of us. And it may pass without a person taking it. There is a little hymn that says something like this:-

... you hurry along with the pleasuremad throng -
Have you counted, have you counted the cost?
Have you counted the cost, if your soul should be lost?
Though you gain the whole world for your own?

You may barter your hope of eternity's morn
For a moment of joy at the most,
For the glitter of sin and the things it will win -
Have you counted, have you counted the cost?

Have you counted the cost? I believe that the Lord Jesus, in His grace and His exceeding love for you, would bring you face to face with that reality at this moment: have you counted the cost? What is it to go on without Jesus? What is a life worth living, apart from knowing the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and yielding the affection to Him that He longs for? What is it worth? The whole world is not to be compared with it. Another wrote: -

'Were the whole realm of nature mine'.

What is it to be compared with the joy of an eternal link with the Saviour, and for this holy intimacy to be known, when He says, Let me see thy countenance; where His intimacy and yours meet, we may say, in a holy communion, an eternal communion? And He says, "let me hear thy voice". Oh the Saviour would hear your voice, He longs to hear it, longs to hear the voice of response - not the obduracy of will at work - the response of a soul that is awakened not only to its own need but to the longing of the Saviour - to fill that need, to meet it, to satisfy it and to claim the affections for Himself.

One appeals to you. I believe the Lord Jesus would speak a simple word at this time, that He might indicate to you the impression of the depth of His feelings after just yourself. Just yourself! It comes down to that. No matter how many may be in the room, or under the sound of any preaching, it eventually comes to the Saviour and yourself. That is how it has been with all of us: the Saviour and yourself. And that is what is most blessed: "let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice". That is the voice of the Lord Jesus, and He is longing for you.

Now some of us assembled here earlier today and made a simple response to the appeal of the Saviour. He said, "this do in remembrance of me", Luke 22: 19. We came here in the presence of a world that cares nothing for the claims of the Saviour, which has no thought of satisfying His affections. Indeed, it has cast Him out and has branded His name as worthless. Make no mistake about it! The world's view of Christ is not a careless one; it is a careful one. It says, "the stone which the builders rejected" , Ps 118: 22. It means that they looked at the stone from every angle and decided, quite carefully, that there was no room for Christ in their system. Dear friend, what is your estimate of Jesus? What is your valuation of Him? Is your lot going to be cast into that world or are you going to answer to the appeal of the Saviour's love today? Are you going to answer to it, just as we answered to it this morning, a few of us, assembled, as I say, in the midst of such a world, a world that has cast out and rejected, and indeed crucified, the Saviour? We were able to assemble, not because of any greatness that marks ourselves, not because we had any merit, or could claim any merit, but because divine grace has reached us and claimed our hearts for the Saviour. We assembled here this morning to answer to His appeal: "this do in remembrance of me". Well, has every heart done that? Did you? Did you answer to the appeal of the Saviour? Are you prepared to do it now? Ah, He would say, "let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice". He wants to hear it. It may be that, deep down in your heart, there is a love for the Lord Jesus.

Well, why not confess it to Him? Why not give expression to it? Why not tell Him? He longs to hear your voice. As I say, He longs to have this undisturbed communion with yourself. May it be that there is none here today who would deny the Saviour His longings.

When we come to chapter 3 we may say we find our side of things. There has been an awakening; and one would long that that might be so at this time, that there might be an awakening and that you might be made aware of the Saviour's longings for you and your own need of Him. Do you know you need Him? If you do not know Him, I would say your need is desperate. It is a necessity, an

absolute necessity; it is imperative. That is what you find in chapter 3 here: the one who is addressed is set in movement, searching for the Lord Jesus. It may be that you have been searching for some time: oh that the Lord would, in the grace of His word, reveal Himself tonight! It is not the power of the preacher; it is the grace of the Lord Jesus; the power too of the Holy Spirit at work in your soul that you might find Him. I think the language is beautiful: it says, "I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go". I believe that is the language of mostly every heart here in this room: "I held him, and would not let him go". Persons who have found the indispensability of the Saviour can sing: -

'I could not do without Thee,
O Saviour of the lost' (Hymn 220)

What would life be without Jesus! An empty life surely. Why go on without Him? Why not find that He is available to you, available to you where you are. It says "The word is near thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart ... the word of faith, which we preach", Rom 10: 8. It is not an empty word, it is not a word that would tantalise you with something you cannot get; it is not that at all. It is near you; it is in your heart and it is in your mouth, the word of faith which we preach, that "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from among the dead, thou shalt be saved". There is no 'maybe' about it; there is no uncertainty about the word: "thou shalt be saved". My friend, that link between you and the Saviour is as near as that. The blessing of the gospel, and all the glory and all the abundance of the wealth of the love of God that would flow to you, is as near as that. It is in your heart and it is in your mouth. As the word says from where the scripture is quoted (see Deut 30: 11-14), there is no need to go over the sea, nor to go up into the heavens; it is near you, brought near to you in the word of divine grace, in the word of the preaching, and in the blessed appeal of the Saviour. It is brought near to you that you might have this experience: "I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him and would not let him go".

I suppose most of us treasure the memory of our first meeting with the Saviour. It is a precious thing. The sweetness of it grows as you grow older. It is something you never weary of thinking back upon, the moment when your soul really came into contact with the Saviour, and a link was formed with Him. And you found, as you answered to the appeal of the Saviour, that He was ready to bless you in the fullest possible way, to bring you into this communion with Himself, this known link with Himself that abides for time and for eternity. Put your trust in Him and respond to Him for all His affection, for His Name's sake.

WEST NORWOOD, LONDON

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A LITTLE CHILD'S ENQUIRY

Jesus, canst Thou receive

A feeble child like me?

My little heart can scarce believe

That I may come to Thee!

With children I can go,

And all I think can say;

With those I've often seen, and know,

I do not fear to stay.

But Lord of heaven art Thou,

And dwell'st far off on high!

Though at Thy Name I'm taught to bow,

Can I to Thee draw nigh?

That Name is far above

My thoughts, howe'er I try;

How can I know Thou dost me love?

Nor fear before Thine eye.

J.N.Darby

Yes, precious little one,

Thou rightly dost revere
The Name of Jesus, who has done
Redemption's work down here!
Some young ones heard His call,
When here in Bible lands;
Into His arms He took them all
And blessed them with His hands.
Jesus for thee has died,
And thus His love has proved;
Though now in heaven and glorified,
His heart t'wards thee is moved.
In faith then to Him come,
That thou, too, may'st be blessed;
Thy prayer will reach His heavenly home,
And He will give thee rest.

Contributed

THE CHILDREN'S WRITING

The prophet Isaiah refers to persons who would escape one of God's future judgments as being like trees left after a bush-fire, and so few that "a child might write them". It would be a simple task. By way of contrast there are several occasions mentioned in the Bible where God is said to have written, as it were with His own hand. In what we may call the book of purpose it was recorded of the Lord Jesus that He said "Lo, I come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do, O God, thy will". Perhaps we could say that Jesus referred to the same book when He said to the disciples, "Rejoice that your names are written in the heavens".

In the first mention in Scripture of divine writing, it was in the form of engraving as with God's finger upon stone. The law of

Moses which taught the people of Israel God's will for their blessing was written thus upon both sides of two stone tables. These were shattered by Moses, in his wisdom, because the people had already turned to idols! The stones were, however, replaced by two more upon which God wrote again the commandments. These tables were placed in the Ark of the Covenant. The Lord Jesus alone has, in love, fully carried out the will of God. By way of contrast, however, you will remember reading of the occasion when Daniel had to read and interpret the words written by a mysterious hand upon the wall of a king's palace. The message was one of judgment upon a wicked person who despised God's grace and patience.

It is a wonderful thing that God is able to blot out, as well as write down. Peter appealed to the very people who had crucified Jesus, saying that they should repent and be converted "for the blotting out of your sins". Happily for them, many people answered the appeal and the number of men was about five thousand.

Centuries before it had been prophesied that God was able to blot out sins as a thick cloud. His righteousness in doing so was on account of the atoning work of Jesus, known already in divine purpose. Are your sins blotted out?

J.C.Evershed