

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

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THE FATHER'S BUSINESS

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L.McF. The exercise, brethren, is that we might be encouraged to become more involved in the Father's business. The Lord Jesus referred to here as "the boy Jesus", is a pattern for us. Speaking for oneself I know of no more satisfying occupation than to be wholly committed to the Father's business. The link with this scripture and the last scripture is that Paul makes a point to Timothy that he is to be wholly committed. There is not much place in this for part-timers; it is to be a full committal. The Lord, as I said, as a boy set this on; He was found in the temple. Thank God for the temple; that is where we are this morning, found in the temple where divine light shines.

The glory of Christ of whom we have been singing is to be found in the temple. That is where He was; He was sitting, restfully found in the sphere of divine operations; then He is hearing from His elders and He is asking questions. This is a most beautiful portrayal of what was ever in God's mind in relation to His creature. Now despite all that has come in in the breakdown, we have here God manifest in flesh. He is within the range of every one of us as the boy. Luke presents Him as the babe, then growing up to boyhood, normal growth proceeding; then later on we have His manhood.

In referring to the second scripture, the desire is that we all might be involved in active trading. These are commercial thoughts no doubt, but the Lord will help us to become active in trading. Let us not sit down and look on one another - Jacob said that to his sons (see Gen 42: 1) - but let us get involved in active trading. The idea of the ten bondmen and the ten minas involves responsibility. We are every one responsible to the Lord for what He has committed into our hands. You will note that each one was given the same.

In the scripture in Kings the thought in the pot of oil, I would suggest, is related to the mina; it is the gift of the Holy Spirit. We each one have been endowed with this precious gift. Now, alas, many like this poor woman do not know its value. She had it in the

house, her husband no doubt had left it as an inheritance - that would be suggestive of the Lord's death - she had it in the house and she thought it was next to nothing. Brethren, I am speaking feelingly but I feel it is needed that our eyes might be opened to what we have. We are not speaking of what we have not. Each lover of Christ has been given the gift of the Holy Spirit and He is to be used. The more I am involved in the use of the Holy Spirit the more there will be development; there will be wealth in the local position and above all there will be satisfaction. The pot of oil which we have is real value, real capital. Let no one think he has nothing. You have real capital, brethren, to work with.

Paul's exhortation to Timothy is that it is a full-time job. The Lord would help us to carry this exercise - to be a model to my local brethren in the pursuit of the truth and in love for my brethren, making room for the blessed Spirit so that progress might become manifest.

A.R.S. The Father's business, do you think, would involve all that God ever had in His heart? It is an unlimited line of things; it will not run out, it will go on through time into eternity, do you think?

L.McF. That is good. We have boys here with us this morning. Think of what it meant to the Father to have this Boy at the early age of twelve. Speaking soberly and reverently, He was not with the other boys playing outside, He is in the sphere where divine things are cherished, He is in the temple. So His parents were anxious as to what had become of Him. He asks this question: "did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?" or, as the note says, 'the things of my Father'. This was something new, divinely set on by Jesus and it is intended to be a pattern for us all. Our conversion brings us into this glorious realm where we can have our part in doing something, doing things, not like the man who wrapped the talent in the towel; it is not good enough even to put the money in the bank. You will know as a trader that your money is of more value as you put it into circulation than in the bank. Many of us are getting older and the tendency is to put it in the bank; I relax and put the

money in the bank. Well, the point in the second scripture is that the Lord is coming and I have a responsibility to Him.

J.A.P. It is not so much the Father as we get in John's gospel - the family - but more the operational side; the Christian in activity and acquiring the truth in the temple. Why does the Spirit of God point to the temple here? Maybe you have more to say about it.

L.McF. Not much more: it is the place for inquiry.

G.H. Would the temple bring out the thought that that is where the light is shining?

L.McF. That helps too. It is where divine light is to be found at the present time. So the Lord would be in that sphere. We miss many of our younger people here today, we miss them, yet the Lord is able to work with us so that we value the temple. Then He is not feverish, He is restfully there appreciating what would develop, just as we are together now.

J.A.P. I think that the thought of the temple maintains life amongst us because the Spirit will come in.

L.McF. That is fine. That is the whole point in these scriptures, life in activity.

C.F.D. Is that seen in the boy Jesus taking the initiative? He is only twelve but there is no indication that anyone told Him to do this.

There is no indication that the Father told Him to do it, certainly His parents did not tell Him to do it, but the Lord took the initiative.

Should that encourage us that at a young age we can start to do things ourselves because of a link with Christ?

L.McF. That is so. Applying it to ourselves, He is amongst the brethren; He is characteristically one found amongst His brethren, just to make an application. We would look for that. But this matter of life is important, how the Lord Jesus at such a tender age would set on for us the things that really matter. We need conviction as to that so that our lives are not wasted. We will soon be leaving everything we have here; let us not waste our lives on the things that

are not going through. He begins here as a youth and it characterized Him until He went to the cross - first things first.

T.E.D. We need a transaction of soul, do we not, to set our desires rightly in relation to what is for God?

L.McF. Say a little more please.

T.E.D. I see in the previous paragraph that there is a sister who did not depart from the temple; and if we go back into the Old Testament we see Samuel as one committed. Some transaction of soul takes place to make persons devote themselves to divine things, otherwise the gravitation is towards the world or something that may be legitimate - my home, my business or other things.

L.McF. What you say is exactly right. There must be this work of God with us and then the diligence on our part to have these desires. The temple is marked by beauty - the beauty of Jehovah the psalmist speaks of: "to behold the beauty of Jehovah, and to inquire of him in his temple", Ps 27: 4. I do not think there is any greater favour, dear brethren, than that we are retained in the temple to behold the beauty of Jehovah. So we pray to this end that we may be helped to come into it.

G.H. The exhortation is to redeem the time because the days are evil (see Eph 5: 16). Why is "because the days are evil" brought in?

L.McF. Is that not our own day? The days are evil, difficult times are with us. So we need to be redeeming the time. I would like to know more of it for myself.

Now in the second scripture my thought is the outward smallness of things at the present time. We say that the Lord has allowed these small gatherings, and it is the order of the day in most parts of the world, but one is concerned as to whether we are trading with what we have, not just accepting the limitations but exercised to be available in our neighbourhoods. I was in a house recently in Australia and a neighbour had a problem with his son who had left home. The father belonged to the Baptist church. What impressed me was that he came to the house of a brother to ask him to pray

with him. I think there is something in that for us in our neighbourhoods where we live. The idea of the neighbour comes into the third scripture: "borrow for thyself vessels abroad from all thy neighbours, empty vessels; let it not be few". I am just speaking of this as feeling the need of it like anyone else, that we might be more available. God has sovereignly given us light as to the truth - there is no question about that - but is it covered up, is it in a towel, or is there something for others to see?

K.N.P. Is it seen in the first scripture - "hearing them and asking them questions"? Is that how the trading takes place?

L.McF. Yes; we know that the Lord - God over all blessed for ever - even in these circumstances did not need to ask them questions.

These persons could not have helped Him from one point of view, but I think what He did here is a pattern for us - that we need the help, we need to draw on one another. Thank God for those who are instructed among us; we need to value them.

K.N.P. If we are going to trade while He is coming we have to hear so that we gain, and we have to ask and get things out, do we not? It works both ways, does it not?

L.McF. That is good.

K.N.P. Do you think that would happen largely in the temple? We grow as we are together. Is that how the growth comes about in every one of our hearts, that the minas grow?

L.McF. I am certain you are right as to that. We each have circumstances, younger men have their jobs and so on to attend to, but I have no doubt the Lord will answer these godly desires.

G.D.P. You said that the Lord is the pattern for us; He remains in His place in the household in subjection to His parents. Is that not a good pattern to follow?

L.McF. It is good that you bring that in. The feature of subjection is really characteristic even as He sat there in the temple. He could teach these men, yet the feature of subjection is a beautiful sight for the angels. The dear sisters are brought into Corinthians as to the

token - that is for the angels. This feature of subjection is to be seen pre-eminently in the sisters; the angels are looking on and are affected by it. Now brothers are to develop in this feature too; we are to learn how God in His wisdom has operated in the creation. So in 1 Corinthians 15 we have, "when all things shall have been brought into subjection to him, then the Son also himself shall be placed in subjection to him", that is, to God. What you have brought in fits in nicely into this section and it is a feature where the Spirit of God finds liberty. We read of persons who had the Spirit, persons who were filled with the Spirit; you can be assured that subjection underlay all that. If we are to be led by the Spirit, if we are to be used of the Spirit, we need to be subject persons.

G.D.P. It is over against what is so current in the world where the Spirit is hindered.

S.E.H. The Lord hearing them and asking them questions is involved in trading. I was thinking how the Lord uses questions to get at the state of soul in persons, as when He asks in the case of the Samaritan: "Which now of these three seems to thee to have been neighbour of him who fell into the hands of the robbers?", Luke 10: 36. Then also He speaks to Simon: "which of them therefore will love him most?", Luke 7: 42. We have these questions that the Lord asks in view of drawing something out of the persons He is speaking to, not for His own gain or for His learning but to bring out something from a person.

L.McF. That is fine. Well, that is what you get in the temple. We did not anticipate a lot of these questions but the Lord brings them in and that is the way we get help as together. So you would encourage the youngest of us to ask.

J.A.P. It was a question in Barnet in 1929 that brought out the truth of the Lord's sonship (see J.T. Vol 29, p.361).

C.S.E. I was looking at that scripture which you have already quoted: "One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Jehovah, and to inquire of him in his temple",

Ps 27: 4. I thought of the sweetness, you might say, of the maturity seen in David, as we see in this section the bent of his mind as he said, "that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life". I thought of an area where things are developed and where help comes in. Each of us should set ourselves for that so that there might be more for God.

L.McF. That is a good contribution. It says, "that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty" or, as the footnote says, the graciousness of Jehovah. Where else are we going to get this view, dear brethren? It is in the temple where we behold the graciousness of Jehovah. How David had this in his heart even as a young man; he cherished the idea of the temple.

God answered his prayer, all the days of his life. David was used to set on this great matter of the service of God.

T.E.D. Has not the Lord in the recovery of the truth brought out the value of the weekly calendar - the prayer meeting, the ministry meeting, the reading, occasions where this feature can be enjoyed? If we do not avail of it we will lose this experience of soul that I believe you are promoting exercise about.

L.McF. Yes, that is so. It occurred to me earlier this morning that, if we had a date as to the Lord's coming, we would all be different persons. The fact stands that He is coming, but we do not know when. I think that is intended to be a lever in the soul that I love my Lord. The bondman who placed the talent in the towel did not know his lord; the way he spoke of him showed that. Now, if we know the Lord and love Him, as I said, it would be a lever in the soul to encourage us.

T.E.D. Are not these occasions, such as this one and the occasions through the week, the opportunities to become acquainted with our Lord?

L.McF. That is it. Well, we say, I am going to find just two or three brethren when I get to the meeting. But I find from experience that that is the time we prove the Lord's help in a remarkable way. He comes in; as He says, "where two or three are gathered together

unto my name, there am I in the midst of them", Matt 18: 20. I find the greatest help in my sub-divisional reading as a few of us are together. And why do you think that is? It makes us dependent, we feel our weakness and the Spirit comes in and adds His help.

A.S.H. What is our occupation? Our occupation has much to do with it; am I occupied in the Lord's business? In our morning reading we were reading John 21; Peter says, "I go to fish" (v 3). Is that not a lesson for us as to whether we are going fishing or are occupied in the Lord's business?

L.McF. That is so. Pharaoh asked the brethren of Joseph what was their occupation. They said, Thy servants have been shepherds from our youth (see Gen 46: 34). Paul is stressing with Timothy this matter of occupation, Paul had been a tent-maker. He could have been one of the greatest administrators in this world but he took up tent-making. He said, in effect, I want to be available to my brethren. He is encouraging Timothy that blessing lies in a full committal.

S.E.H. Do Peter and John going up together to the temple at the hour of prayer illustrate the matter of trading? Peter said to the man at the gate that they did not have silver and gold but "what I have, this give I to thee", Acts 3: 6. Then they proceed into the temple and there was glory to God resulting from this trading. Does that illustrate it at all?

L.McF. That is fine; that is two of you as in Matthew 18, if two of you shall ask anything it shall be granted. So that brings us to this matter of the fellowship. Two brothers together during the week, two sisters, are now going up together. Solomon says, "Two are better than one" and "a threefold cord is not quickly broken", Eccles 4: 9, 12. The apostles, by trading, secured a third, they were strengthened by this man who held on to both of them and went with them into the temple.

C.F.D. Immediately what came out was the man's instinct and, too, his being attracted. I suppose Peter and John would have been attractive men. They were not just ordinary men, they were setting out the dispensation, they were setting out the features of Christ

secured in the glad tidings. That should be something about us, that our committal, our devotion, what is seen of Christ, should be attractive to the young people.

L.McF. I would say Amen to that. So he became a testimony, he was seen walking and praising God.

G.H. Think of those two going together. Peter could say, Silver and gold I have none - that is what men aspire to - but then he says, Such as I have. Think of what he has been through, the education he has had in order to acquire 'such as I have'. He could say that with real feelings.

L.McF. He could. Now that involves the pot of oil. Peter put it to use. He did not have the silver or the gold but he had that which was priceless. I think, brethren, we need to be awakened to the fact that we have what is priceless; we are to put it to use so that there is increase. As you put what you have into circulation there will be increase. Then the woman is not told at the end to give the oil away but to sell it. It is very precious, it has value. And now she is to live. It has been suggested that the wealthy woman following is the same woman; the woman used the oil to pay her debt and she became a wealthy person spiritually.

J.A.P. It really was a crisis here and we are in a crisis in this area about our young I think. She says "my two children"; when the prophet restores the position it is "thy sons". The answer that you are helping us on is room for the Spirit, and if there is to be room for the Spirit there must be subjection.

L.McF. Yes, we have been saying that. Subjection and separation - "shut the door". The Spirit cannot be at liberty in a worldly state of things; with all the light I may have, the Spirit cannot be at liberty in that state. He is holy, He is the Holy Spirit. Though He is given to me He might recede, there might be a state there such that the Spirit is not free in His activities.

J.A.P. These passages you have read should encourage us because a good deal in these scriptures is in the circumstances that we are in. They were very small here, one sister and two children,

but the Spirit of God came in and made it very great. That is really the day that you and I are living in; that is what we have to come to, the greatness morally and spiritually is in a few.

L.McF. Yes. Then sonship comes to light.

K.N.P. They all joined into this, they brought the vessels to her. She was the one who had the exercise, but do you think that, as soon as we get into this thought of trading and then of carrying out and using what we have, everyone comes into it? It is not a one-sided thing.

She is not the one who does everything, she is told to pour out, but the sons are the ones who bring the vessels. Maybe you can help us as to how we can each one of us help to have the others come in as vessels ready to be filled up.

L.McF. I am sure each one of us would do well to be exercised as to what they can add. We are to notice too that when there were no more vessels the oil stayed. That is to say, the Spirit is here in an unlimited way; the more room He has the more we will prove His power.

K.N.P. The first thing the woman had to do is to get her eye off the difficulties and get her eye on the pot of oil. Do you think that is one of our biggest problems; we have our eye too steadily fixed on the difficulties down here instead of having the focus and the attention on Christ and the Spirit and what we have?

L.McF. That is excellent. That is the need. The limitations we are in tend to cause us to think negatively.

A.R.S. In that direction do you think faith is necessary? We notice in the Scriptures that the Spirit is linked with faith. Do you think the more we are in faith the freer the Spirit is to help us?

L.McF. Yes, that is right. That is confirmed in the good teaching, faith and the Spirit go together. He is here as a divine Person but on my side I need to have faith in the Spirit. He is the greatest power down here; He is in the assembly and He is available. We confess how weak we are, how feeble we are, and yet there is this power

here with us. It is just that we might be exercised, brethren, to be helped.

A.G.S. The disciples said to the Lord "Give more faith to us", Luke 17: 5. The disciples were with Him and saw all His activity, healing the sick and even raising the dead so the disciples concluded that they needed more faith and the Lord was ready to show them the way to receive it.

L.McF. Yes, that is a good scripture to bring up. The Lord said, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed" - if you have a little, He would say, Now use it.

A.G.S. We need to request the increase, not only day by day but moment by moment.

L.McF. We do. On account of what we are we need this increase and to pray for it too.

G.H. It says, "as God has dealt to each a measure of faith", Rom 12: 3. Would the thought of stewardship enter into that as to what I do with the measure of faith I have?

L.McF. That is the idea. The ten bondmen would show that we are all in a place of responsibility, we are all responsible to the Lord. He has blessed us. Previous to where we read Zacchaeus received him into his house, he received blessing and now the Lord followed that through. He said, Now I am going to leave something with you, will you trade with it? Salvation has come to the house. Now we are to trade, brethren, we are to value the sovereignty of God that has taken us on. When we think of the millions out there, many Christians among them, we are to be affected by God's sovereignty in giving us to have a little part in all this glorious greatness we are speaking of.

A.S.H. I wondered if there is anything to learn from the woman's husband? She said he feared Jehovah. Is that not the setting, that this man was a God-fearing man?

L.McF. That helps. It is to bring out that she had no natural resource, but she was a lover of Jesus, typically speaking, she had

the oil. Well, thank God for the prophetic word.

T.E.D. She valued the prophet. She went to the prophet and he directed her to what she had. Then when the vessels were filled she went to him again and he gave her a further word. Is there not a further word week by week or moment by moment?

L.McF. Yes, you are doing it week by week which is a good thing. We are not able for it here. But week by week is good so that we are making room for the prophetic word. It is intended to open our eyes. That was included in Paul's commission - to open the eyes of persons. Thank God for the beauty of the creation, what a sight it is, but then we need the eyes of our hearts to be opened to take account of the new creation. This dear sister would say to herself, Just think, I had this here in the house all these years, I was worried and perturbed about my circumstances and the Lord had given me all that I needed. We all, it is the same word to us.

G.A. I was thinking about the vessels that were filled with oil; in John 2 at the wedding feast the Lord noticed the vessels standing by and told them to fill them with water: the wine had run out. Would that fit in with what you are saying?

L.McF. Very much so. The vessels in John were standing, having in view purification and then the water was changed to wine. All these are types of the Spirit, how the Spirit will bring into the temple all that we need. Every desire will be satisfied. It takes place in the temple.

A.R.S. We hear that we who are older should make things more attractive for the younger people, but is there any responsibility on the side of the young people to see what is attractive? Take a young woman like Ruth, how did she discover what was attractive in a person like Naomi?

L.McF. That is a good question. I think the secret was that she kept near to Naomi. She was not occupied with other young people and she was able by the help of the Spirit, typically, to take account of what was real, the fruit of discipline. We need that, to be able to take account in a positive way of the fruit of discipline as seen in the older brethren.

A.S.H. She clave to her.

L.McF. That is the scripture, she kept very near. Now we would encourage the dear younger brethren to take advantage of what is available in their elders.

E.H. What would you say about the fact that there was more oil than vessels?

L.McF. The Spirit is unlimited and it is a question as to how much room we provide. So there is no running out until the vessels were filled - not partially, but filled. Now you get these vessels in the early Acts, men who were filled with the Holy Spirit. Is there a possibility of that in our day?

A.R.S. It is the same God we have to deal with and His disposition remains the same. In Ephesians Paul says we must be filled with the Spirit and not with wine (see chap 5: 18). It shows that there is this possibility.

L.McF. Yes, there is. Now I venture to say that these dear men were wholly occupied with the Man in the glory.

C.F.D. Would it be right to think that the Spirit of God is prepared to fill every vessel made available to Him? The difficulty lies in what we make available to the blessed Spirit. He is not going to assert Himself and dislodge things that we might be occupied with but He will fill what is made available to Him, which is our responsibility and our exercise, is it not?

L.McF. That is good. So they were occupied with Jesus. Now that is the basis. Occupation with Jesus where He is provides scope for the Spirit in us.

G.H. You can see these wonderful, precious thoughts in the beginning of Scripture. God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living souls" (Gen 1: 20), and to Man it was given to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The great thought of fulness and wealth is in the divine mind for blessing.

L.McF. Very good.

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Key to initials

- New York unless otherwise indicated.

G.Ashby; C.F.Dadd, Plainfield; T.E.Druckenmiller, Plainfield;
C.S.Elliott; A.S.Hinkson ; Eric Hesterman, Plainfield; G.Hesterman,
Plainfield; S.E.Hesterman, Plainfield; L.McFarlane; G.D.Pfingst,
Plainfield; J.A.Petersen, Plainfield; K.N.Pye; L.D.Phillips;
A.G.Spooner; A.R.Stevens

THE INFLUENCE OF CHRIST

Willie Dickson

Psalms 19: 1-9; 2 Kings 2: 1, 2, 4, 8-10; Luke 10: 38, 42; John 12: 1-3

One would seek the Lord's help, beloved brethren, to say a word as to the importance of being under the influence of Christ. The thought of influence is a very remarkable one. It finds its place in the creational sphere and also in the moral sphere, and it can work for good or for ill, but the important thing is to be under the influence of Christ. Influence is a very important factor in spiritual things for good or for ill, and it is sobering to take account of how many actions are motivated by influence rather than by quiet determination in the Lord's presence. That is a fact, and we want to ensure that the influence we come under is the influence of Christ, and the influence of Christ can be radiated and expressed through the brethren. That is where the need for the Spirit comes in on our part, so that we are sure and confirmed that the influence we are under is the influence of Christ.

I want to emphasise that the Lord Jesus is a Person. I am speaking about the influence of a Person. Young people, what you have to guard against is what religious circles speak of as the influence of the Spirit. That is a wrong thought. The Spirit of God is a Person. As the Lord Jesus is a divine Person, the Spirit of God is also a Person and we should have regard to that and dismiss from our minds that the Spirit of God can influence a person naturally, because He does not influence a person naturally. In every believer there is a hidden spring of motivation, and one purpose, among others, of ministry is to nurture and prosper that hidden spring so that it is kept pure and nurtured by the influence of Christ.

We referred to the Holy Spirit earlier, and there is something I should like to say in passing, and that is that the wide tenor of the New Testament up to, and including the first three chapters of Revelation, emphasises that the presence of the Spirit lies in relation to the testimony and the service of God in the present dispensation.

Whatever enquiry we may make rightly as to the place and service of the Spirit in eras outwith the present dispensation, it should not becloud our thoughts that the teaching of the presence of the Spirit is in relation to our time, His service and testimony being to exalt Christ. It is important in our conversations not to get mystical, not to get fanciful thoughts as to things that are not in Scripture. I say that because the presence of the Spirit in the present time, appreciated and known, is what helps us to keep the hidden spring of motivation within us pure and constantly under the service of Christ.

The early verses of Psalm 19, as the brethren will know, are a prophetic allusion to the world to come. They relate, prophetically, to the coming day when Christ is in supremacy and the heavens are no longer defiled by the presence of Satan. Think of how wonderful it will be for the whole scene to be under Christ - restful, peaceful, and in the enjoyment of divine blessing, the heavens declaring the glory of God, the assembly there, that great heavenly body casting her influence over this scene. What a scene it will be, beloved brethren! There will be no fear of nuclear warfare, no sickness, death and devastation, but ever resting under the benign influence of the glorious Person of Jesus. It says, "In them hath he set a tent for the sun", the sun being the great influential thought in Scripture. The whole redeemed scene will rest under the influence of Christ in benign harmony and joy and peace. As Isaiah beautifully puts it, the very trees of the field shall clap their hands in joy (see chap 55: 12).

You young people, do you ever think of these things? The "bridegroom" is an allusion to the place that Christ will have in relation to the assembly in that order of things, and then the "strong man" is Christ as having brought to pass all the divine purposes, everything for the glory of God. Reference was made in the reading today to David becoming stronger, but a Man will shine in that day as the One who has brought to pass every divine purpose, every divine thought. The sun, the bridegroom and the strong man are all figures of Christ in His influence over the coming scene; and, as we have been taught, the effect of that day to come is to be known now morally amongst the saints, His people.

Then it goes on to the word of God: "The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of Jehovah is sure, making wise the simple". Oh beloved brethren, how good to remain under the influence of Christ and let the word of God reach your hidden springs! How much of what we read and hear just reaches our heads! I know that from experience. I am constantly challenged as I listen to ministry, and read ministry, how much of it is reaching down into my inward parts, into my soul, into my spirit. That is the character of the word of God - "perfect, restoring the soul". Then, "the testimony of Jehovah is sure, making wise the simple; The precepts of Jehovah are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes". What a cleansing, beloved, what a purifying of the inward springs of the believer as coming constantly under the influence of Christ! This is the way of divine adjustment. We may seek to adjust and help one another in regard to things, but it is a wonderful soul experience to come into the presence of Christ, under His shadow, and allow the word of God to search your inward parts, to reach the soul, to reach the spirit, to purify them, and, as it says in verse 11: "in keeping them there is great reward. Who understandeth his errors? Purify me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be perfect, and I shall be innocent from great transgression". Oh, beloved brethren, what a delightful lesson to learn in the presence of Christ, just to sit there and let the radiance of His countenance and the strength of His love help us inwardly so that we are in the current flow of the Spirit as He moves amongst the people of God.

In 2 Kings we touch on this. As we said, you cannot run the types too conclusively, but I was much impressed by what Elisha said: "As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee!" He was held by the influence of Elijah, the influence of a holy and separate man, an unworldly man; and he said, "I will not leave thee". You think of the journey that he was going to take. Those that were present would try to dissuade him from that journey, but "I will not leave thee", he said. Dear young people, is the influence of Christ

over you such that you would say, "I will not leave thee"? Again he says, "I will not leave thee!" How good it is for a brother or sister to have a spiritual influence so that when the test comes such is our answer. We want to be attached to one another in Christian bonds.

I feel that what we said as to love in the Spirit is the involvement of one another in Christian bonds, not by partisan links or special friendships or anything like that. In other words, Elisha was affected by the character of man that Elijah represented; and how essential that is. We were reading this passage in Kings in Edinburgh recently and a young brother said, Do you think Elijah was an austere man? No, beloved brethren, a man that could take that boy up to his chamber, stretch himself upon him and express divine feelings, whatever his exterior may have been, was not an austere man. You often find that behind an austere exterior brethren have hearts of gold. How good it is to look beyond the externals of persons and search for the work of God, to try and assess by the Spirit what motivates persons, whether it is coming from the blessed, holy touch of Christ in their affections. So Elisha said, "As thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee!" and then he witnessed one of the most remarkable things in Scripture. It says, "And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither; and they two went over on dry ground". Now that, beloved brethren, is a complete type of Christ when He faced the Jordan. It was the great triumph of Christ in death, as it was in 1 Samuel in regard to David and his conflict with Goliath; the work was his. He completely overthrew the power of death. And here was Elijah: how Elisha must have been affected, how it must have influenced him to see a man so great that he could smite the Jordan. How glorious Christ is! How it enters into the note of worship after the Supper, that the Lord Jesus has vanquished the power of death as He alone could and opened up the way to the inheritance. No other person but Christ could have done that. How Elisha would be affected by the glory of Elijah as he did this.

After that the question arose, "Ask what I shall do for thee ... And Elisha said ... let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me".

That is another allusion to Christianity. It is one of those exquisite touches in the Old Testament as to what Christianity involves. The double portion of the spirit is the great characteristic feature of Christianity. So, as you keep under the influence of Christ, these great spiritual thoughts come to you. Elijah says, "Thou hast asked a hard thing". Why would it be hard? Have you ever pondered that question, young brother and sister? There are two sides to that.

There is the sense in which it necessitated the death of Christ in order that the Spirit might become available, but also, for the double portion of the Spirit to be known in power in our souls means making place for Christ, the heavenly Man, the glorious risen Man, in our hearts.

In Luke 10 I want to speak of this delightful passage, so clearly setting forth the thought of a person coming under the influence of Christ. It says of Mary, "having sat down at the feet of Jesus was listening to his word". Have you ever known that experience, beloved brethren? Have you ever reached that in the experience of your soul? We want to be practical, but, beloved brethren, what do we know of resort to an area of things which is beyond circumstances? What is your soul experience? That is what Mary did. Martha, the circumstances overwhelmed her. Dear sister that she was, she was overwhelmed by circumstances, but Mary desired to come under the influence of Christ in an area which was beyond circumstances altogether. Spiritual life depends upon it. At some time or other or in some way or other you locate that area. The conflicts of the testimony, the contrarieties that appear amongst the brethren, the weakness of your own heart, may tend to unsettle you unless you have some experience of an area beyond circumstances, in which you can sit under the influence of Christ and listen to His word. It was "the good part", and the Lord commended her for it.

Then consequent upon that holy occupation, in John 12 it says that she, "having taken a pound of ointment of pure nard of great price, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment". I think, as it has been said rightly, the ointment was gathered up in the previous

chapters in connection with the death of Lazarus and the experience she had of the Lord, but I also believe that it was gathered up as she sat at His feet listening to His word, under His influence.

We come back to what I quoted earlier from memory by another: Seek knowledge, the fruit of meditation rather than study, and feed in communion, not just to strengthen an opinion you have of the truth. These are spiritual realities, beloved brethren. These are the things that make Christ precious to you because He is there a living, glorious Man to hold you and to keep you in relation to God's glorious thoughts. When we come up to the Supper tomorrow, God willing, we shall have the blessed privilege of having Christ before us, and, even at the Supper, to come under His influence. The Supper itself means that we come under His influence. The bride in the Canticles speaks about "the mountain of myrrh", chap 4: 6. You look at the loaf and the cup on the table on Lord's day morning and you see the mountain of myrrh, the suffering love of Jesus, and the influence of it affects us, and then we proceed into the service of God.

I would encourage all of us, beloved brethren, to seek in that way to keep under the influence of Christ. If you come under the influence of any brother, any sister, make sure that it is the influence of Christ that is reaching you through them. You say, Is it possible? It is possible by getting into the Lord's presence and asking Him to disclose to you the hidden springs that are motivating you in every matter, as to whether it is really love for Christ. May we be assured of these things in our souls, for His Name's sake. Amen.

RICHMOND

5 November 1988

THE CHILDREN NEEDED

There are times when the answer to a problem is - a little child! In order to open a car, locked by mistake, a friend had to call upon a passing small boy to enter into it through an open window-space. In quite a different connection and for a much more important purpose, Jesus called a little child to Him. He placed the child as an example of humility into the midst of the twelve great apostles, and spoke about "the little ones who believe in me". At another time He took children into His arms. I believe that they thus met a need in the Saviour's heart, since He could not express His affection in such a way to other persons.

In the history of the Israelites there came a time when a mere boy was able to answer to God's need of a mouthpiece to make known His mind and purpose. The story of Samuel is no doubt well known to you, and also the number of times that his name was called before he answered to the Caller. There is no doubt that we older believers as well as younger ones are slow to answer to our "calling on high of God in Christ Jesus". The name Samuel is said to mean 'heard of God' so that we may call upon Him as well as He upon us.

Earlier still in Israel's history there was a girl of about ten years of age who was a vital link in the protection and maintenance of God's purpose for His beloved people. I am sure that something of Miriam's history is known to you. Evidently, even at the time when her three-months old baby brother was placed in an ark of reeds by the river's side, she already had motherly instincts. I have often wondered what the name of the babe was! Miriam grew up to serve God as a prophetess. At the age of about ninety she was able to play the tambour, sing and dance to the glory of God. It appears that she lived to be about one hundred and thirty years old, but Scripture is almost silent as to the age of women, giving the exact age of only one.

Are you ready to be of service to our heavenly Father?

J.C.Evershed