

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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CONTENTS

Gathering	E.F.Woodford	1
Clothing	E.F.Woodford	21
Five Little Pebbles	S.J.B.Carter	31
Believing Children	J.C.Evershed	33

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GATHERING

Acts 2: 1-4; 2 Thessalonians 2: 1-7; John 6: 12; Matthew 18: 19,20

E.F.W. I believe we are in days of gathering up. It may not appear like that - from the very fact that there are so few of us together in this great city it might appear that this is not a gathering up time at all. But I believe that that is what the Lord is doing, and that what the Spirit is active in is a gathering together, not only outwardly but inwardly. The Spirit is operating at the present time with a view to the greatest gathering together that there has ever been. When the Lord comes His shout will gather together the greatest number that have ever been gathered. It is a wonderful moment to which we are looking forward, but the Spirit is working at the present time with that in view. Without doubt the enemy is set against that, and his efforts to scatter have been sadly quite effective; but there is also no doubt that the Spirit's operations are also being effective - in gathering together. I wondered if these four scriptures might serve simply to help us speak over certain features of gathering. The first, how the Spirit came; He came when they were all together in one place. The second scripture, in Thessalonians, links the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him. To gather together would involve having an objective, that is, the One who is coming. I wondered if we might link John's gospel with the food that has been given - ministry - the great abundance of ministry that we have had.

But what are we doing with it now? I think the Lord would say freshly to us that there are the fragments to be gathered up, not to use ministry to offset other ministry but the fragments are to be gathered together. All the disciples were together in this matter and what the Lord recalls them to is not how many baskets each one had but what the total was. Finally, that we might be encouraged, despite the smallness of numbers, that the Lord is with the two or three: "there am I in the midst". Certain principles are involved in that because many claim that position, but I think the two things that are vital are, first, gathered to His name, and second, that He has

the place in the midst. I wondered if that might serve to consider the great value, particularly in our minds and desires, of the idea that we are gathering together what is profitable.

L.McF. I am sure that should be of help to us. So, despite the day in which we are found, the day of small things, you are suggesting that in principle this should mark us.

E.F.W. Yes, that is right. I was interested recently in noticing that God's principle of gathering was seen at the outset. If you read the first chapter of Genesis concerning the creation you find that God gathered, gathered the waters, and the reason behind it was that the dry land might appear. The dry land was where God was going to operate. God was operating as a result of His own gathering together, and He saw that it was good. I think God particularly valued and looked at what potential there was in the land.

J.A.P. That is very helpful. In the first passage would you think there is a moral point in the gathering, and that is obedience - that the Lord Himself had said that they were to remain in a certain place until the Spirit came which they did? This would have a point now: that what underlies our gathering must be obedience as well as affection.

E.F.W. There were two things - they were to remain in the city (Luke 24: 49) - but here it is together not just in the city but in one place, as though they would have some divine intuition in carrying out that command not just by the letter but in the spirit of what the Lord had said. The one place seems to me to be a further suggestion.

J.A.P. A very good point!

E.F.W. So we gather together in obedience yes, but not just by the letter; love would pin point where divine operations are actually going to go on.

J.R.C. Would it be right then to think that there was something instinctive in how they were together here? They were not told to assemble; there was something instinctive in how they reacted. You already mentioned that the Lord's commandment comes into things,

and that is so, and is our guide and our direction, but there is something very healthy in that they seemed to feel the need of being together, and as together the Spirit operates, do you think?

E.F.W. Yes; and it adds, "where they were sitting". Do you think they were restful as they waited for this? I do not think we ever read that they asked for the Spirit to come during those days after the Lord's ascension, but there must have been a wonderful expectancy; they had had a promise and it was soon going to be fulfilled. They would be very concerned to be in the right place at the right time, and yet there was restfulness, they were just sitting there. And there should be that with us - restfulness. We are not waiting for the Spirit - He is already here - but we are waiting for the Lord to come.

S.E.H. Would what you are saying relate to Deuteronomy 26 where it speaks of going "unto the place that Jehovah thy God will choose to cause his name to dwell there" (v 2)? Were the brethren anticipating the incoming of the Spirit in the early Acts in this one place?

E.F.W. Very good. In Deuteronomy they had to go to a place. I do not know what directions they were given but they were guided to that place. Here they were to remain and often remaining is more testing than going. I think we would all perhaps find it easier if we had to go somewhere, but to wait restfully in the place may be a greater exercise for us; it is where the Spirit is going to demonstrate what He is doing. I would love to know more of how the Spirit is moulding the lovers of Christ, moulding the work that has been carried on, so that when the Lord comes there will be the great gathering up literally. Perhaps we could say that there is the gathering up morally at the present time in anticipation of the gathering up literally.

T.E.D. Does love underlie this gathering principle?

E.F.W. Yes, but tell us more how love operates.

T.E.D. What was going through my mind was Abraham and Isaac: "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest ... and they went both of them together", Gen 22: 2,6. The place was discerned

by them. I wondered if that did not enter into this intuitive line, the love of God working in our affections directing to one place.

E.F.W. I think that is a very affecting reference because it was unfolded to Abraham as he went on, which is very much like the present time. The Spirit loves to unfold things as we are going on, and love operating facilitates that. Indeed scripture speaks about "love in the Spirit", Col 1: 8.

S.E.H. Abraham discerned that particular place. The Lord told them to remain in Jerusalem, and it says they returned to Jerusalem; but then it says they went to the upper room. They had discernment as to this particular place. Would you say that?

E.F.W. Yes. Our brother used the word intuition. I think that is to be known more by us. You feel the direction that the Spirit is moving in and you are drawn together. The great power of love helps to draw us along together to the place where divine Persons are actually working.

C.S.E. The Supper is a wonderful opportunity just to be together. We sometimes sing, 'Thine is the love, Lord, that draws us together' (hymn 4), and it is truly love in our hearts for the Lord that brings us together and we look forward for Him to come into the midst. Is that like a preview of what is coming to take the saints? Is that what it feels like, do you think?

E.F.W. That is interesting because that was the hymn we had last Lord's day morning and rather confirmed this line, that it is love that draws us together. We felt that at the Supper, that we had been drawn together by divine love. I am thankful for your reference because, if I can just say practically, I felt very exercised about this occasion, but having had that start I then noticed, at the back of this room, in a book just published, that Mr Lock had taken up the thought of gathering. I think we should look for the Lord's confirmation concerning exercises. We need confirming and perhaps this subject. would help towards this end. I have not read that book and I do not know what line he took up but the Spirit is ready to guide us.

L.McF. So that the idea of being together, not just numerically but inwardly as you said, would provide the blessed Spirit holy liberty.

We get that thought too in the beginning of Acts 13. So that as we assemble, the inward side is of the greatest import. It is not just what is external, is it?

E.F.W. No. That is an exercise at this very moment. It is clear that all of us are together in this room - the boys, the girls, the older ones, that we are all together - but are we really all together in spirit? The Holy Spirit would help so that we are all together, and the more we are all together in that way I feel that the Spirit can operate even more freely. There would, perhaps, be greater liberty for instance; that is one of the things, the fruit of the Spirit - "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty", 2 Cor 3: 17. We all know that the Spirit is here but is He free to operate so that there is liberty among us?

A.R.S. In Acts 3 Peter and John went up together and it is clear that it was not just a matter of physically being together but they were together in heart and mind and they were very effective.

E.F.W. They were. I love that suggestion - they were very effective as the result of being together. Those two were very different men as men, but in their operation at that time they went up together.

C.S.E. In John 20 the disciples were together through fear of the Jews. That is the external side, you might say, which regulated them then, but the Lord Himself came in the midst. And after the Spirit came the idea of fear was completely removed from them and they spoke with boldness in the name of the Lord. I wondered, as you had stressed earlier, whether our coming together is preparation so to speak; we look forward to the Lord's coming - whether that ought not to be more in our minds.

E.F.W. Yes, they were together perhaps not so much because of fear but together as waiting for the Lord to manifest Himself. What they did because of fear was to shut the door. There are things that we have to do practically because of conditions that would hinder what is going on. Shutting the door was because of fear of the Jews. It

has often been said that what belongs outside needs to be left at the other side of the door, so that what is inside is the more pure.

J.R.C. Where these conditions are, something comes in from heaven.

E.F.W. I was thinking of that - the strong link is now where the Lord had ascended, gone up far above all the heavens; and that is where the Spirit was coming from, from with the Father. There was a link from what was in heaven to down here and what was in heaven had never been quite the same before; there was a Man there, an ascended Man, and the Spirit was there.

J.R.C. I wondered, along these lines, what are we expecting when we do come together? We sit down together, we see one another, we know one another, but really what dictates is what is heavenly. Is that right?

E.F.W. Yes, good.

G.D.P. In the Old Testament the two wave-loaves come out of the houses at the time of Pentecost (see Lev 23: 17). Would that be involved in your thought of being together in view of increase and being more intensive together?

E.F.W. Now, just for the help of us all, tell us a little more about these wave-loaves. I am very anxious that we carry the young ones here with us.

G.D.P. It seems that after that, when they come out of the houses, then comes the oblation and other offerings, the seven lambs and so forth. It seems to increase, does it not?

E.F.W. Yes it does; it is lovely.

G.H. It is a wonderful prospect - we shall all be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be for ever with the Lord - wonderful!

E.F.W. That in itself has a very uniting effect does it not, because that is what you are looking forward to and so am I, and so are all the dear brethren here - a wonderful uniting effect. But then the

Spirit is operating in this waiting time and I feel we need perhaps a little more help as to how He is operating so that there may be oneness with us. The Lord's great desire in John 17 was "that they may be one, as we are one" (v 22).

K.N.P. Does the testimony go out from this area where they are all together? They are all together and yet it sat on each one of them.

E.F.W. That is very good, because although all together we are still individuals, the Spirit is in each one of us - "sat upon each one of them".

K.N.P. I wondered if that is how things work out. As you go on through the Acts you find that there is something in each one of these persons. It is set on from that position as being together.

Would that help us in our local settings, that as together we can then have the strength to go out into the wilderness and the testimony and fulfil things rightly for God?

E.F.W. Yes, that is very good. I think that goes on because there were distinctive gifts, as we learn from another scripture, in relation to the testimony. So that the distinction of each is preserved; I cannot be you and you cannot be me, and yet each of us is so vital to the testimony. I think we should have the view that none of us can afford to be out of this; every one is absolutely vital in the testimony. The reason for writing to the Thessalonians was that they should not soon be shaken in mind. I think we are living in days when that is a great danger, and no doubt the scripture would have had our present time in view. But these two things in verse 1 are absolutely vital to preserve us from any influence that would tend to bring in fear. We have spoken of the fear of the Jews and there are other fears, but these two things, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him should help to steady us.

S.E.H. Would our gathering together to Him refer to the rapture, and also to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ?

E.F.W. I think that would have the rapture in mind. But what was perhaps more in mind was the influence of that at the present time.

We may tend to leave too much to the rapture, to the Lord's coming, but our whole lives are to be more attuned now to that time.

A.G.S. Meanwhile we should be concerned to be ready for His coming. The wise virgins were ready, so we should be ready, should we not?

E.F.W. Yes, that is exactly what was in mind. It says "his wife has made herself ready", Rev 19: 7. I do not know that I fully understand how extensive that is, but it involves a great deal. I think it would bring in a responsibility with all of us that we are in the 'being made ready'. The trimming of the lamps, having the oil, are all very significant matters in the preparation for the Lord's coming.

G.D.P. As was said, it is what comes out of heaven, and now the Lord is coming from heaven. If we had our minds more on what is above and heavenly we would be more steadfast.

E.F.W. I am sure we would. There are persons today who say that the Lord has already come. I am sure such persons have little idea what it will be like when the Lord actually appears in view of the millennium. The reign of the Lord will be nothing like conditions today. Everything will be subject to Him. That rule will be a wonderful rule that this world has never known.

J.A.P. The Supper has been alluded to; is that where we get the experience of our gathering together to Him? We have been taught that we first, in a sense, gather to one another, but when He comes in that is the experience of gathering together to Him. Is that right?

E.F.W. Yes, that is very helpful. I remember hearing that and we have heard it a few times since which is very good.

J.A.P. The assembly is a marvellous vessel and in some little way, when this great matter of which you have read takes place, the assembly will have had the experience of this - we may say, many times. Maybe some of us have missed it - I would say perhaps I have missed an occasion - but it is a wonderful thing when the Lord Jesus comes in and that you are gathered to Him and you go out when He goes.

E.F.W. Do you not feel that our appreciation of that must depend to some extent on how well we know the Lord? So we would all be concerned to know Him better.

T.E.D. The disciples said to Thomas, "We have seen the Lord", John 20: 25. It had the effect of an answer in Thomas' heart and soul so that he was present the next time.

E.F.W. That was wonderfully effective in Thomas. They did not tell him to come but what they said was so attractive that he made sure he was there the next time.

T.E.D. Speaking in a practical way you feel it. We see our young brother here, and his wife is in India; there are practical things that are hindering the togetherness. But there are some things that hinder togetherness that we can overcome if we are moving in the Spirit, would you say? Can you help us to look at things from the Lord's point of view and get the Spirit's help in view of the togetherness now to which I think you are drawing our attention?

E.F.W. That is a good example because I am sure that they are doing things together although they are not physically together.

J.A.P. There is government limitation in the matter we are speaking of, but I think it is in mind that we ought to see practically about being together with our brethren and that authority underlies it as well as instinct.

E.F.W. The scripture speaks about not neglecting gathering together or assembling together as is the custom with some (see Heb 10: 25). It is very sad to see that some have neglected this, and you rightly feel that all of us would be stirred not to neglect the great privilege we have actually of assembling together. Is that right?

J.A.P. Yes; heaven comes into that and I would not like to miss it.

E.F.W. That is good. The other two scriptures we could perhaps just touch very briefly. I thought we could link the food in John 6 with ministry. How much we value the past ministry would be a test to all of us, but there is no doubt that it is food of a distinctive kind. Surely

the fragments are to be gathered up and, as the Lord adds, gather them up that nothing may be lost.

A.S.H. There was a time when all were filled; they were filled to capacity and then there was what was over and above.

E.F.W. The Lord is always ready to give more. You can never say there is no more that I can learn. This is a vital time for learning, for we know that we are not going to learn in heaven, but we learn here and this is where the food is available. We shall not need the books in heaven.

A.S.H. We should make ourselves available in this learning period.

E.F.W. And help one another in it. Some of us are not able to absorb ministry as easily as others but in occasions like this we can help one another into the good of it, into the enjoyment of it. I think ministry is to give us joy as well as instruction.

J.R.C. In verse 6 it says of the Lord, "for he knew what he was going to do". You mentioned in prayer the matter of the headship of Christ operating when we are together. Is there something for us to learn that everything is in the Lord's hand and He is able for everything?

E.F.W. It is very comforting, is it not, that the Lord knows what He is going to do and He is able to carry it out. The nearer we are to Him the more conscious we become of His delight to unfold what He is going to do.

J.R.C. That leads to excess, does it not?

L.McF. So the little boy in the context here would encourage us all.

We have some brethren not taking much part but how the Lord would draw on what this little boy had, small no doubt, but then think of the result. Is that to encourage us all to become involved?

E.F.W. Yes indeed, and to bring what we have. In the Lord's hands He can make it do whatever He will.

G.A. I was thinking about the children of Israel in Exodus 16, how what was like hoar frost came down from heaven and they diet not

know what it was. But then Moses told them that it was the bread from heaven for every man to gather; it says, "This is the bread which Jehovah has given you to eat ... Gather of it every man according to what he can eat, an omer a poll, according to the number of your persons" (vv 15,16). They gathered it according to their measure; he that gathered much had nothing over and he that gathered little wanted nothing; they had gathered every man according to the measure of his eating. It says further on, "Let no man leave any of it until the morning" (v 19). How does that fit with what you are saying?

E.F.W. It gives you an impression of the wonderful supply that there is: as we had in the hymn at the outset (No 206), the perennial river, perennial food, the unlimited supply and we are not to despise it but remember that it comes from heaven.

C.S.E. Is there something special for us to learn from this scripture in John's gospel? The Lord was concerned that they should gather the fragments which were over and above that nothing might be lost. Is the Lord teaching us there to appreciate what He is giving and to be very careful to use it rightly?

E.F.W. Yes that is right. The fragments were not something new, they were part of the loaves.

I think Matthew 18 very much links on with what was said at the beginning about love. I think the Lord Jesus loves to be amongst those who are faithful and committed to Him. He is not there just to make a name but He is there in affection and appreciation of persons who are willing to come together - even two or three; He appreciates that and would give them a sense that that is where He would be. What a stimulation for those who remain, to come together and give the Lord the pleasure of being in the midst. The two governing features here are: gathered to His name and that He is in the midst.

L.D.P. I was thinking of Malachi where there was opposition, but despite this there were those who feared Jehovah: "Then they that feared Jehovah spoke often one to another; and Jehovah observed

it, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared Jehovah, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be unto me a peculiar treasure, saith Jehovah of hosts", chap 3: 16,17. Would that fit in?

E.F.W. That fits in very well and introduces something that should help to preserve us together, and that is, speaking often one to another. I think that that is something that would involve all of us.

We are all human and may tend to gravitate towards certain ones, but one to another would involve every one.

G.H. Verse 20 is very important: "For where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them". It would involve the importance of His headship and His lordship: is that something vital?

E.F.W. That is right. And a name that never changes. That is an important matter, is it not? The Lord's name would involve what does not change.

G.D.P. You get confirmation of this where there is a living ministry. Is that not right?

E.F.W. Somebody said that would be a test. If I have doubts as to where I should go, that is one thing I would look for - is there a living ministry?

G.D.P. There are to be no more novelties but we would have something that is current, would we not?

E.F.W. Yes, and the effect of that is very stimulating.

J.R.C. What has been mentioned about "gathered together unto my name" is very important. 2 Timothy 2 says, if you name the name of the Lord you depart from iniquity. If persons take the name of the Lord, then there is to be a moral correspondence, and that is what makes it, should we say, simple in regard to any position that is taken up. There is diversity all around us but the way is clear - depart from iniquity; otherwise you are naming the name of the Lord and are not in correspondence with it.

E.F.W. I appreciate your comment that it is simple. If you try to put the iniquity right you realise that it is more than anybody can do. You get into the most complicated, difficult position, but just leave it, depart from it.

K.N.P. Were you going to say something as to the difference between being gathered together unto His name and being gathered together to Him?

E.F.W. Gathered together to Him, I think, would involve His Person, His feelings, His love; gathered together to His name, I think, brings in the principles, the directions. We have spoken about the commandments earlier on; all those things would be involved in gathering together to His name. The Supper really involves both because there is the commandment, "This do in remembrance of me", but then there is the love side, the love that delights to answer to that.

G.H. There is His tender love and then there is also His authority.

E.F.W. That is what I thought. You cannot separate the two because His love is behind His authority.

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(All local unless otherwise stated)

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CLOTHING

Eric Woodford

Zechariah 3: 1-7; Luke 24: 49; 1 Peter 5: 5; 1 Timothy 2: 9, 10

I feel very much the need of the Lord's help to speak about clothing. It is an interesting subject, perhaps more so to women than to men, but it is interesting to all of us. God introduced it at the very

beginning, as we know, when there had been breakdown of the most serious kind. Man had tried to clothe himself, but when God came to Adam he said that he was naked; he knew that what he had done was useless. God then clothed them with coats of skin. I think this important matter, which God has ordained, is being interfered with by Satan, either by nullifying the shame of nakedness or by undue occupation with the world of fashion. We need to be suitably clothed. It is remarkable despite the fact that God clothed them with coats of skin that there is today such opposition to the use of skins and furs for clothing. In Luke 8 the man out of whom Jesus cast the demons was found not only sensible but clothed. I only bring this in to show how important right clothing is in God's view.

Now we might ask the question, What is it for? Clothing is normally expressive of the persons themselves. Clothing needs to fit properly. David was offered protective clothing that was unsuitable for fighting Goliath. The human mind, in Saul, would have tried to introduce human ideas for covering to protect him but David would go in faith and dependence. Five small pebbles from a brook and a sling is all that he needed - and divine direction. Perhaps some of you young ones have read that lovely poem, Five Little Pebbles. It is well worth reading, by S.J.B.Carter. So clothing needs to fit properly.

Then we might say, Clothing is for warmth. We wear clothing to keep warm. But it is interesting that in Scripture it is often of no avail. You remember that they covered David with clothes but it says he obtained no warmth. Haggai says, "ye clothe yourselves, but there is none warm", chap 1: 6. We may put on outside things but spiritually it is the heart from which the warmth comes; the love inside keeps you warm.

Then what else is clothing used for? Clothing can be used for deception. That was referred to in the reading. You remember that Jacob, a young man, clothed himself order to deceive his father - a very serious matter that sons making out to deceive their father: not beyond girls either, but there it was a on deceiving his father. He put on the clothing and his father felt him, the clothing of Esau, but he says, It is the voice of Jacob. There is one thing certain, you young

people, you might deceive your father and mother but you can never deceive God, and sooner or later the truth will come out. There was another occasion concerning a gang of people. Sometimes we are too frightened to act alone and we solicit others to gain our objective. This group of people came to Joshua wearing old clothes, worn out shoes, looking disreputable in order to get something to which they were not entitled. So clothing can be used for deception, but God sees the heart. Men look on the outward appearance but God looks upon the heart (see 1 Sam 16: 7). May there be none of us who would deceive. It is all important that we should be open and truthful.

But what I want to come on to particularly is the clothing for adornment. I read Zechariah because that was the opposite. There was a man there, the high priest, Joshua, standing before the Angel of Jehovah, and Satan "standing at his right hand to resist him". I feel, beloved brethren, that we need to pray hard because Satan is near to resist - "at his right hand". Even Paul had to admit that Satan had hindered him in what he wanted to do (see 1 Thess 2: 18). The great answer to that is prayer. One thing that Satan can never do is to stop you praying. Let us encourage one another to pray because Satan is near. Well, Jehovah had a right, He rebuked Satan. I have no doubt that is what He does today; there is a restraining hand, as we read in the earlier meeting, "he who restrains", 2 Thess 2: 7. We need to be very dependent on the One who alone can restrain him.

But Joshua, it says was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the Angel. Whether that was his own view of it or whether that is how he felt because of the presence of this Angel - who I think others have said would refer to Christ: think of standing before that holy Person, Christ - Joshua felt his insufficiency. There he was, perhaps with something on his mind or conscience that he felt he could not get off. There it was - expressed in those filthy garments.

The word is, "Take away the filthy garments from off him". How out of keeping such would be! I wonder if there is someone here that has something on their conscience. You feel perhaps that you do not want to tell others but it is there and it is hindering, not in keeping

with the holy presence of Christ. You want to serve Him and yet you feel you cannot. Maybe you want to remember Him and you feel there is something within you that is restricting you, something you want to do and you just do not feel equal to it. The word would be, I am sure, Take them off, those filthy garments. Get the matter settled, settled before God. And then what? He has clothing and would clothe you with festival robes. It is like Luke 15, that young man who came back; when he came back he put the matter right and then the father said, "Bring out the best robe and clothe him in it" (v 22). God has only the best thoughts for you. You are of such value to Him that only the best is good enough. So often we take second best - just part-way will do. But God would say, Only the very best is good enough, so bring out the best robe and clothe him in it.

Then God has a word for Joshua. You cannot have these wrong things and it not be cleared. So He speaks to Joshua: "See, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I clothe thee with festival-robes". And then we get the addition, something more, more than you expected maybe: "And they set the pure turban upon his head, and clothed him with garments; and the Angel of Jehovah stood by". Now there is this word to Joshua: "If thou wilt walk in my ways". Is that what He is saying to each one of us now? Hear the urge: "If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts", and then this last sentence: "and I will give thee a place to walk among these that stand by". Who was standing by? Who were these persons? Well, for one it says the Angel stood by. I think the persons would represent those who are near to Christ, and that is where God wants you to be, to be among those that stand by. You might say, What are you standing by for? What are you waiting for? Standing by for service while waiting for the Lord's return.

I pass on to Luke, the man who cared, a physician. Any one ill? Luke would be the man that would want to care for you, would want to give you something that would make you better. How reassuringly the Lord speaks to them here. Luke is the only one that

refers to being clothed with power from on high. The Father loves to give the Spirit. The Lord had prayed to the Father, indeed begged the Father, that He would send another Comforter. The presence of the Spirit is the result of divine pleadings. What interest heaven has in the operations of the Spirit at the present time! And it is in power.

This is the clothing: "clothed with power from on high". Are you clothed like that? Has every one of us that clothing on? You may say, There are more interesting colours for clothing. I do not think we read very much in the New Testament about the colours of clothing.

One man who had colour was the rich man who was dressed in purple but he missed the blessing (see Luke 16: 19). He was more concerned with the show, with the colour. But God says, I want you to be clothed with power. Although Satan is standing by, God would remind you that "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world", 1 John 4: 4. Is there any one who has not that clothing on?

Oh, make use of it. I say that reverently, make use of that clothing, the power of the Spirit.

I refer to Peter who says, "Likewise ye younger, be subject to the elder, and all of you bind on humility towards one another". You may say, But I have the power, the power of the Spirit. Oh, beloved, we need at the same time to have that humility towards one another, for everything that we have that is of any value at all has been given to us. Who of us here can say, I deserve to have what I have? None of us deserves it but we have been given the greatest things. But along with that we need to bind on humility. It is something that tends to fall off pretty quickly. It is not weakness to be humble. One of the greatest men of the Old Testament, Moses, is said to be the meekest man in all the earth (see Num 12: 3). Let us ask help from the Spirit that each might maintain humility towards one another.

That will have a tremendous effect. It says, "God sets himself against the proud, but to the humble gives grace". If you are willing to be humble God is going to give you something else that is effective - grace. Much could be said about it but let us seek to have grace, something that is indispensable in every locality, indispensable really for every person, but it starts with the binding on

of humility. When God sees that you are humble minded He is going to give you grace, grace to go on.

This is a very practical word in Timothy. I want to stress the beginning of that verse in case anyone thinks I am getting at anyone, which is far from my thought. It says, "In like manner". I think that links very much with the prayer of the previous verse. Young people, do you pray? Do you pray regularly? We would encourage you to go on praying. Scripture says, "Pray without ceasing", 1 Thess 5: 17. I wonder why it says that. There are some matters, of course, that we may have to stop praying for. A certain matter troubled Paul greatly and it says he besought the Lord thrice about it (see 2 Cor 12: 8).

He knew when to stop. Can it be said of you beloved brother, beloved sister, that you are a praying person? Of some, usually the older ones, it can be said, she is a praying woman, or he is a praying man. Heaven looks down and takes account of those who communicate with heaven. It may be easier for us to communicate down here on the horizontal line, but think of the value in heaven of communicating up there, vertically. If I may be allowed a digression, this country is well known for its great success in sending things skywards into outer space. How far it will be developed before the Lord comes I do not know, nor whether they will ever be allowed to go as far as they plan, but how much more we should concentrate on our communications which go far beyond outer space, they go to the One who has gone up far above all the heavens. That is open to us all.

Now following the verse on prayer we read "In like manner also that the women in decent deportment and dress adorn themselves with modesty and discretion". These features are not natural with most of us, but Paul would encourage Timothy to encourage them. I do not know how he would have done it; brothers may find that difficult, but Timothy would tell you that there is something that the older women can do. But we would all have some discernment as to how this can be done effectively that there might be the modesty and discretion expressed even in the physical clothes we wear. Then it adds, over against certain things not to be used for adornment,

"what becomes women making profession of the fear of God, by good works". May we all be encouraged to keep the fear of God before us which will preserve us from much and to do good works under heaven's direction.

I would like to refer in closing to the outstanding covering that God has done Himself and that introduced colours then into the ark in the tabernacle. Wonderful the way that God covered! The whole system, of course, was wonderful, the way God covered it with skins, the way He covered it with that which was so beautiful. I wonder if we really have a view as heaven would have had of our Lord Jesus, what He is in all His perfection, not only everything that He did here, every step that He took, but how He is now in the glory. Oh, the attractiveness of that Man! What God thinks of Him! He has given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow (see Phil 2: 9,10). Oh, the glory, as seen in the gold covering it all!

May the Spirit help us to think over these things, that we may be more pleasurable and serviceable to God in our walk here.

May the Lord bless the word for His Name's sake.

NEW YORK

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FIVE LITTLE PEBBLES

1 Samuel 17: 40

Five little pebbles lay in a brook,
Five little pebbles hid in a nook.
"What are we good for?" one said to the other.
"Little or nothing, I'm thinking, my brother."
Wearing away, day after day,
It seemed that for ever those pebbles might stay.
If they were flowers, ever so gay,
Doubtless someone would take them away;
Or if they were big stones that builders could use,
Perhaps then some builder those stones would choose,
Wait, little pebbles, rounded and clean,
Long in your loneliness, lying unseen,
God has a future awaiting for you.
Five little pebbles, sturdy and true.

Five little pebbles hid in a brook,
David came down and gave them a look,
Picked them up carefully out of the sand;
Five *little* pebbles *great* in his hand.
"Hark!" there is shouting, there's fighting today,
Boldly these pebbles are borne to the fray;
One of them chosen and put in a sling -
Could we have thought that a stone could thus wing?
Onward it sped, with a might not its own,
Onward it sped, by the shepherd boy thrown;
Swift as an arrow, straight as a dart,
For the whole nation that stone played its part,
Striking the giant's great terrible head,
Laying him low - a mighty man dead.

Five little pebbles lay in a brook,
Mentioned with honour in God's Holy Book.
Be thou a pebble, contented and low,

Ever kept clean by His mercy's pure flow,
Hidden and ready till Jesus shall look,
And choose *you*, and use *you*, a stone from the brook.

S.J.B.Carter

BELIEVING CHILDREN

One of the great apostles, Thomas, had doubts as to whether the appearing of the Lord Jesus as risen from the dead was really and truly his own Master. Jesus said to him, "be not un believing, but believing". Perhaps these words could be said to someone reading this and who does not yet believe on the Lord Jesus. He is now not only risen but ascended and glorified, yet available to all as Saviour and Master.

Paul's epistle to Titus, which mentions "believing children", tells us that the grace of God has come as a teacher whilst we are in this present world, which is therefore like a schoolroom. Grace has brought with it salvation without which we could not begin learning.

We have every help in turning away from wrong things and following what is right. One of the first lessons is to live "soberly", that is to behave ourselves well in all things. Then to live "justly" relates us to what is due to all around us, whilst "piously" is to give pleasure to our Master.

We are at all times in God's school and not waiting to be dismissed or sent on holiday. There is a window in the schoolroom through which we are encouraged to look for the coming of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. He will come secretly for those whom He has redeemed and then in glory He will come again with them all. Will you be amongst these?

J.C.Evershed