

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 196

July 1989

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ASSEMBLY FEATURES

PATTERN

SOME ROYAL CHILDREN

ASSEMBLY FEATURES

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A.J.E.W. I think all would readily agree that a great point in the Spirit's mind currently is the bringing to light of features of the assembly in vital and substantial expression. The Lord would have all of us engage ourselves to find our part in that. We find much that is richly suggestive in the service of the apostle Paul: without in any way failing to recognise his apostolic office we can rightly derive immediate instruction from the way he does things, the way he presents divine things. Taking the scope of his service we see how constant was his emphasis on living features precious to Christ in that vessel which answers to His heart, and if in any measure we are called upon to serve in the Lord's interests, the work of the Lord as we may say, we find abundant instruction in the way that the apostle and his companions - for he had companions - approach their service. We might think of Timothy, for example, concerning whom we read in 1 Corinthians, the apostle saying "for he works the work of the Lord, even as I" chap 16: 10. The work of the Lord is a very important matter today, calling for commitment, personal commitment, calling for active energy, calling for great wisdom; but it is the work of the Lord. As we think of our glorious Lord as the Master, as some brought into His service, He directs the work; His authority is lent to the work.

Now the scriptures read would help us to get some impressions of this because they relate to two localities: first Corinth, secondly Ephesus. Corinth was a grossly immoral city well known in history for that dreadful feature. Ephesus was a city that was governed by gross idolatry. We can see how the work of the Lord proceeds, we might say in the very teeth of those features really of opposition to Christ. In the first scripture we read Paul tells us how he went to Corinth. The history of it in Acts 18 is very interesting to link with what we are contemplating in this scripture. That scripture tells us how he received a word from the Lord that he should speak and be not silent, and that he would be protected from injury by elements of

enmity. In other words, he went into his service in Corinth with a very distinct impression that the Lord would be with him in it, even as to circumstance. That has an important bearing even upon us, convincing us of the need that there be nothing of a casual character in what we may undertake under Him. We have to speak sensitively as to being sent lest there appear to be some element of boastfulness in it, but there needs to be some realisation of the Lord's authority and support entering into His work whoever may put a hand to it. I believe it is a crucial thing to look for. Then the character of his preaching is very clearly set out: "For I did not judge it well to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" - the emphatic "him crucified". Jesus Christ and Him crucified is a matter which meets all those elements of darkness that Corinth would embrace. We should begin today with some sense of the completeness with which this presentation, "Jesus Christ and him crucified", leads to the resolving of every moral question that may arise with any one of us. One object in raising these questions this afternoon is that we may each arrive at the need of substantial contribution to the Lord's work in each of our several localities; and flowing out of that the need to keep these features in mind, maybe in going to serve, however small the measure may be, in other localities. It has struck me of late that the local assembly, as we speak of it, - without claiming to be the assembly - is really the area in which what is substantially of the assembly is to be brought to light. What is substantially of the assembly would relate to the whole, but what relates to the whole has to be brought into vital activity and expression in every local company. The beloved apostle has this in mind clearly when in the second scripture he says, very suggestively, "for I have espoused you unto one man, to present you a chaste virgin to Christ". Really the virgin for presentation to Christ embraces this precious vessel, wholly, completely, and yet the way the beloved writer speaks of it - "to present you a chaste virgin to Christ" - at once implies that there is to be something in Corinth - not just in the widespread area of the testimony but something in Corinth - that has this chaste virgin character - a most attractive character attractive foremostly to Christ, but attractive to every true lover of

Christ, a chaste virgin. The feminine side is in view in all its attractiveness to Christ in His glorious manhood. But then that was to displace entirely all the features which would compete against it in Corinth. I feel little concerned that we may carry in our minds the two sides of what is proper to our own locality because God has set us there in responsible relations, and what is proper to the assembly as a whole. The first of those, of course, is derived from the second. What is in evidence locally is to be based on what is before God and expressed in the truth universally. Am I making myself clear?

W.McC. Yes, that is very helpful. I think we really grow in our affection for Christ as we consider for the assembly here.

A.J.E.W. That is a great point to seize; having the assembly in our hearts and minds in this way is far from displacing anything from the glory of Christ. Several interesting expressions have been used, but Mr Lyon used to refer to the assembly as the continuation of Christ.

So that to have the assembly prominently in our exercise, personally and in our companies, is wholly justified, particularly if we have any grasp of what we shall come to in the final scripture, the mystery of God in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge.

The prime point in the mystery of God is really Christ and the assembly, and the assembly for Christ as answering fully to His heart. The affections of the saints would be stirred increasingly, I believe, by contemplating this precious matter. We can speak of it as the mystery, the mystery of God in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge, involving Jew and Gentile, secured, united together in one body in relation to Christ. There is such glory in these elements of the truth, and the glory that they reflect upon God - Father, Son and Spirit - is something to affect us constantly.

P.H. Had Paul's initial experience on the Damascus road left an indelible impression on him: "why dost thou persecute me?", Acts 9: 4? All through his life he never forgot that.

A.J.E.W. It is fine to bring that in because, when he goes over that experience in the third presentation of it in Acts 26, he relates how the Lord addressing him referred to the things in which He, the Lord

Jesus, would appear to him. I love that reference, I often come back to it because it showed that not only had the Lord appeared to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road to bring about that initial earthquake, so to speak, in his soul, but He proposed that there would be fresh appearances of which He clearly would determine the character. This enters into the whole scope of our subject because, if there be ministry, we have many indications that that ministry springs from impressions. Impressions are vital. If you stand up to preach you look to the Lord for an impression, do you not, and this contemplates a certain liberty of communication according to the Lord's feelings and intentions between Himself and those who serve Him; and the richness of Paul's service, I believe, reflects the richness of the impressions that the Lord gave him from time to time in many different sets of circumstances. Unless something of a spiritual impression enters into some point of service it will tend to lose the freshness and power which is so much to be coveted as the word is ministered. Would you agree with that?

P.H. Yes, certainly.

H.T.F. You spoke about Acts 18: I was thinking about Paul arriving there and the eighteen months that followed; it does not seem that that period was in mind when he arrived, but he was anything but casual nevertheless. Do you think that this chapter - 1 Corinthians 2 - shows us the dependence that was behind the history that we read in Acts, and how things are to be arrived at by diligence? It was hard work, was it not?

A.J.E.W. It must have been very hard work, but dependence is the secret; and dependence calls for intimacy of communing with the Lord. Do you not find that?

H.T.F. I am very tested by you saying that, but feel the need of it if there is to be anything for Him.

A.J.E.W. Most of us are not short of some understanding of the teaching in reference to the truth; the main elements of the truth by way of doctrine or teaching are pretty well understood among us. They are needed, of course, and it is good that they are understood,

but along with that we may lack sometimes in that dependence on the Lord to allow Him quickly and effectively to intimate His mind to us, even as we proceed in the service. I believe this is vital, and this is how an individual approach to things fits into the general subject that we have before us this afternoon. While Paul was in Athens it is on record that he was "painfully excited" (Acts 17: 16) whilst waiting for Silas and Timotheus to come, pointing to the strengthening of what is for the divine pleasure by elements of brotherly support that may work together to the divine end, and that is prominent in the service of Paul. We might have said, Well, with the remarkable understanding that the great apostle had, it would not perhaps make very much difference if he had Silas and Timotheus with him; but, No, that was an occasion of great satisfaction to Paul, and thankfulness in view of the service that was before him. We do depend, speaking generally, upon one another's support in what we can rightly think of as the work of the Lord. We need one another's support and the brotherly links that we so happily share in these days, and which are vital to the interests of Christ.

W.McC. And especially in pressure.

A.J.E.W. Yes; with the conditions that we have mentioned as to Corinth, pressure would be constant for him in his labour, and there are conditions in localities that induce acute pressure, and we need one another locally, and indeed generally too, that these elements of real support of what is precious to the heart of Christ might be brought into expression and be active. It is a great comfort to have your brethren with you wherever they come from.

H.A.H. Does it seem from the second epistle that the development of what was particularly Paul's line in relation to the knowledge of the Son of God was really dependent on those two companions? He says, "the Son of God, Jesus Christ, he who has been preached ... by me and Silas and Timotheus)", 2 Cor 1: 19. I wondered if the development of that was dependent on the fellowship of those two beloved men.

A.J.E.W. Quite so. All that is pressing what is positive in this matter, and there is so much to be done, and there is a need of positive application to it; it calls for devotion, calls for dependence, calls for energy, but the whole idea of an apostle (as I think Mr Darby would support) or one idea of it, is energy in reference to the divine interest.

H.A.H. He seems to be marked by a very distinct purpose. He judged certain things in the first epistle, and then the espousal which seems to be linked with it is again a very definite matter; it is not something haphazard, is it?

D.B.B. You mentioned at the outset the way in which he was with them - "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified". Would that be against anything that would tend to be popular? I was thinking of the scandal of the cross.

A.J.E.W. Say some more about it.

D.B.B. At Corinth they were probably well versed in the truth, but they were on a very popular line, and there is a tendency always to be on that line. "Jesus Christ, and him crucified" is not popular.

A.J.E.W. Quite so. Another feature of the first letter is the idea of building in chapter 3. The foundation has been laid, but the word is "But let each see how he builds upon it" (v 10). Now I have to ask myself, Am I building anything upon it? That brings a deep challenge sometimes. I think it is sober to say that we should each this afternoon think of that challenge, and take it to heart as to the strengthening of the proper assembly relationships and activities in the places where the Lord has set us.

J.H. The instruction is, See how you build on it. What is the motive? What have we in our sights? It seems as though the apostle in this first chapter has the blue-print before him - See that thou do all things according to the pattern shewn thee in the mount (see Exod 25: 40).

A.J.E.W. Yes, the pattern shewn in the mount is very instructive as to this. You are referring there to Moses, and of course there was a pattern that was given by the Spirit to David of the house that

Solomon built, Solomon receiving the pattern from David in view of the building. The pattern is vital, because it depicts the whole character of what is to be brought into expression, does it not? But it is so important in that sense, not only that something is brought into expression but that it conforms to divine standards in every respect.

So what I spoke of as the moral side has to be faced in regard to things, that everything may be suitably based and suitably carried through to the glory of the Person who is in view in this place, the Son of God.

It is good perhaps to recall that wonderful transaction of Peter when the Father revealed to him the glory of the Son, and when the Lord proposed that that confession of Peter's would be the foundation of His building. He is building; it is something to impress us, the Lord is building. He has not only positive ends but positive means in view all the time.

J.H. And, of course, we in our small way are contributing to that, are we not, in our attitude and our effectiveness in the local assembly?

A.J.E.W. I am glad you bring in the word attitude because our attitude to things determines so much what we may do in connection with them, and what is before us in these scriptures, I think, would give us to dig deep as to basic things in our own constitution. In saying that I am thinking a little of chapter 11: "But let a man prove himself, and thus eat of the bread, and drink of the cup" (v 28). That proving is really a moral process and a necessary one, that we may be clear of what may lead to Christ being dishonoured.

H.A.H. Is it remarkable in connection with the pattern that, when there had been so much departure, the word to Ezekiel in chapter 43 was to shew the house of Israel the pattern (see v 10)? That would lead to the self-judgment of which you speak in view of our arriving at these precious thoughts.

A.J.E.W. It is very interesting to see how Paul had a pattern clearly in view; he must have received it directly from the Lord - "to present you a chaste virgin to Christ". There is a pattern behind that, and it affected his whole outlook because he speaks of his jealousy. What

a feature that is that he comments on! "For I am jealous as to you with a jealousy which is of God". Well, how much jealousy marks any of us here in relation to the preciousness of the assembly to Christ? I suppose that jealousy points to one of the deepest feelings of which man as such is capable. It may often work negatively, but there is the positive side, as we have it here, the deepest feelings brought into expression as to what is for the heart of Christ.

H.A.H. It is intimately connected with love in the divine thought of it, because it is a name of God, is it not?

A.J.E.W. It is; say some more.

H.A.H. I am only thinking of what you said, that with man it is often negative, but I think the references in Scripture are very positive. Even if we take Numbers 5, where there may be failure in view, the end is a positive thing, that there should be a true seed for God, and the Nazarite coming into view in God's blessing.

A.J.E.W. And if we speak in this instance of pattern, how superbly attractive the pattern is! We need to ponder these positive things and let them affect us. Sometimes, before you go to sleep at night, something strikes you, and you just ponder it, and you say to yourself, Is that not magnificent! Now that is a lovely experience, and I think we should make full room for it. Some of these personal experiences are that; they are not always assembly experiences, although we have assembly experiences personally too. But some of these things are so vivid in a right positive sense that we need to make full room for them.

H.A.H. Reference was made to what Paul received on the Damascus road; it was a suffering assembly, was it not? But do you think that as he had further intercourse with the Lord, and came to know Him as the Son of God, he realised the place the assembly had in purpose, and that would lead to this jealousy which you have spoken of?

A.J.E.W. Quite so. And if you speak of the Damascus road, it is good to reflect that there was a simple brother in Damascus, Ananias, who was really called into the work of the Lord, and how

skilfully and effectively he found his part in that work - an instance which is very attractive. It is rather akin to the way in which Aquila and Priscilla come into the matter of Ephesus (see Acts 18: 26).

D.B.B. Yet to start with Ananias did not want to go. Is that not often like we are, reticent to go forward? But the Lord said, Go.

A.J.E.W. Yes, quite so. That is a good point as to Ananias, that he received adjustment; not only was it given but it was received, and he went on to contribute critically to this positive matter of the laying hold of one who was to be the outstanding servant in relation to Christ and the assembly.

W.McC. You mentioned three features coming into this as to commitment, energy and wisdom; would that be also the order in which we would see these through? I was thinking of Ananias: he was a committed man, and the energy was the result of the Lord's exhortation, and the wisdom came in as he was present there.

A.J.E.W. Yes, and therefore Ananias was able to say later to Saul of Tarsus, Arise and get baptised; as if he would say, Do not tarry over this superb matter, come into action immediately. That is a very fine touch; that was another part that he contributed to the work of the Lord - Arise, get baptised.

P.H. It says in Ecclesiastes "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do with thy might", chap 9: 10.

A.J.E.W. That is exactly it, that is the scripture to bring in, surely, and how important it is for all of us. The young ones here can have their part in the work of the Lord. Think of some of the young ones in Scripture. Who was that young sister who detected the voice of Peter? Well, she was doing the work of the Lord.

Now Ephesians was read from because of the crucial place of this local assembly in the unfolding of the whole dispensation, and Paul had elements of history in reference to it which could repay a little further study - those chapters in the Acts which we have already referred to briefly, chapter 18 as to Corinth, chapter 19 as to Ephesus, chapter 20 as to the happenings at Troas and Paul's

exhortation to the elders from Ephesus. That is a remarkable section of the Acts in connection with what we are seeking to say this afternoon. It would do us all good to read it and think of how the work of the Lord is to proceed. When he first went to Ephesus in chapter 19 he found a lack of appreciation, a lack of knowledge in fact, of the coming of the Spirit - a clue to what follows in the Pauline service because of the urgent need of appreciating the Spirit and affording Him place in these heavenly features of the truth We have in this third chapter of Ephesians: "what is the administration of the mystery hidden throughout the ages in God" v 9, intimating to us that this time, this dispensation, is an administration time. The thought of the mystery was there but it had to be brought out into actual expression, involving an administrative course of activity in which, of course, Paul himself had a considerable part. But then he says, "in order that now to the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies might be made known through the assembly the all-various wisdom of God" (v 10). Now this is a challenge to our collective relationships. What do the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies see when their eyes rest upon us in Sunbury or in any of our localities? Do they see wisdom working? Or do they see, as unhappily they might, a marked lack of wisdom working? It is a searching challenge, but it is part of the function of the assembly according to the divine mind to afford an exhibition, if I may use that word reverently, of the divine pleasure, an exhibition of divine wisdom. Beloved brethren how much wisdom we need!

H.A.H. is that why he says to the Corinthians, "But we speak wisdom among the perfect", 1 Cor 2: 6? Is this what he has in mind here?

A.J.E.W. Quite so. Therefore in that epistle he refers to Christ being made to us wisdom from God (see 1 Cor 1: 30). That is a very close connection with the headship of Christ, is it not? Dear brethren, how much we need to be watchful as to the headship of Christ, the Head of the body.

H.A.H. We cannot prove it without the reality of the blessed Spirit's power and presence, can we? Does that link with what you said as

to chapter 19 of the Acts?

A.J.E.W. Yes, quite so. The assembly is a heavenly vessel; the whole concept of the assembly for Christ is a heavenly one; the working out of it involves heaven. Let us keep our gaze upward in all these connections and let us find our resource in the Spirit in the sense that He is a heavenly resource. The way in which the Lord speaks of Him in John's gospel involves that He brings us a report from up there. What a wonderful matter that is to have access to what we might speak of as heaven's concepts in reference to the assembly.

H.A.H. We speak of the blessedness of those communications, but really what the Lord has in view in that section of John is the communications in heaven of which He brings a report.

A.J.E.W. Yes, exactly that; very good.

W.McC. Have you an impression as to why it should say, "all-various wisdom of God"?

A.J.E.W. Because it covers such a wide area; it is "all-various", there is not a matter into which divine wisdom cannot reach in some sense. Whether we are in touch with it is the concern, but whatever difficulty or pressure may arise, divine wisdom has the answer to it somewhere.

W.McC. Yes indeed; we often say that no two matters are the same.

A.J.E.W. Exactly, that is the all-various wisdom being made room for. The matter we have this week will not be the matter you have next week, but the same wisdom can meet both.

J.F. I have been listening and taking in what you have been saying. These are very real matters, are they not?

A.J.E.W. Well, we can be assured of one thing, that in all these features we have been speaking of as necessary to the divine pleasure, there is every disposition from God's side to bring in the line of supply according to the need of it.

P.H. Is Paul letting us a little into the secret of his power in telling us that he is bowing his knees to the Father, that if there are going to be right conditions in our gatherings it will only be as we are on our knees privately with God? Light in itself will not bring it about, would you say?

A.J.E.W. I am glad you mention that, because prayer is something - from one point perhaps a somewhat obvious one - that is needed.

One point about it is that the sisters can bow their knees in prayer.

How much we owe to godly sisters! To pray is so essential to bring in power. There needs to be the bringing in of power, and someone has to do that, and the basis of it usually is personal prayer.

H.T.F. Is that what lies behind the inner man - "by his Spirit in the inner man"?

A.J.E.W. Yes, "the inner man", quite so.

H.T.F. It is really the result of prayer; you could think of it as that.

A.J.E.W. Quite so. It certainly is that the whole question of prayer engages the inner man; it is not the outward man. What are we inwardly? It is a big question and a vital question. What do we have in our inwards?

H.T.F. If there is to be any power in relation to anything it will flow from what is in the inner man, do you think?

A.J.E.W. Then we come - and I think we should just mention this in closing - to the top note in verses 20 and 21 of Ephesians 3, where the highest and richest functioning of the assembly is introduced, that which is directly for God's pleasure. We often speak of it in respect of actual expressed praise or worship, which is assuredly right, but it might include a great deal else; there would be glory for God if there is some expression of that divine wisdom in the local company; there will be glory for Him out of that, but particularly in the service of praise, the service of song, the service of God directly as we speak of it. This is the top note, and the interesting point is, "to him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen". The way that is expressed is most striking

because the "unto", and what follows involves really the eternal thing going through; but it is "unto", that is, it is viewing the matter from the present position, but the present position includes what is of that character immediately. Think of the saints in many localities gathering for the Supper tomorrow morning, and how they will express what is for the glory of God in the course of the service.

That is the present expression of what is conveyed in this wonderful verse. It goes on through into eternity, and it is "unto" that, and it would help us, I think, and stimulate us dependently to find part in the service of worship, to realize that this has its anticipation immediately.

GRIMSBY

30 July 1988

Key to initials

(Grimsby unless otherwise indicated)

D.B.Bodman, Birmingham; H.T.Franklin ; J.Franklin; H.A.Hutson, London; J.Haggan,

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PATTERN

A.J.E.Welch

Philippians 2: 1-11; 4: 8,9

I marvel, beloved brethren, at the skill of the Spirit of God in the way in which He produces formed results in the saints, something formed in us according to the glorious pattern in God's beloved Son. What a

pattern! The Spirit of God in Scripture has laid down principles, necessary principles; He has laid down connected teaching, necessary teaching, to secure a conformity in us, which is not a conformity by law but a conformity nevertheless; features actually secured in us that match the divine mind. It is a wonderful experience to gather for such a simple occasion as this one, to look round upon our brethren and take account of the results reached in formation, involving a change, a progressive change, according to the divine mind. It is most uplifting to gather with our brethren with this in view, to see a brother or a sister, and another brother or another sister, who are not as they once were; there has been a change, and we are caused to enquire who has brought about the change, and how has He brought it about? We come to recognise that it is God who has brought about the change, and we are caused to think how He has brought it about.

It is on this that I just want to make a comment or two - on the divine skill that enters into the work of formation in God's beloved saints. He addresses Himself to us in many ways. If we read the epistle to the Romans (a most remarkable and essential epistle to be read), we find an analysis of exercises of soul through which persons have passed and are passing as God works with them. The idea of pattern is not absent from that, because you read the successive chapters and you discern inwardly a certain enquiry. Have I been this way? Many of us perhaps - and I would discredit none in saying this - would be a little hesitant in furnishing an answer to that question, and we go back and re-read the epistle to the Romans and find something which we have not identified before, and identify now, and say to ourselves, Yes, I have been that way at that point. You see, God is gaining ground, securing capital if you like, in our souls, mingling His pattern with our experiences. What grace it is, dear brethren, that does that, as if what is rigid, and even harsh, is above all things avoided, but such is divine grace that our God leads us on, but in leading us on He gives us a kind of gauge of just how we are progressing; not to be produced in any boastful sense, but a kind of

measurement as to how we are getting on. How serviceable it is as our exercises proceed!

What we have in this chapter 2 of Philippians is, I believe, a peculiarly exalted way by which the blessed God secures divine ends in His saints; and the word is - and I am going now, for a moment anyway, to verse 5 of chapter 2 - "For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus". What is our mind, dear brethren? What is the bent of our hopes, I might almost say of our ambitions?

What mind have we in this connection? Are we content to let things go on casually, to take day after day, hour after hour, and just, so to say, plod on, without very much definiteness of design or intention? Or shall we seize the glorious objectives which God has set before us in Christ and through the Spirit, and find our mind changed by what opens up to us; discerning as we must - and we must come to this at some point - that the divine design for us is far more vital than any design of our own. I might want a good business; I might want a nice house; there might be some experience commonplace amongst men which I covet for some reason. But is our mind formed that way, dear brethren? The apostle anticipates these lines of approach, these lines of thought, in the divine skill which I referred to. He says, "let this mind be in you". Then he goes on to give us the pattern of it, and the pattern of it is in a Person. How much might be said about that Person, but the pattern of it is in the Person, a Person whom we know through divine grace, through the gift of the Spirit; and it is a wonderful way to come into the preciousness of divine things, to see them set forth in a Person, to see - I say it in reverence because of who He is - to see them set forth in a Man; not found in the often defiling circumstances of this dark scene, but a Man in the glory who has been here in the reality of His manhood. We see Christ up there: what an outlook that is! "We see Jesus ... crowned with glory and honour", as the writer of the Hebrews could say, chap 2: 9. That is whom we see, and our hearts are drawn out to Him, and we get an impression of glory in a Man, a heavenly Man, a glory which nothing in this dark scene can eclipse. Every feature found here in the darkness of this world is eclipsed at once by what we see in Jesus.

But then it comes back to us - and this is vital to the understanding of this scripture - there has been that which has preceded what we see now. Supremely precious: the measure of everything as to man Jesus and His pathway, in the days of His manhood here, something totally unique, something which unfolded under the eye of God and occasioned His delight; not only occasioned His delight but caused Him in His love for His Son to assert it; the voice came and was heard - "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight", Matt 3: 17. That, dear brethren, is, so far as our present course of things here in this time of the Spirit, the glorious pattern. You think of the variety of the circumstances in which Jesus was found, and that becomes the measure of what our blessed God would have in us as those same circumstances may be brought to bear upon us. We have seen something in Jesus which is perfect, and it is at every point the expression of perfection in the sight of God, and that becomes the means under His hand of a very great change. We come under the power of the excellence of what God has asserted, and still asserts for each of us in this present time - "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus". Then a whole course is set before us: "who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God" - how the glory of His Person is protected in this same skill that the Spirit uses - "but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form". The note that the translator gives us is very enlarging as to these verses: 'becoming what He was not before'. When you think of that thought which is clear, we marvel that one of the Godhead should be thus presented to us - 'becoming what He was not before'. It moves us to worship to think of it - one of the Godhead becoming something that He was not before, "taking his place in the likeness of men". And that is not all: "having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death and that the death of the cross". Those few words of that phrase, "and that the death of the cross", are a most moving point of Scripture - such a death, not only did He go into death, but He went into such a death, the death of the cross, the most hateful method that the mind of man could conceive. "Wherefore also God highly exalted him and granted him a name,

that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father's glory". We have touched the glory now.

What delight it is with God to call attention to Him up there, the worthiness of the Lord Jesus that every knee should bow to Him and every tongue confess Him Lord. There is glory for God out of that - "to God the Father's glory". You have a course set forth involving suffering, a course set forth involving what we would have to speak of a humiliation - "that the death of the cross - but it leads into glory, and a glory which the blessed God in the exercise of His authority and power must cause every one, every tongue to confess and every knee to bow at the name of Jesus. See what the outcome is.

The scripture does not exactly press the actual endurance of suffering, but it does impress us with what was presented - He became what He was not before, which I believe would give us to worship, that that can be said, and is said, of a glorious Person of the Godhead. The glory is in view now; God has commanded it so, He has exalted Him, highly exalted Him; God has given Him that supreme place in which He now is, the glory that follows the remarkable character of this stoop - we can rightly call it that - this stoop into manhood. Now, dear brethren, our mind is to be thus - "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus". We have certain experiences to go through, there may be certain matters which we are called to answer to, but what is our mind about the whole course? What is my mind about my whole course? You think of the course of such a man as Saul of Tarsus, what he became when he saw Christ in glory; the mind of that man was changed.

Now the mind of each of us, beloved brethren, is to be changed, particularly in the sense that we become humble. It must be so. We can see that all those high thoughts must go, because the course that is set forth here in which He trod in the days of His manhood came to a close in death, and beloved brethren, we have to understand death, especially in its moral force. But I see that an order of man is in question, and the way that order of man has come into view in my course here, one order of man put away in death and judgment, another order of man coming into view on the other side of

death. That is where the glory comes in, and it is not just glory objectively, it is something in the sense of glory which has happened in me and in you, that God has come in and touched us that we might be affected with what has been caused to engage us in the Person of Christ.

Now this, dear brethren, is the point I see of great skill, skill that commands worship in the way the Spirit has to say to us that He might have us in conformity to Christ, and that is how we are to be finished, conformed to the image of His Son. What a prospect! But does that prospect have an immediate effect upon us? Do we see that as the glory into which we come? It is not by some momentary thought, but going forward in a course which is characterised and based on a mind - I use the word as this scripture uses it - a mind that has been brought to us. And, dear brethren our mind is to be what we have so skilfully depicted in these verses of scripture, basing everything, as everything is to be based, upon the glory of God's beloved Son. This is the high point of our learning, beloved brethren. We learn in many ways, we learn by discipline, but this manner of learning is something by which the Spirit of God would affect us this afternoon, that we might come fully into line with the divine thoughts for us and about us, and enter into them in the reality of experience by the Spirit. It leaves nothing of us; there is no room for a particle of pride; all that is set aside by this mind that is depicted here. How proud many of us have been, seeking something which was not according to God, but this mind abolishes all that, another mind is in view, and the purpose of this scripture and of the Spirit's voice, I believe, at the present time is to bring this into application in our souls that we might have a mind which perhaps we have never had before.

Well dear brethren, I trust I have conveyed something that shall affect us for God's pleasure. An occasion like this is to affect us for God's pleasure, and I trust there may be something of that character now, because I suspect that very many of the pressures and sorrows of the present time, universally, shall be met, or met in a way that

God can honour, on the principle of this mind affecting us. May God bless the word.

GRIMSBY

30 July 1988

(These notes revised but not by Mr. Welch. Ed.)

SOME ROYAL CHILDREN

Of the boy prince Abijah, son of the first king of Israel it is recorded that, alone of his family, "in him there is found something good toward Jehovah, the God of Israel". He was still only a child when he fell ill and died, and it may well be that God in His mercy took him out of a scene of great sorrow. Though so young he must have feared God in the secret of his own soul so that his desire was to be pleasing to Him. No doubt we can think of him as having beforehand the benefit of the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A century later there was another boy named Joash, this time a prince of the house of Judah. Because of wicked people he had been kept in hiding in the temple for his first six years so as to protect him. It is perhaps remarkable that this history of confinement did not turn him against God. Rather did it make him ready, when seven he was rightly proclaimed king to seek to do that which pleased God. He is especially an example of learning from godly persons and benefitting by their influence. The scripture says quite simply that in so doing "he did what was right in the sight of Jehovah". He reigned for forty years.

Many years later there was another prince of Judah who became king when he was only aged eight years old. His name was Josiah, meaning 'whom Jehovah helps'. A little book I have calls him 'the faithful servant' because he purged out idolatry and set up again the holy, priestly service of God. Of him scripture says that "he did what was right in the sight of Jehovah and walked in the ways of David his father and turned not aside to the right hand nor to the left". I think that as he grew up he must have read in the parchments about God's pleasure in David his forbear, just as children today are able to read of God's pleasure in the Lord Jesus so as to follow in His steps. Do you read about Him?

J.C.Evershed