

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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INTEREST IN THE THINGS OF GOD

Genesis 25: 27-34; Exodus 3: 1-5; Psalms 132: 1-5; Zechariah 2: 1 -5

J.R. We have been considering heaven's interest in what is proceeding down here, and we could be challenged as to what interest we have. These scriptures might give us some indication of how we can commit ourselves to interest in the things of God, beginning when we are young – the earlier we begin the better, to be really involved and interested. Jacob was interested and valued the birthright. Birthright relates to inheritance; Jacob valued the inheritance that came through Abraham and Isaac and came to the next generation, to Jacob. Esau despised the birthright, Jacob valued it. There is a great need for our young people and all of us to value the birthright. We have in Joshua 17 vv 3,4) the inheritance which the daughters of Zelophehad valued; and Naboth valued the inheritance of his fathers, and would not give it up for the best business proposition he could be offered (see 1 Kings 21: 3). We ought to value the inheritance of our fathers, what has come down to us in the recovery of the truth.

It says here, "And the boys grew". The parents had their exercises – Isaac waited twenty years for the family and the record also shows that Rebecca went through secret inward exercises before the boys were born, and then the boys grew. Boys grow and girls grow; what kind of features are going to be manifested? Is there going to be interest in the birth right or are we going to despise the birthright? What a solemn thing if such a birthright as we have come into is despised! Jacob valued the inheritance of his fathers.

G.D.P. We often refer to the boy Samuel; he grew.

J.R. The boy Samuel grew, and he grew on.

J.A.P. What is the birthright in Christianity?

J.R. For us it would be the truth of the assembly, as we sang in our opening hymn (No.221) – the light of God's purpose. It would be

initially what was established by the apostles and what Paul brought out, the truth of the mystery and the assembly; it would involve all that, and it would involve for us what has been recovered in the truth. It is an inheritance which we ought to value.

J.A.P. That is good, sonship and eternal life, and so on. But you have something in mind about the time of recovery.

J.R. These things were in some measure lost sight of during dark ages but have been recovered to us, and we have the ministries available which set these things out. What an inheritance our young people have and we all have! We need to become interested.

There is nothing for those who are not interested. We begin by interest as Jacob did. Esau was a man of the field, no doubt a popular kind of man, a man who would make friends outside which is a great snare; he despised the birthright. Jacob was a homely man, dwelling in tents. It says that Abraham dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob (see Heb 11: 9); it does not say he dwelt in tents with Isaac and Esau. Jacob became interested and then he valued what was available to him.

C.F.D. Do you think that is a key? You spoke about the older brethren being an example to the younger brethren. If the young people look on and I am not interested in the inheritance, and Christianity is but an appendage to my life, that is not going to be of any help or any strength to them. Do you think the older ones – we ourselves – have to set the thing on and show them by example that we value the inheritance?

J.R. That is very important. Isaac is viewed typically as the heavenly man. Heavenly things would be involved in his life and they ought to be involved in our lives. As you say, example is very important for our young people. If parents of young people are not really interested or committed there is no example for young people. But Isaac and Rebecca were.

S.E.H. Would it be right to think of Abraham imparting to Jacob what God had told him in the early part of his life? God said "Go out of thy land, and from thy kindred"; and then the blessing that God promised

him "I will make of thee a great nation", Gen 12: 1,2. Would that enter into Jacob's appreciation of the birthright?

J.R. It would indeed; he would see it in Abraham and in Isaac. I think Jacob was about sixteen when Abraham died, so he had those sixteen years with Abraham and of course, longer with his father Isaac, and Jacob must have become interested. So the boys grew; what kind of features are going to come to light? That is a testing matter for young people – of course for all of us, but young people particularly.

L.B. Would determination and desire help on this line? I was thinking too of the appeal in Revelation: "Hold fast what thou hast that no one take thy crown", chap 3: 11. Would that link with what you had in mind?

J.R. Exactly. "Hold fast what thou hast" would in principle be the inheritance that we have come into.

T.O. Jacob is spoken of as the one who is loved. I was wondering if that would provide the basis for what transpires in him. There was an environment which would allow the expression of what is found here in the way of response and commitment.

J.R. Jehovah loved Jacob. The Lord loves this feature of interest. He said that in Malachi "I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau" (chap 1: 3). when they had proved the kind of persons they were. He loves this feature which began with Jacob although he had many ups and downs. If we commit ourselves when young we will have our ups and downs but we will learn God in the process as Jacob did.

T.O. Is the truth of that scripture that he was loved as a consequence of what he did rather than before it took place?

J.R. That is how it is worded in Malachi. Jehovah loved this feature with Jacob from the very beginning. Moses records in Genesis Jacob's desire and interest in the birthright. What you say is true, that God loved this feature in Jacob.

E.C.B. Abraham according to chapter 24 was immensely rich – sheep and cattle, silver and gold, bondmen and bondwomen, camels

and asses – and it came to Isaac intact. Now the question is, is it going on intact?

J.R. That depends on ourselves; what has been recovered is to be exemplified in those of us who are older. Isaac was sixty when the boys were born. The boys grew; what is going to come to light? What a challenge that is! I trust every young person here will take this to heart, to show interest. That is to be encouraged.

L.McF. Abraham was characteristically a heavenly man; his manner of life was in relation to heavenly things. Is that not the test of the moment?

J.R. Such were strangers and sojourners. They were strangers not only because they did not belong here but because they belonged elsewhere.

G.D.P. Jacob seemed to be under the influence of his mother. We should be under the influence of Jerusalem above, which is our mother, which is the assembly (see Gal 4: 26).

J.R. That is right. Mothers are to represent that as well as fathers.

T.E.D. Paul draws Timothy's attention to "the unfeigned faith which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and in thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded that in thee also" 2 Tim 1: 5. There is the need with us all for the revival and the strengthening of these links of faith.

J.R. There certainly is.

M.W. Is there something cumulative about the way that Esau came to despise this? He went to the field and that made him faint then he says, I am going to die, what use is the inheritance? Something that might start rather innocently in a simple way may lead to this.

J.R. What you say is very true, and I have noticed that what is a great attraction is companionships outside the fellowship.

G.H. The Lord when He probed Peter said "Art thou attached to me?" Peter said, "Thou knowest that I am attached to thee" John 21: 17. I know that I have been attracted to the Lord but I certainly would like to get hold of being attached to the Person.

J.R. Attachment to the Lord Jesus is basic, and then to value the light we have been brought into, the greatness of the inheritance, the light of the epistle to the Ephesians and all it contains, the truth of the mystery, the truth of the assembly; all these matters are to be valued by us. The blessing was the result of valuing the birthright. The birthright and the blessing go together. They were both blessed – Esau was blessed too – but there was something special about Jacob's blessing because he valued the birthright.

G.H. I would like to get hold of this matter of being attached to the Person. I certainly have been attracted to the Person, I certainly have a measure of affection for Him, but I would like to be truly attached to the Person.

J.R. If I am truly attached to the Person I will be interested in all that He is interested in. In the Song of Songs the enquiry is, "Tell me, thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest thy flock", chap 1: 7.

Attachment to the Person whom the soul loves causes the enquiry, Where dost Thou feed Thy flock, where dost Thou make them to rest at noon, where are Thine interests preserved and valued? If we are attached to the Lord Jesus in reality we will be interested in His interests, in what He is doing.

J.N.C. Would it help also that we look into the inheritance that has been so wonderfully given to us and acquire experience with God in understanding and appreciating those who have gone before in the testimony, specially those who might have been near to us and have helped us particularly in our souls?

J.R. That is the truth. The inheritance and the value of it has been exemplified in those who have gone before. some of us have parents who have exemplified this very feature. It is a very solemn thing to despise that birthright. What a man Esau became· he hated his brother. There is a remnant I suppose, from nearly every nation except Edom – a very solemn thing. There is from Egypt, Moab and Ammon but not Edom. It is a very solemn thing to despise the birthright.

K.A.O. You referred to the scripture in Hebrews, that Abraham dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob. Maybe we should be exercised as parents not to be settling down here and that our houses are not places for enjoyment only of what is down here.

J.R. Some of our young people, when they get married, are criticised for trying to begin where their parents left off, but they have learned that from their parents; that is the standard they have understood and therefore they want to make it their standard. I do not blame them too much. Maybe we are responsible for not remaining in a tent, in simple circumstances.

K.A.O. Jacob learned from Abraham his interests were in relation to heavenly things, not in relation to this earth. Stephen says that God did not give him even what he could put his foot on (see Acts 7: 5). There was nothing here for Abraham.

J.R. What a man he was! He went out not knowing where he was going; all he knew was the God who called him. That simplicity of faith came down and Jacob valued it. He was like ourselves, he was not the same as Abraham, he had ups and downs, but God valued that initial interest and his value of the inheritance and he came into it and represented it and passed it on to his twelve sons. He was a great father, he had twelve sons all in fellowship. What a wonderful father he was! Even Abraham had only one, Isaac had only one in fellowship, but Jacob had twelve all continuing the tribes in the testimony in spite of all his ups and downs. He learned God in them all. God can turn our failures into means of knowing Him.

H.J.G. The Lord spoke about every one forcing his way into the kingdom (see Luke 16: 16). I was wondering if that had any connection with this matter of the birthright. Is that not following up the line of new birth?

J.R. I am sure that is true. The secret is that Jacob was born anew, and therefore he had these desires and interests. From our point of view we are challenged when we are growing up, what kind of features are we showing?

K.A.K. Is there not a need for developing a taste for these things? I was thinking of Caleb and Joshua observing the land and having a totally different interest in it from what the others had.

J.R. That is right, they tasted it. Our tastes need to change. As we are interested in the things of the Lord and committed in attachment to the Lord Jesus and valuing the inheritance, our tastes change, our values change.

K.A.K. That same taste must have come down to Achsah because of what she asked, and then asked Othniel to ask also. It is interesting how that is communicated from one generation to another.

J.R. That is very fine. She urged her husband in what was right. She did not hinder her husband, which is a word for young wives and older ones too, to urge their husbands into what is for God's pleasure.

S.E.H. Is the solemnity of God's judgment of Esau seen in the prophet Obadiah? It says, "the house of Esau for stubble; and they shall kindle in time and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for Jehovah hath spoken it" (v.18). How solemn!

J.R. The consequences of despising the birthright, the inheritance, are very solemn. We ought to go on to the next scripture, Moses' interest in the bush; he saw the thorn bush burning and it was not being consumed. It says, "And the Angel of Jehovah appeared to him in a flame of fire", that is, the flame of fire indicated God's presence; the presence of God is represented by the Angel; "out of the midst of a thorn-bush". The thorn-bush would represent the conditions in which God is prepared to be with His people, not attractive naturally, not a great cedar, but a thorn bush, of no consequence in the eyes of men but God was there, the fire was there, but the thorn-bush was not being consumed. It is like the presence of God among His people, which may be seen in localities. Localities continue, maybe not very attractive to us when we are young, but God is there. The fire consumed what was consumable,

but there was a work of God there, there was what was pleasing to God. The thorn-bush burning but not being consumed is a very fine illustration of God being with His people. The flame of fire was Jehovah's presence, the thorn-bush represented the conditions where He was pleased to be. What grace to continue with His people! As in the wilderness, in all the murmuring, all the difficulties, God was there. He says in Malachi, "I Jehovah change not, and ye, sons of Jacob, are not consumed", chap 3: 6.

R.J. Is that demonstrated in the three men in Daniel in the fiery furnace? It was what was in them that was unconsumable which was carried through with the presence of God.

J.R. Quite so.

L.McF. "And Moses said, Let me now turn aside and see this great sight".

J.R. This great sight, a thorn-bush burning but was not being consumed. We need to see our localities in this light. "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb 12: 29); it is a process. Jehovah saw that he turned aside. The Lord takes notice of one who is interested in a local setting, unattractive to men naturally, but there is something very precious there.

L.McF. That is fine. So that the Lord's chief interest should be our chief interest?

J.R. That is very good.

G.D.P. Nehemiah went to Jerusalem when it was in ruins, but he was interested in that locality.

J.R. Exactly. The feature of Nehemiah is leadership; he told no one what God had put in his heart. He began with himself; afterwards he told others. Then there came a difficulty and he said, "I consulted with myself", Neh 5: 7. That is a very important feature. He did not ask someone else's opinion; "I consulted with myself". There was the wherewithal in himself to consult. We need more of that kind of thing. This thorn-bush is very interesting; God was there.

C.F.D. What you are directing us to is extremely interesting, God was there. The locality in Corinth was like a thorn-bush, very unattractive; they had all kinds of problems, really disregarding the principles that were set out. You might say, What was there for God? But God was there, "the assembly of God which is in Corinth", 1 Cor 1: 2.

J.R. God was well able to bring them all through, as He will with all His people.

C.F.D. Paul was interested in principle. I know he did not go, he sent Timothy, but in principle he turned aside to see what God was going to bring out of the place.

J.R. That is very fine. He went later; he spent three months in that area according to Acts 2 (v.3) after they were recovered. He would build them up. The fire was active in Corinth and these awkward, difficult, wrong elements were no doubt judged.

C.F.D. The fire was having its effect. So when he wrote to them the second epistle the effect of the ministry was there and they were judging themselves; God was having His way. That was the effect of the fire.

J.R. The fire would be, in principle, in the first epistle.

T,E.D. I was wondering if the thorn-bush is not suggestive in some way of God's history with us in our local settings. Is there not a lot to think back over in our localities as to the way God has brought us through. It would be very difficult for me to leave a local setting where the history of God's ways has been with me. I think some of our brethren who are moving from one place to another ought to weigh over carefully in the divine presence what they do.

J.R. I think that is true. Yet you are sympathetic with young men who have employment and value employment. It is quite difficult in Britain, for instance; some may have to move somewhere else if the firm moves them; they have to weigh all these things up. "I consulted with myself" would enter into it, the weighing up where the

Lord would have me. We are not saying that such must not move. You are not saying that either.

T.E.D. No; I am saying weigh it in the divine presence, because it will either be for good, or for sorrow if the Lord is not fully in it. But if the Lord is in it blessing will result and increase.

J.R. It is good to be interested in the Lord's dealings with us in localities.

E.C.B. The Lord uses this section to bring out that He is the God of the living. I wonder ed if that was the birthright today. He is not the God of the dead; you might say He was the God of Mr Darby and others, but He is the God of the living. Is God Himself our birthright?

J.R. Very good. Jehovah Himself was the Levites' inheritance.

K.A.O. I wanted to ask if Ruth and Naomi would be a parallel thought? Ruth appreciated Naomi when there was nothing outwardly attractive about her. Naomi said, "the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me", Ruth 1: 20.

J.R. I am sure that is the same kind of thing. Naomi was the result of God's discipline, which enters into our localities too, but she became attractive to Ruth. She was a widow with no prospects; she presents that to Orpah who turned back, but Ruth clave to her. What a committal she made! "Do not intreat me to leave thee, to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go", Ruth 1: 16. That could be a committal to the local position.

K.A.O. Thy God my God, thy people my people.

J.A.P. Naboth lost his life because he valued the inheritance of his fathers.

G.H. You mentioned Nehemiah consulting with himself. The prodigal in his misery consulted with himself.

J.R. He came to himself.

G.H. Maybe you have something more for us about consulting with myself.

J.R. There was something in Nehemiah he could consult, some knowledge of God. It says of David in Ziklag, when things looked so black, so difficult, "David strengthened himself in Jehovah his God", 1 Sam 30: 6. It would be that idea, getting back to our personal knowledge of God.

H.J.G. Does this show the beginning of Moses' learning time? The call came from God and he answers "Here am I".

J.R. Quite so. Moses learned something here. He had to care for, I suppose, about two million people for forty years; no doubt the impression of the flame of fire in the thorn bush sustained him. He would say, God is here. In spite of all the difficulties, all the sorrows, all the burdens he carried, he continued forty years with two million people. None of us have as many as that to care for. The Lord gives us a few to care for. He says, I am going to live with these people eternally, I have given them into your care for a short time.

J.G. When he is writing in Deuteronomy 33 he said, "the good will of him that dwelt in the bush" (v 16). He does not speak of the fire or of the thorns; it is the good will, which would be what we begin with God's pleasure in us – would it not?

J.R. Very good. He speaks in that section about the law as the inheritance of Jehovah; "Moses commanded us a law, The inheritance of the congregation of Jacob" (v 4). That is what Moses valued," that is what the people needed to value and which we need to value.

E.C.B. The reference to Deuteronomy 33 is interesting because that is the end of the history; what Moses says amounts to saying that whatever has happened on the way the good will of God has been in it all. "All things work together for good to those who love God", Rom 8: 28.

J.R. There is the 'lumber's account of the years in the wilderness and there is also the Deuteronomy account: "all the way which Jehovah thy God led thee... to humble thee, and to prove thee... and fed thee with the manna", Deut 3: 2,3.

J.McK. The tribes were settled in the land and the cities by lot; it is by measure. We take account of things according to God's measure. It says in Ezekiel that the name of the city from that day was "Jehovah is there", chap 48: 35. We want to get to the moral and spiritual value of these things; we seek perhaps in our minds to measure them and forget that God's measure has already been established for us to understand.

J.R. Quite so. In Psalm 132 we have David's exercise and interest; what he is concerned about is better conditions for God. What a concern it ought to be with every one of us locally – better conditions for God! You wonder at the language he uses; "vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob: I will not come into the tent of my house, I will not go up to the couch of my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for Jehovah, habitations for the Mighty One of Jacob". We do well to be concerned about better conditions in our localities. There is no locality where conditions cannot be improved. What results is that what David was concerned about coincided with Jehovah's own thoughts, because Jehovah said, in verse 14, "This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it". Conditions congenial to the Lord, better conditions, ought to be our concern.

J.McK. I pointed out to a person who said, We have the same ministry as you, we have the same Lord, that the ark of the covenant was put in one place, in Jerusalem. It was not cut in two so as to have one part in one city and the other part in the other city; the ark is one and it remains one; it is for you to find out where the ark is, be in touch with the Spirit of God and He will lead you to where it is.

J.R. I am sure it is a fact that, where there is genuine enquiry, genuine seeking, the Lord will answer such.

R.J. Colossians has two references to Epaphras and the last reference is that he prayed earnestly to the end that the saints might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God (see chap 4: 12). Is that the thought you have in mind?

J.R. Exactly. He was local in Colosse and he had the same prayers, the same concern for the Colossians, as Paul had. Paul combated the same kind of combat in prayer for his local brethren.

J.A.P. David is recalling a committal made when he was younger. Would that be right, do you think?

J.R. Yes; he said, "Behold, we heard of it at Ephratah"; somebody must have been speaking about it and he had an ear, an interest in what was being said when he was young. "We heard of it at Ephratah, we found it..."; he heard of it first and he was interested and valued the light that came to him and then he found it by experience.

E.F.C. Would you say that Solomon, in 2 Chronicles 6, quotes almost the very words of David here in his prayer and praise? I wondered if he gathered that from his father, showing how the testimony is carried on and these precious things handed down from one generation to another.

J.R. That is very practical; things should be handed down unimpaired from one generation to another. That very thing was committed to Timothy: "the things thou hast heard of me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, such as shall be competent to instruct others also", 2 Tim 2: 2. It comes to us as "others also" and is meant to promote faithful men so that things are passed on as others also become faithful men. Is that not the line on which the testimony is continued, not by creed but in persons?

M.W. Would it appear that the individual has company? "I will not come", "I will not give", "until I find"; then "Behold, we heard of it" and "Let us go", and the prayer that he prayed: "Let thy priests be clothed". God answered it in the same Psalm.

J.R. Exactly. David says, "Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness," and the answer is "I will clothe her priests with salvation". David prays, "let thy saints shout for joy", the answer is, "her saints shall shout aloud for joy". There is a full answer to this

desire for better conditions for God in our localities, better conditions for the service of God.

M.W. "I will abundantly bless her provision".

E.C.B. According to the end of 1 Chronicles David, having this desire, used his affliction and his affection and his strength to bring it about. Even if things were bad he used them – what I have prepared in my affliction (see 1 Chron 22: 14). He is still working towards this in which his interest had been acquired early.

J.R. When he somewhat departed from it, Urijah represented the same thing.

E.F.C. In the end of 1 Chronicles it speaks of the "times that passed over him", chap 29: 30.

M.W. Did you think that Urijah might have reminded David of his earlier committal? The language is very much alike.

J.R. Exactly. He said, the ark first. What a faithful man he was! David was prominent, Urijah was not, but he was there in the background with the same interests, the same desires.

C.F.D. In the ways of God he was clothed with peculiar dignity as he is mentioned in the genealogy of Christ.

L.B. David's desire was that there should be a united company going forward. He says here, "Let us go into his habitations, let us worship at his footstool". What a great desire that is, that each one of us should carry the other into these great things.

J.R. That is very good. He set the thing out himself and then he said, "Let us", being an example himself. It would be good if every one of us took up this exercise about the conditions in our localities for God, for the service of God, for the testimony.

Zechariah is very interesting and what impressed me is "the angel that talked with me". Over ten times in the first six chapters of Zechariah we have reference to "the angel that talked with me".

Zechariah was interested and he had the service of the angel that talked with him. He asked about ten questions and the angel that

talked with him is able to answer all the questions. There is something very sweet and very fine about heaven's interest, heaven's availability, to persons who are really interested. Now the question would be what for us would answer to the angel that talked with him. In fact, there are two angels in the verse we read: "And behold, the angel that talked with me went forth; and another angel went forth to meet him, and said unto him, Run, speak to this young man" (who, I suppose, was Zechariah himself) "saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein". If we really commit ourselves in interest valuing the things of God we will find abundant help. There is the help of the Holy Spirit. There was intimacy between Zechariah and that angel but we have One more intimate still who abides with us and in us available to help us. Were you thinking of the Spirit?

T.E.D. Yes, I was thinking of the Spirit. It is wonderful how near divine Persons are to us· the Lord is above but the Spirit is here.

J.R. Exactly. When the Lord was here every question the disciples asked would be answered by Him. Then the Lord says, I am going to leave you but you will be even better off without Me and with the Spirit because He will be with you and in you. The question is, Do we make full use of the availability of the Holy Spirit?

A.S.H. Do you think there was urgency when he said, "Run"? The king's business requires haste.

J.R. Very good. It shows heaven's availability to help us, to help persons who are interested. Then the Spirit would use persons to help us to answer our questions, our difficulties. The angel that talked with me would extend no doubt to persons who are available, enlightened persons who are available to help us. We need to keep inquiring. The temple involves that spirit of inquiry. We provide temple conditions as to how we come together in complete dependence and expectancy and inquiry. We provide temple conditions and the Spirit comes into that and answers exercises.

S.E.MacC. We spoke a little earlier about consulting with ourselves; I wonder if the Spirit would help us in this.

J.R. Surely, because consulting with myself, as Nehemiah said, would involve for us having the Spirit in and with us.

S.E.MacC. He would help us in our decisions.

E.F.C. Does that involve relating ourselves to the inward man? We sometimes forget that there is a work of God in us that is imperishable and is going through irrespective of our outward failures and mistakes.

J.R. That is very good, because the inward man appears in Romans 7 in contrast to the flesh. "For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man" (v 22) and the inward man is in correspondence with Christ Himself. The Lord said prophetically, "To do thy good pleasure, my God, is my delight" (Ps 40: 8), and the inward man has the same delight.

E.F.C. The inward man would be in perfect concert with the will of God, would never lead us astray.

J.A.P. Consulting with oneself in the sense that you use it is not independency. Paul said to Barnabas in Acts 15: 36, "Let us return now and visit", and Barnabas was minded to take Mark but Paul thought differently. I am bringing that in so that we are not advocating in dependency. There is not one of us who does not need advice sometimes and I am sure there are many who would give it to us too!

J.R. Quite so. "The angel that talked with me" involves being prepared to be adjusted and maybe directed; heaven's interest may be expressed through persons. What you say about Barnabas and Paul is interesting; it says, "and Barnabas taking Mark sailed away to Cyprus" – sailed away – "but Paul having chosen Silas went forth", Acts 15: 39,40. Barnabas and Mark sailed away. We do not want to sail away, we want to go forth.

G.D.P. Actually Esau represented the flesh and Jacob was the spiritual side.

G.H. It says about the prodigal, "And coming to himself", Luke 15: 17. He was consulting with himself.

J.R. Yes. No doubt the work of God was there and expressed itself in repentance; he came to himself.

J.A.P. We are not always governed by providences but the providence of God may come in and confirm something to us.

Should we look for that? I have things to decide in my life and I am glad of the prayers of the brethren, and we would look for something from heaven to show us or confirm us in what is in mind; and maybe we take counsel too.

J.R. Surely. As you say, we are not to be independent, but it is good to have something within you, some knowledge of God within that we can consult with.

H.H. If we do that, consult with ourself, we get the help of the Holy Spirit, and then if we confer with our brother and he is spiritual there will not be a difference.

J.R. That is so, there will be confirmation like the angel that talked with me.

R.J. Is it related to the unction – "know all things" 1 John 2: 20?

J.R. Yes, very good. We are thus independent of human learning and teaching.

J.N.C. Would that be borne out in verse 10 of the next chapter (Acts 16)? No doubt Paul was affected by the vision which he saw; it does not say that he consulted with himself but he brought the brethren into it. Luke says, "And when he had seen the vision, "immediately we" (that would be Luke and Paul and Silas) "sought to go forth".

There is the going forth again, the level was maintained.

J.R. That is fine. See how sensitive they are to the Holy Spirit. It does not say exactly that the Holy Spirit led them, He forbade: "having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia", and then "the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them", Acts 16: 6,7. There must have been a very sensitive character with this company.

J.N.C. Yes, we are always thankful for this because our being in the testimony depends on it; how one man and several others with him were sensitive to the Spirit.

J.R. That is right. As you say, the vision appeared and then we concluded, and it was a right conclusion they came to in this sensitive area of seeking guidance. It is difficult some times to get the Lord's mind; we have to be delivered from all personal preference and personal prejudice to get what the Lord's mind is in this sensitive area of moving.

G.H. "The Spirit of Jesus did not allow them": there is something very gentle and tender about that.

J.R. That is right. There is the Holy Spirit and then the Spirit of Jesus.

H.H. If it is difficult to get the mind of the Lord is it that self-will is at work?

J.R. Self-pleasing too there may be, in some way. I have been impressed with what the Lord said to His disciples in Luke 22: "When I sent you" – when I sent you, mark you – "without purse and scrip and sandals, did ye lack anything? And they said, Nothing" (v 35). It is a great matter to have some consciousness of being sent, and if one is sent, the wherewithal will be supplied. "When I sent you".

Our movements ought to have some sense of being sent. "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased", Dan 12: 4.

That is not a very good setting, but "when I sent you" ye lacked nothing.

L.B. Would that link with the Lord saying, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God", Matt. 6: 33? It does not stop there; what is encouraging is "and all these things shall be added unto you".

J.R. That is right. So "when I sent you" would involve this sensitive area of divine direction. If we are going to do anything to help, this is most important: "when I sent you... did ye lack anything? " They lacked nothing because He sent them. If we presume to go without this sensitive matter of being sent we might lack something; we may not get on so well.

J.A.P. A brother locally said to the brethren, I have an exercise to preach on the street, and in the providential ways of God he

obtained a permit from the government; but the permit came from above, and then the brethren went with that. That is the idea, that things are initiated in one person, as you are outlining, but you are looking for confirmation. The Spirit of God in type in Genesis 24: 21 remained silent to see whether Jehovah had prospered His journey.

If a divine Person in type, speaking reverently, says that, that is something for us to learn.

J.R. The first thing the servant did when he arrived at that place was "he made the camels kneel down" (v 11) – a very fine expression of complete dependence. We do not want of course to get into legality but it is a great matter to be sensitive as to what the Lord would have us do. If you get an invitation to a three-day occasion you accept that, but we do not want to be free-lances moving about. It is not a question of having the wherewithal financially; it is having the wherewithal from the Lord as being sent.

J.McK. Jehovah said, "Whom shall I send... ? ... Here am I; send me", Isa 6: 8.

J.R. That is a good attitude on the part of any one of us, to be available to be sent, and then if we are, possibly we will know we are sent.

E.C.B. Can we not judge whether a brother or brothers or sisters are sent?

J.R. How can we judge – results?

E.C.B. Partly by results, but we have the Spirit and there is one Spirit and God is not a God of disorder.

J.R. That is right.

S.E.H. Were the brethren able to tell in Acts 15? "But Paul having chosen Silas went forth, committed by the brethren to the grace of God" (v 40). It just impresses me that that is in a way a very simple test. These words "sailed away" versus "went forth" test our motives.

J.R. The brethren did not send them but they approved of their going forth, they laid their hands on them confirming the sensitive

exercises they went through.

W.McK. It is interesting that they speak of them not in any distinctive way as gift or any thing like that but "men who have given up their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ", Acts 15: 26.

J.R. That is character. This matter of the angel that talked with me shows heaven's interest and availability in persons who become interested and ask questions and get the answers to their exercises.

PLAINFIELD

29 May 1989

Key to initials

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OUR LIFE

Arthur Munster

Colossians 3: 14; 12-15

I think the exhortations here are what the apostle is seeking would be brought about through the operation of the Spirit. We need to value the service of the Spirit: the Lord's coming may be very soon.

We need to keep that before us and to be ready and these exhortations are very practical. It is a question of what we are seeking: "If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above". I wonder if that is what we are seeking as we go through our life day by day. What is our object in life? Well, "If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above, where the Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God" – that is, it is another scene. We are on the earth, but we are to seek the things which are above in another scene where Christ is.

Christ was in this scene and He moved through it in perfection to the pleasure of God. His life was given up; now He is raised and as a result of His finished work we can be brought into this sphere, so that our life can be with Him. He is now above and that is where our life is to be. We need to challenge ourselves as to how much this is true of us: "seek the things which are above, where the Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God: have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth". Of course, we have to think of things on the earth: we have certain duties to perform as a matter of righteousness, but it is a question of what our objective is. "Have your mind on the things that are above"; that is our objective. What a grand thing it is! Our affections are in that scene. What a wonderful scene it is – a scene, indeed, of eternal life which we are to know at the present time. I am sure each one of us has experienced it in some way, "for ye have died, and your life is hid with the Christ in God". We need to challenge ourselves, I need to challenge myself, what is my life? Is our life hid with the Christ in God? We need to be encouraged on that line. It is so easy to be turned aside. There is what is natural which can easily drag us

away, but "our life is hid with the Christ in God". We all have our life here but what a terrible scene this is, we do not want our life in it; our life is hid with the Christ in God. So, "When the Christ is manifested who is our life, then shall ye also be manifested with him in glory".

This would be the appearing. Christ is coming to reign and we are going to be manifested with Him in glory, the Christ who is our life now. What a precious thing that is! It is the promise that is made to those who are in Christ's life now.

In the next section that I read it is more the wilderness side. We are still in this scene "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering". We think of ourselves here, we think of one another many in trying circumstances. It says "Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long -suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another": perhaps that is a test. Is it? But, "forgiving one another, if any should have a complaint against any; even as the Christ has forgiven you: so also do ye". Well, that is a challenge.

Christ has forgiven us, He has laid a basis for forgiving us as we put our trust in Him and He forgives us. He has made the sacrifice we are all sinners but He has borne the load, our sins have been taken away. So we can be forgiven: what a wonderful thing that is! Think of what it cost Christ in order that we might be secured; "even as the Christ has forgiven you, so also do ye". It is a challenge to us whether we are ready to forgive one another; we see certain faults perhaps, are we ready to forgive?

"Even as the Christ has forgiven you, so also do ye. And to all these add love". What a basic thing love is! Think of the extent to which love has gone. Think of the depths of the love of God, giving Christ so that we might be secured. So "to all these things add love, which is the bond of perfectness". It speaks about love amongst ourselves (see John 13: 35); we need to be encouraged on this line.

"And let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts, to which also ye have been called in one body, and be thankful". What a wonderful thing that is! We have different personalities, but it is one

body, it is the bride of Christ. How encouraging it is to think of Rebecca being brought to Isaac! She was ready. When she was challenged she said "I will go", Gen 24: 58. What an encouragement that is to us to be attached to Christ.

I just thought we might be encouraged in this way, that we might be exercised as to what our life really is and our life as "hid with the Christ in God". Then there is this practical side too: "to all these add love". So we see how things are worked out in a practical way at the present time. May the Lord encourage us so that we might be helped on this line, for the glory of His Name.

LONDON

17 October 1989

ALL FOR THEE

Take my *heart* Lord

Make it Thine -

Controlled alone, by love divine!

Take my *hands* Lord

Let them be -

Consecrated, Lord, by Thee!

Take my *feet* Lord

Let them go -

Thy way Lord, while here below!

Take my *lips* Lord

Set Thy seal -

So shall they, Thy love reveal!

Take my *eyes* Lord

Let them see -

All beauty, Lord, alone in Thee!

Take my *ears* Lord

May they hear -

Thy voice of love, as ever near!

Speak Lord now

to me today -

Grant me, grace, just to obey.

Alec Wheeler

in hospital

February 1958

THE CHILDREN'S ABC

ACCEPTANCE by God is a happy privilege of the Christian believer. It is like finding a welcome when you enter the house of a friend. If some great personage were to ask you to come to his home you might at first wonder why he did so, and you might feel yourself unworthy. I heard of a certain preacher who, after years of trying, said 'I used to think that I must try to be good enough to be accepted, but I now see that it is Christ who is good enough to be accepted, and God accepts me in Him'. He had now, it appears, believed the scripture to the effect that God took him with many others "into favour in the Beloved". Instead of our behaviour, however worthy of praise, making us accepted, our behaviour flows from a sense of God the Father giving us a welcome in the name of His Son.

BLESSING is a word often used amongst believers, and indeed in the Scriptures themselves as well. We read there of God blessing us as believers, and our blessing God Himself who has accepted us. This points to an important feature of Christianity. It shows how God's pleasure is bound up with that of His creature man, as the scripture says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ". Our blessings are heavenly but they are enjoyed now on earth because of the Holy Spirit given.

CONFESSION should follow on the enjoyment of that which you have just been reading; it is the normal answer to receiving divine blessing. Those of us who are older will all say that we wish we had been more open and true to our Saviour since believing in Him.

After a certain battle a soldier, badly wounded on the field, was given life-saving help by an officer unknown to him. He asked 'What is your name, doctor?' Receiving the answer, 'Oh, no matter', the soldier said 'But, doctor, I want to tell my friends at home who has saved my life'.

Are you a confessor?

J.C.Evershed