

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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Contents

CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MIND OF GOD - III

"STAND FIRM, AND HOLD FAST"

RESPONSIVE CHILDREN

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Genesis 30: 1,2,22-24; 35: 16-18; Zechariah 14: 8-11

D.R. We are considering the work of God in the believer, producing correspondence with God's mind and bringing us into sympathy with His operations. The principal thought in one's mind today is the feelings inwardly that I believe we need to have as to the completion of the dispensation. I thought it was somewhat expressed in Rachel's exercises, the urgency of the feeling that enters into this cry of hers: "Give me children, or else I die". I think it would be typical of a believer who has in mind the continuation of the testimony. It is very affecting that, while Jacob seems to misunderstand her, the word says that God remembered Rachel and God listened to her and opened her womb. And when Joseph is born I think she represents the prophetic mind that we need in these closing days.

She says, "Jehovah will add to me another son", that is one more, which brings us to the twelve, the completion of things. The bringing in of Benjamin - we might say the final thought - involves travail and sorrow and pressure of exercises; and the saints are not without that pressure. I believe there are sorrows and pressures today in a way that has not been before - "the sufferings of the present time" - and that it is in view of finality in the dispensation.

Zechariah, as the brethren know, is a postcaptivity prophet. I suppose the prophets who prophesied during the captivity mainly had deliverance in mind, but those who prophesied after the captivity had in mind the building up typically of the saints and the completion of God's work in recovery. I thought it interesting that where we read in Zechariah the way is opened up through the gate of Benjamin.

You do not find that gate in Ezra and Nehemiah; I thought it is a peculiar feature of the final days of the recovery: it is a gate that was defined. On the one hand it involves travail and on the other hand it involves God's power, the son of the right hand. I believe God would dispel from our hearts any thought of failure as to the closure of the dispensation and would assure us that there is power in the principle of Benjamin. I suppose Benjamin is a type of Christ but viewed as

Christ formed in the saints. God would assure us and dispel doubt from our hearts as to His ability to complete the dispensation. I thought that Rachel would suggest to us a fine product of God's work in the way she is brought into correspondence to God's mind.

C.F.D. Rebecca's communion with God is very interesting. It says in the second section you read: "God listened to her" - a very fine thought, that when we go through these pressures and exercises and carry them in a priestly way, we can go to God with a sense that He will listen to us. The heavens are not brass and God is not far away, the Lord is near, and we can come away from the presence of God with a sense of being listened to.

D.R. Yes, it is a very precious word, that God remembered Rachel and listened to her and opened her womb. So God fully understood the exercise, because really the exercise represented His own mind. We need to be feelingly with God in matters, and not be diverted. I believe the enemy is making attempts to divert the saints from exercises as to the completion of the dispensation, but we need to be exercised in the depth of our beings to be in line with the mind of God in the closing up of the dispensation. You can see how feelingly the saints were with God at the beginning of the dispensation and one would love to be amongst those who are correspondingly feelingly with Him at the close.

C.F.D. Would you say a little more about our being feelingly with God in relation to what is proceeding from within and also having an understanding as to what is proceeding without. Is this important at this juncture?

D.R. I think it is suggested in the urgency of Rachel's cry: "Give me children, or else I die". The thought of a child is something formed. It is not merely that our minds are filled with certain ideas, or even ideals, but that there is something substantial in our exercises, whether as to exercises within or conditions without, in view of the completion of the dispensation. I believe God is looking for it from us.

W.McK. Would you say that, over against the misunderstanding of Jacob, God treasured this, saying through Jeremiah, "thus saith Jehovah: A voice hath been heard in Ramah, the wail of very bitter weeping, - Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children, because they are not", Jer 31: 15?

D.R. Just so. We feel that loss of children. I think God has allowed certain things to bring depth of feeling into us. Many here have lost children as far as the testimony is concerned and God means us to feel these things. There is no comfort in nature as to these things - the feeling is very deep - but then there is this correspondence with God's mind: "Give me children". I believe it is on that line that God is completing the testimony. I do not believe that in any of the dispensations there has been an automatic closing, but that the closure of every dispensation is really an answer to the moral state found in the people of God. Would you agree with that?

T.E.D. As we think back over the last 150 years and all that has transpired - the enemy's constant attacks, disruptions amongst brethren - are we to carry these things feelingly with God? There has been divergence with many. Should the ruin and the sorrow of that be in our hearts?

D.R. Just so, and God intends the sorrow to deepen us in our feelings, not to deter us. I think God would assure us, on the principle of Benjamin - Christ in the saints - that there is the ability and power to complete the dispensation. He would dispel any doubt we may have in our hearts as to that, because the enemy would surely put doubts in our hearts the day is so small.

T.E.D. God uses Joseph and all that sorrow to bring about the recovery of the family.

D.R. Just so. Joseph is the eleventh, but what a wonderful recovery is brought about through him; and Christ's glory of course will fill the universe. But the important thing to see is that another one is needed to complete the divine thought of the twelve.

A.P.D. Many of us feel that what has happened is the evidence of God's government. Do you think that, in the recognition and

acceptance of God's government, we would see that God's love in discipline has in view fruitfulness?

D.R. It is all-important to see God's hand in these things. We may think of the divisions that have taken place amongst Christians as the activity of Satan, but I think we need to see God's hand in these things. We remember what Joseph said: Ye meant it for evil, God meant it for good (see Gen 50: 20). So that God means to bring out of all the discipline a product that is in correspondence with His own mind. The sorrow that we all face is very deep; we may as well recognise that.

A.P.D. You could not accept it unless you see God's love in it. "Whom the Lord loves he chastens", Heb 12: 6. The Lord's love lies behind it.

D.R. There is no consolation on the principle of nature; we are totally cast upon God for our consolation, and for help as to our own continuance in the testimony until the end, and for the children that are needed to fill out the time. "Give me children, or else I die": I believe that ought to come into our exercises in our localities.

J.A.P. The Lord Jesus Himself came in at the end of a dispensation as a child; "this child", Simeon says, Luke 2: 34. So that He has filled up what was needed. Then we find 'our children' among the brethren. Paul speaks of "my child" to certain young men. Would it be good for the older brethren to take on responsibility as to young people?

D.R. That is very good, and feeling for them too. The thought of a child may be small, but think of the potential that is there, as you have suggested. The Lord is called a child - "the child Jesus", Luke 2: 27. What a beautiful thought! Think of the holy potentiality in the thought of the child: "Give me children or else I die". Another great thought in children is that it is derivative: the children of God would bear the character of God Himself. The derivative thought would mean that we bear the character of Christ and the Spirit of Christ.

We need to understand that it is that kind of spirit, the spirit of Christ, that will be involved in the completion of the dispensation.

J.E.S. I wonder how to regard Jacob here. He said, "Am I in God's stead...?" He did not seem to accept any responsibility; he said it is God's matter. How would we, in the light of this call, this cry of need in our localities meet that in responsibility?

D.R. That is a good inquiry. Later on Jacob is recovered to the thought: and we need to be recovered to the thought. It involves faith. As far as Jacob was concerned there was no hope of children from Rachel. We might look at our localities, we might look at the loss of children, and say, There is no hope. While in one sense that is true, what about the divine operation? Have we not to learn never to limit God? He will bring to light a nation in one day; can He not bring a child to light? Can He not sustain the locality? Can He not sustain the testimony? Has God lost any power? Is the Spirit not the same Spirit as at the beginning? Do you not think that is how Jacob would be helped, and we ourselves.

J.E.S. I am very helped by that. Have you in mind that Jacob shows he had learned in this in the way that he named Benjamin?

D.R. Quite so. He is the only child that Jacob named. Really he rises in moral triumph to the situation: he is like the believer, like a man who has grasped God's hand. But I think Rachel helped him. And we depend a lot on the sisters. I feel that there is much more value in the sisters than we credit - their prayers, their exercises. I know of places where the exercises of the sisters are really the backbone of the locality.

S.E.H. Would that be confirmed in these three sisters you are speaking of? Abraham was desirous of Ishmael living before him but Sarah brought in the prophetic word; and Isaac favoured Esau at a certain point whereas Rebecca was bringing on Jacob; and here, as you say, Rachel has the exercise and her husband is defective at this point in his exercise. Can you say something more about that?

D.R. What you say represents one's exercise. I believe help and adjustment comes through the subjective element, and one would encourage the brethren, as one has exercise to be so oneself, to be more subject. These women I think, represent the way God is

operating in the souls of the saints to bring correspondence to His mind. Let us just grasp that thought, that it is the subjective operation of the Holy Spirit in substantiality in our souls that brings us into correspondence with the divine mind. In a certain sense it is the sisterhood represented in these sisters that rescues the situation each time.

H.G.H. Jacob's father entreated God for his wife; "And Isaac entreated Jehovah for his wife, because she was barren" (Gen 25: 21) but Jacob did not take up his responsibility. We should set our minds to take up our responsibility before God.

D.R. Just so. We need to begin to take up our responsibilities as men and God will help us. We may not feel equal to it but as we take it on God helps us. The taking on of responsibility develops spiritual and moral maturity with us. Even in young men, and young women too, the way to grow is to take on responsibility. You may not feel able to do very much but God will help you in what you do as you take it on.

L.MacF. What is to be learned from the fact that these three women, and others like Hannah, were barren? If we have a state of barrenness in our localities, is it intended to create exercise to get to God about it?

D.R. Yes. That is a very important matter. The barrenness causes total reliance upon God and the solemn realisation that natural ability produces nothing; nature cannot contribute to Christian responsibility. That is a hard lesson to learn. When we look at the very smallness of our conditions publicly, we have a sense of loss and we weep for our children. I am sure many of us know what it is to weep in the secret hours of the night, weep for our children, not only for our children naturally but many dear brethren we love and have lost. And there is no comfort naturally. Well, where is our comfort, where is our resource? It is in God Himself.

R.N.H. Was this exercise also at the beginning of Acts where they were to choose the twelfth? The angel indicated that the Lord will come in like manner in which He went into heaven. Then they went

into the upper room and were in continual prayer. Should that mark us at the close?

D.R. I am sure that is right. I think we have come to a very solemn time in the history of the testimony. The Lord is about to come; is there going to be moral readiness with me and with all of us, and is there going to be the continuance of the testimony vitally and substantially, which the child would represent? "Give me children, or else I die". Is there going to be that correspondence with the saints that the Lord longs for. Of another day it says, shall the Son of man find faith on the earth? (see Luke 18: 8). What is He looking for? I believe He is looking for moral correspondence to the mind of God in the saints, intelligently, sympathetically, formatively. That is the idea in the child, I believe. It would be a terrible thing for the Lord to come and find me empty. But "Give me children, or else I die" points to moral substantiality.

T.S.O. We spoke in an earlier reading of the feelings that would underlie the rapture. Is that found typically in Benjamin, Joseph's feelings going out to him. Is that what the Lord Jesus will come for, the features that are found in Benjamin.

D.R. I think that is very beautiful. I trust, what I have said appeals to the brethren. I do not think there is an automatic ending to the dispensation. I know that the times and the seasons are in the Father's hands, but do you not feel that, corresponding with that, the Lord's coming coincides with a state reached in the saints?

T.S.O. As that is so, there will be a time of love when the Lord Jesus comes. Benjamin was not the same as the rest of his brethren in a certain sense, in the way that Joseph's affections would come out to him.

D.R. That is very fine. There was no guilt attached to Benjamin; the guilt attached to the others and they all had to be adjusted. In principle he is the overcomer, and my own feeling is that the overcomer is the product of what is maternal in the saints.

G.D.P. In correspondence with the state suitable to the closing of the dispensation, the psalmist refers to Benjamin as "little Benjamin",

Ps 68: 27. That is our safety, is it not? If we try to be big and important we will bring in disaster.

D.R. We need to pray each day like the psalmist, to keep me back from presumptuous sins (see Ps 19: 13). We are very prone to presumption; our hearts are full of presumptuous pride and there is no one more important than 'me'. That is true of all of us naturally.

What you say is most beautiful: "little Benjamin"; I think that is one of the features the Lord loves, that feature of littleness.

G.D.P. Joseph could give him five times the portion of the others. If we do not act in self importance the Lord would give us something special.

J.N.C. So when Joseph looks upon Benjamin he sees one who was not only of the same father but also of the same mother. That is really what causes the Lord's affections to be moved, when He sees Himself reflected in His saints.

D.R. That is very fine. The birth of Joseph really leads Jacob to retrace his steps back to Canaan and Benjamin is born in Canaan.

He is the only son that is born in Canaan, that is, he is born in the light of divine purpose. That is a very beautiful thought. We are coming into the final stages and we might say, What is the purpose of God for the day of small things? It is just as it always has been, so that Benjamin is born in the land, in the light of purpose.

G.D.R. Do we need to have faith to see the latter glory of the house as being greater than the former (see Hag 2: 9)? We need to have spiritual eyesight. I think the quality of what we are seeing and appreciating together is wonderful; it relates to this matter of what is latter.

D.R. It does. It must be moral because we are never recovered to the public order of things: it would be folly to think so. But what we are recovered to is the moral and spiritual glory, and it is very great in God's eyes.

E.F.C. Do we see the spirit of Benjamin carried forward in the apostle Paul? When he commenced his public service his name was

changed from Saul to Paul which means little.

D.R. "Who also is Paul" (Acts 13: 9), that is little. We have had a few hard lessons in the past years; we have got the gain of them or is the propensity still with us to grow great? Well, it is, and hence the need of Romans 7.

E.F.C. The greatness would be on the moral side.

K.A.O. I wanted to inquire about the expression "Give me children". I think it is a very attractive thought. One of the things that marks children is simplicity. I wonder whether we need to be helped to be kept in simplicity in relation to how we should proceed in the testimony.

D.R. That is a very fine suggestion because I think one of the main features of the anointing is simplicity. Whenever things begin to be complicated we had better drop them because it leads to confusion.

If someone seeks to develop a confusing line of thought in human greatness there is immediate danger in it. I would commend that thought to the brethren. Dignity is in the anointing but I think also simplicity.

K.A.O. I feel how we need to be kept from what is official amongst us. In the beginning in the Acts things were simple. As exercises come into our localities (the Lord places them there: some of them are happy - the prospect of additions for example) we should keep before us the prospect of life in the children and yet be simple in relation to that.

D.R. It is a simple but urgent cry, "Give me children, or else I die"! I think that is the cry that would go out from an exercised soul as to the continuation and the completion of the testimony.

A.P.D. "He maketh the barren woman to keep house, as a joyful mother of sons Hallelujah!", Ps 113: 9. I wondered whether the preservation of the testimony involves housekeeping, the maintenance of divine principles.

D.R. I thought we might come to that in Zechariah.

W.F. Would what is said in Galatians as to Christ come of woman (see chap 4: 4) fit in with the exercise we have before us. When the male side fails, God has, on the side of the female, the salvation.

D.R. That is very good. I think that even as to moral formation and spiritual substantiality in the souls of the saints it comes in this maternal way. It says "as the woman is of the man, so also is the man by the woman", 1 Cor 11: 12. As these maternal features are seen in the saints, the features of manhood, needed to complete the testimony, will be maintained until the end.

K.N.P. Is that seen in Judah when he takes on the responsibility of Benjamin before Joseph? After that, Joseph is able to make himself known to his brethren.

D.R. It seems to me that the whole principle of recovery devolves upon Benjamin. Joseph, perhaps one of the most distinctive types of Christ, really leads to Benjamin and then he becomes the focal point of recovery. We need to find the gate of Benjamin and proceed on the line of recovery and in the power of recovery. Because there is power in a recovered person, a freshness that perhaps never was there in that person's life before; that I think is reached through the gate of Benjamin.

E.C. Do we see how the longings of Paul for the continuation of the testimony were worked out in his writing to Timothy whom he addressed as "my true child in faith", 1 Tim 1: 2?

D.R. And Titus too, another he speaks of as "my child". What you raise is important because, while Paul's teaching was most important, he also called attention to his manner of life. So another great exercise we need to have before us is that our manner of life is in correspondence with the teaching we hold. There is no power in inconsistency. One would say in affection to the brethren that to say one thing and then to do another is not consistent, there is no power in it. There was not only the power of Paul's teaching but there was the manner of his life.

C.F.D. I was struck by the vital character of what you are saying. In 2 Timothy 3 he brings on to view so much that would characterise

the latter days, the days in which we are and what will be standing out - the lack of reality and the appearance of things without the truth of them. As that chapter goes on he brings in the antidote - thou knowest my manner of life, my whole conversation - as over against the breakdown.

D.R. A man moving in the energy of life. There is only one answer to the ruin of the church and that is life in the saints. There is no answer in argument; there are many things we could not argue about. We are just to bow our head in a humble way, but the answer to the ruin that has come in is life in the saints and that is 2 Timothy. It is the power of energy in a dark day and that is seen in Paul.

E.C. I am sorry I may have distracted you from what you were going to say about Zechariah.

D.R. I do not mind being distracted: the Spirit is in control in the temple. I think what you raised is most essential and we need to be concerned that our lives are in correspondence to the teaching we hold.

C.F.D. That stands over against imitation; and what is so common in our own time is what is Laodicean. We do not have to speak about what is Laodicean as if it is some great distance away from us because it is right in my heart.

D.R. It is very close to all of us.

C.F.D. We need reality, and that is what was set out in Paul's life.

D.R. I do not think I have ever been tested more than I am at the present moment as to the reality marking me: I feel the test every day as to whether I am real. I am not doubting my conversion but concerned as to the reality of my committal to what God has in His will and mind for the saints, especially at the close of the dispensation.

J.A.P. In the wilderness it was Aaron's rod which budded: there was a living ministry that could not be disputed.

D.R. Just so, it could not be gainsaid. It might be spoken against, it might be resented, but the power of it cannot be gainsaid, it is the

power of life. And as our brother said, the Lord will come and He will find life in the saints and that is pleasurable to Him.

J.A.P. That well known thought that Mr Darby left with us: In cleaving to Paul do not give up John, because that is the life line.

D.R. Yes; and Paul's ministry is maintained in the vitality of John's life. The glory of Paul's teaching, that precious treasury which is the peculiar light of the present time is maintained, I think, in our souls in the principle, we may say, of John's life.

C.F.D. Do we not need to be careful that we do not turn the edge of what has come down to us as Paul's light, what has been maintained in ministry as to it, or allow the impact of it to be lost to us. One effort the enemy is making at the moment is to bring in what is discrediting of some of that ministry, and that is not of God.

D.R. I believe too that one of the greatest snares that we can fall into is merely to agree to the truth and fall short in the practice of it.

What we find in the latter days of Mr Taylor's ministry was the insistence on the practice of the truth.

H.G.H. As I understand it, at the end of the dispensation there will be those in whom that is found. So my own prayer is, May I be among them.

D.R. That is it. I believe Benjamin represents that. It is really Christ characteristically formed in the saints that is to be seen, and it is that that the Lord will have so much delight in taking.

H.G.H. The danger is to see the thing and think I am a part of it.

But this is not so; I need to be maintained by God so that I may be in it.

D.R. And to find daily that God has the power to enable you to fill that out.

H.G.H. That is faith, is it not? I cannot do it, but God can do it.

D.R. That is right.

K.A.O. What is Benjamin's gate? Would you help us as to that.

D.R. I think it is the principle of recovery and the principle of overcoming, precious features that belong to the final days. You will find Benjamin's gate mentioned in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, but as far as I recall it is not among the gates in the recovery books of Ezra and Nehemiah. It seems to me that the gate of Benjamin is a peculiar touch for the final days, and that the overcomer finds the way through. As we find our way through the gate of Benjamin it opens up to these other gates, the place of the first gate. The only way to maintain the first principles which were referred to is through Benjamin's gate. It is the principle of overcoming. I think Benjamin's gate would bring in assurance and dispel doubt from our hearts. God has the ability to complete the dispensation and will complete it but He is completing it in relation to a formed substantial state in the souls of the saints. I think that is Benjamin's gate.

K.A.O. So do you feel that in our local settings what should be before us is the whole thought of the assembly and that it is not just a straggle-end of things? We need to keep this before us and life before us in that relation.

D.R. I am sure that is good.

J.N.C. Did Peter have something in mind that would correspond when he says, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, use diligence to make your calling and election sure", 2 Pet 1: 10?

D.R. Do you think there would be a similar thought in 2 Timothy 2: 10: "For this cause I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory"?

J.N.C. I was thinking of what we were saying a moment ago as to our being maintained in the testimony until the end. I suppose Peter's injunction has to do with our responsibility. We were speaking of the necessary exercises of Romans 7: that involves our own personal responsibility as to self-judgment, do you not think?

D.R. Each person is responsible to keep himself pure: that is my responsibility. You may help me in it and the brethren may help me but it is my responsibility as a lover of the Lord Jesus to keep myself

pure. Another thing we need to be exercised about is the danger of falling short of the purpose of God. That would bring in the thought of the elect.

H.G.H. You speak about your brethren helping you but it is the Lord who will help you.

D.R. Surely.

A.P.D. In our desire for additions we may give up first principles.

D.R. There is no safety in that.

A.P.D. We could probably fill our meeting rooms if we let certain things go. There may be a tendency to dilute first principles amongst us, would you say?

D.R. We want to be careful as to that. The dilution of principles is not being kind to persons. The other side is that I find exercised souls here and there coming amongst us who are greatly testing us as to our own consistency. An exercised soul has every right to make thorough inquiry as to how we are proceeding. Are we prepared for such scrutiny? Is the principle of transparency with us, just as they would be transparent enough to be the subject of scrutiny themselves? First principles really apply both ways; the principles of God's house, the principle of holiness, the principle of righteousness, these principles have to be maintained. Is that what you had in mind?

A.P.D. That is most helpful because many things have come in. The Lord has spoken to us that we let down the principles of God's house. As you say, it would be well if we examined ourselves in that connection.

D.R. And accept the prophetic edge of the word. There is also a danger of diluting the power of prophecy. It says, "do not lightly esteem prophecies" (1 Thess 5: 20); and in Hosea: by a prophet He brought them out and by a prophet He kept them (see chap 12: 13).

That is, it is the power of God's word which is "living and operative, and sharper than any two-edged sword", Heb 4: 12. Let us face it, beloved brethren, let us be men and women facing the power of

God's word and get gain from it. I think first principles would refer to that. Another danger I see (not that I have observed it amongst those with whom we walk) is that we could imbibe the customs of modern religions.

C.F.D. What do you mean by that?

D.R. The way evangelical campaigns are carried on and such like.

We want to be free of these things; they are men's innovations and do not belong to divine principles. We want to be marked by first principles. While we are never recovered to the outward order of the assembly, what was established in the apostle's doctrine remains and its power is to be observed morally and practically amongst us.

I trust that I am not being too strong in what I am saying but one feels these things.

J.A.O. In the scripture you referred to in 1 Thessalonians 5 it says, "do not lightly esteem prophecies; but prove all things, hold fast the right; hold aloof from every form of wickedness". Then it says, "Now the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly: and your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (vv 20-22). That 'blameless' would be a connection with Benjamin, would it not?

D.R. That is fine. There is no guilt attached to Benjamin, he was blameless. When we come through to the line of overcoming it is a blameless condition, not an innocent condition but a blameless one that is suitable for the Lord to rapture. I think that is confirming. And what a beautiful touch: "the God of peace himself" (having to do with God Himself) "sanctify you wholly"; it is not a partial matter but wholly. That confirms what we are at, that we want to go in for the thing wholly. What Laodicea represents is a kind of half-hearted religion; you have part of the world and you take as much of Christianity as you want. That will not do; we must have it all. We need to see that there is a tremendous snare in falling short of the purpose of God for us. Do you not feel that?

J.A.O. Yes. In Laodicea the Lord is gracious; even to one that is pretentious He would make it good. He said, "I counsel thee to buy

of me" (Rev 3: 18), so that those things are seen in that overcomer, the person who would buy.

D.R. Read that word to Laodicea because this is to become the word of God, living in our souls.

J.A.O. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. Thus because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and am grown rich, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art the wretched and the miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; I counsel thee to buy of me gold purified by fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white garments, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not be made manifest; and eye-salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see".

D.R. Now have you something to say about that?

J.E.S. You refer to what we were speaking of in the house? Well, I thought that 'gold' was the truth in all its purity, 'purified by fire' it is proved and established; 'eye-salve' is clarity of judgment which is a needed thing; and 'white garments' is that in every relationship I am righteous and pure.

D.R. These are precious things. We have the power of the word of God and we can hardly add to that. What can any one of us say in the face of what has been read? You feel the challenge of it. "The word of God is living and operative, and sharper than any two edged sword". Now how do we correspond, beloved brethren, - how do I correspond – to the word of God? "Buy of me": that is the word for us. It must involve a transaction with Christ.

H.G.H. So we have the exhortation of Paul in Thessalonians that we have read; is that our prayer?

D.R. Well, that is it. I believe in what we are having there is a prophetic word for us; there is a comfort that God is speaking to us in such a living way today. It is a proof, I think, of His interest in us and too that He would assure us that there is power to see us through.

C.F.D. I am struck by what you are saying. Reference has been made to "by a prophet was he preserved", and we can see from what you are saying that if we accept the prophetic line that the Lord has seen fit to bring into these meetings it will have a preserving effect upon us. What strikes me is that if you turn the edge of what is prophetic you remove the first line of defence amongst the saints and expose the body of the brethren. We need the prophetic line, do we not?

D.R. Just so. The younger brethren might think when we speak of prophecy that we are thinking of what is future, but we are thinking of prophecy now as the current mind of God. And the assembly - I am not speaking of the assembly officially because we cannot claim that ground - but the assembly vitally, assembly persons really, find their life in the word that comes out through God's mouth. That is what the Lord Jesus says; "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which goes out through God's mouth", Matt 4: 4. That is the prophetic word. May we be more available to God for it, each one of us. I believe the sisterhood has a great function in holy exercise before God to encourage this line of things. So that we need to keep at the prophetic meetings week by week. Even in small conditions we come together and the sisters listen to much the same ones all the time, but I do not think I can remember one time when we did not get something quite distinct - not profound humanly but some distinct touch from God. The brethren are to be comforted, consoled and edified. May the Lord help us to keep these things up.

K.A.O. Is what the man in 1 Corinthians 14 saw the spirit of judgment as a result of the prophetic word? Would that be what is normal in our local assemblies? And then he becomes a worshipper, does he not?

D.R. That is good; and the great proof of the power of the prophetic word is that God is indeed amongst you.

M.N. In Moses' blessing of Benjamin he said: "The beloved of Jehovah - he shall dwell in safety by him; He will cover him all the day long", Deut. 33: 12. Would that be the preserving power to

which we have been referring? Then Moses adds "and dwell between his shoulders" - what affection and stability!

D.R. That is very good - the strength of God known. Jah will be our strength. "By my God have I leaped over a wall", Ps 18: 29.

Another feature of Benjamin is that he brings the booty in the evening (see Gen 49: 27); that would correspond to our thought that Benjamin has a peculiar application in the final days of the recovery. Beautiful features are suggested in the first gate and the corner-gate. I suppose the corner requires a particular feature of strength. We want to make sure that these bonds amongst us are in the truth; our bonds are not national or natural or social but in the truth. That is the angle, the corner, that stands the strain. That was seen in Acts 4. Think of the conditions that would have overwhelmed the situation, but the corner was there, the corner of the building stood the stress and strain. One would love to see the feature of the corner amongst us so that the power of evil that is rampant and flooding the world, particularly the western world, will not overcome the testimony.

C.F.D. It is like a reinforced area. That is what we need in principle and I think an occasion such as this would bring it about; we need reinforcement. It is what will maintain things.

D.R. Just so.

H.G.H. You say that you would like to see it but I am sure you do see it.

D. R. I am not doubting it, but I would like to see it maintained.

H.G.H. The fact that we do see it would be that it is there.

D.R. Absolutely. It is the strength of God's own work in the saints; it is the corner-gate.

S.E.H. Is the overcomer seen in the corner-gate? Is that principle seen in each of the seven assemblies in Revelation?

D.R. A touch of stability! It is fine to see that stability, that reliability, in the saints; it assures us that God has in the saints what will complete the dispensation.

A.P.D. Do you think that where we are tested is the corner, as to whether we can see God's mind? You spoke of understanding God's mind. We are slow sometimes to see that.

D.R. Well, it is a gate; we have to find the entrance.

A.P.D. What let the gentiles in in Acts 10 was the corner-gate, do you think?

D.R. God's word enlightens (see Ps 119: 105). It is the gate, the way God's word would get in and bring not only intelligence but understanding which is a very deep thing; it is more than intelligence. It is a mysterious thought but it is something that is understood in the inwards.

A.P.D. Would Peter's ecstasy lead to his understanding? How patient God is with us and yet we are to be in the full understanding of His mind.

D.R. Just so; and God loves that.

J.A.P. The corner-stone is enlarged on by Peter, the house giving character to the gate. The Lord Jesus is the centre of our links.

D.R. That is very fine. I love that touch of Paul in Corinthians: "Other foundation can no man lay besides that which is laid which is Jesus Christ", 1 Cor 3: 11. When we come to Ephesians it is "Jesus Christ himself ... the corner-stone", chap 2: 20. The whole building is permeated with the features of that reliable Man (one uses the word reverently) but Jesus Christ is a Man who has been proved here in this scene of adversity in His committal to the will of God. It is the reliability of that kind of man. The whole building is permeated: foundation - Jesus Christ; the corner-stone - Jesus Christ; the whole position sound.

J.A.P. The corner-stone of the week is really the Lord's supper and we want to rally to that and all that enters into it.

E.F.C. It says in Acts 4, when Peter and those with him were challenged by the high priest, that they returned to their own company, and the place where they were assembled shook. I was thinking of the stability of such a position.

D.R. Very good. It may be that God would give us that friendly shake today, a sense of divine power in our souls, the assurance the dispelling of any doubts we may have as to God's ability to complete the dispensation, and our longing to be with God in it.

E.F.C. Will that help in hastening the coming of the day of God (see 2 Pet 3: 12)?

D.R. That is very good.

H.G.H. So what is the tower?

D.R. I wondered if the tower of Hananeel was like the preaching of the gospel. It is a tower, grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life (see Rom. 5: 21). The enemy has tried to knock that tower down through out the dispensation; he has tried to stop the voice of evangelism over and over again, but it is grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life. I believe that is the tower of Hananeel. What do you think?

H.G.H. I link it with a place of salvation.

D.R. You mean "the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Prov 18: 10): just so. I think that would be in the spirit of the evangelist.

H.G.H. Yes, but I was also thinking of the assembly as being a place of salvation.

D.R. Just so, that is an important thought.

T.E.D. The great trumpet is about to be blown: would that be from that tower? In Isaiah 27: 13 it says, "the great trumpet shall be blown; and they shall come that were perishing in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and they shall worship Jehovah in the holy mountain at Jerusalem". That will bring in final conditions, will it not?

D.R. Yes. So we need to be marked by the spirit of the evangelist in these final days. "Let him that is athirst come" (Rev 22: 17): that is what you are saying. It involves moral power; it is not a weak sound but the trumpet sounding. We need more fervency in the glad tidings; I need it anyway. Nothing tests us more as to our reality

than the preaching of the glad tidings. Learn to grapple with a soul, too, in an individual way.

K.A.O. Would you say something about "And men shall dwell in it".

D.R. Is that not a delightful thought? "Men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; and Jerusalem shall dwell safely". I think that in the post-captivity prophets - these three latter prophets - it is not so much the line of deliverance but the line of recovery and bringing the saints into suited conditions for God to dwell. The house was to be built, not only for the saints but for God, and for men to dwell in it. Now what about the king's winepresses?

J.A.O. Would that be a matter of joy? As to the tower of Hananeel, you were speaking about the glad tidings and fervency; it is "unto the king's winepresses".

D.R. I thought that led to gladness, the wine that gladdens the heart of God and man. But it is "the king's winepresses"; it is pressure applied by the Lord. That is a very delicate touch. No doubt there are other things involved in it but we can see, in the light of our own circumstances and in the sorrows that the saints are passing through - great pressures in some parts (and I do not think many of us are apart from these pressures) - that is the King's winepress and what the King has in mind is the pleasure and satisfaction of God's heart.

J.N.C. Would there be a touch in it of the sweetness that comes out of the death of Christ for God? I was thinking of the cupbearer who said "And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup", Gen 40: 11.

D.R. Involving the fingers, the touch of Christ related to His death, and securing from the saints, we may say, in that gentle but firm pressure something for the glory of God.

S.E.MacC. Earlier we spoke of Rachel; he says "Wrestlings of God have I wrestled with my sister", Gen 30: 8. I was thinking of all the exercise and pressure and what it resulted in.

D.R. Let us not turn our backs on it. Let us not be discouraged by the pressure; it is the King's winepress and He has an end in view.

We speak to one another very feelingly because some of the beloved brothers and sisters present in this room are going through very grievous and deep exercises as to their children. But let us remember that it is the King's winepress and as we are in His hand the pressure is related to the pleasure of God.

R.N.H. Did Peter know about the King's winepress? In 1 Peter 1: 6 and 7 he says, "Wherein ye exult, for a little while at present, if needed, put to grief by various trials, that the proving of your faith, much more precious than of gold which perishes, though it be proved by fire, be found to praise and glory and honour in the revelation of Jesus Christ". He goes on to speak about exulting with joy unspeakable and filled with the glory".

D.R. That is very fine. And Paul too: "I am already being poured out, and the time of my release is come", 2 Tim 4: 6. I think in principle that is the drink-offering. The literal translation of that is strong drink, a matter to be understood spiritually. It is the kind of thing that meets God's heart. I think you see that in Paul: "I am already being poured out". There was a man who had come under the King's winepress, a touch of Christ in pressure, and his whole being was being poured out in a holy drink-offering to God. What an out going! Will the end of the dispensation be like that? I think it will; I think God will have extremely delightful pleasure in the saints.

W.McK. Is there not some comfort in that even in Laodicea there is an allusion to the King's winepresses: "I rebuke and discipline as many as I love", Rev 3: 19? We generally write off the whole of Laodicea, but the Lord says, "as many as I love" and He is active in relation to them.

D.R. Yes, and is there not an overcomer in Laodicea? That is a fine touch to finish with.

PLAINFIELD

28 May 1990

Additional initials

T.Oberg, Villa Grove; K.N.Pye, New York

This is in fact the fourth reading at these meetings. As already indicated the tape of the first was faulty: the third reading - on the Lord's Day - was on a different subject.

"STAND FIRM, AND HOLD FAST"

B.M.Deck (*with Christ 19 June 1991*)

2 Thessalonians 2: 15 -17; 1 Kings 21: 1-9; Revelation 11: 3-12

I want, dear brethren, to say a very simple - and, I trust, brief - word that may leave upon all our hearts a sense of encouragement so that we may go forward from these meetings with a sense of being encouraged of the Lord. I have specially in mind the two exhortations at the end of this chapter: "stand firm, and hold fast".

This chapter has been engaging some of us over recent weeks, particularly in view of the current conditions among men and among nations. We need to be intelligent as to them and yet not over occupied with them. The Lord will deal with everything that comes in. There is no need to be too occupied with the prophetic side, yet we need to understand certain things. Daniel understood by the books. Our occupation is with Christ, and His chief interest here is in His beloved assembly. These two remarkable letters to the Thessalonians bring out the depth of His feelings. They are not addressed formally; they are addressed as "in God the Father", suggesting, I would think, that there is an inward formation there in the knowledge of God as Father. Where we read it is "our Lord Jesus Christ" and "our God and Father", as if there had been an inward appropriation that brought about a formation in love, an answer in that beloved assembly to what was about to be. It is not exactly a letter of commandment. We get that to the Corinthians because it was needed. Paul says "the things that I write to you, that it is the Lord's commandment", 1 Cor 14: 37. I would not weaken that. We need the commandments of the Lord. They are protective and necessary for us. But in this letter and particularly in this

chapter, it is exhortation. In fact, he begins it by begging them: "Now we beg you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to him. You can sense the intense feelings of the writer as he sees what is about to come about and is begging the brethren to do certain things. He had often told them; he had gone over the around many times; but the tendency is to be shaken by certain events. What I wish to convey now is that we should not be shaken. We need to keep steady. None of us would presume to know just what lies ahead, but we know the One who does know. Heaven is in control and everything has been given into the hands of Christ, the Father loving the Son. What we need to pray for is more faith and to cling to Him. The great need for all of us is to cleave to the Lord. Barnabas at Antioch exhorted them "to abide with the Lord", Acts 11: 23. It is the secret of everything.

Now what I want to come to is these two very simple exhortations: the first is "stand firm", and the second is "hold fast". The first would involve our feet; we need to know where we stand. The second, holding fast, would involve more than our feet. It would involve at least our hands. I suppose it would involve the whole body. Oh, what a heritage we have come into! As the Lord may help, I want to illustrate this from Naboth and the two witnesses who certainly - at least, Naboth - stood firm. He did not give way. He did not sell his inheritance or barter it. He stood by the inheritance of his fathers. He stood firm. Beloved brethren, we need to be sure that our feet are on safe ground, on the rock. You have to dig deep, as the Lord says in that passage in Luke (see chap 6: 48); get your feet on the rock and when the storm comes it does not shift you. If we are on the sand we are swept away. Oh how many casualties there have been! Go back over the whole history - "strewed in the desert" (1 Cor 10: 5), whereas what followed them was the rock: it says "now the rock was the Christ" (v 4). Beloved brethren, He is no different; He "is the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come", Heb 13: 8. I believe the Spirit of God would bring us back constantly to the basic, precious link we have with Jesus. The foundation is there. It cannot be moved: "Yet the

firm foundation of God stands", 2 Tim 2: 19. Make sure you have your feet on it! I am not predicting a storm. We do not know; the Lord knows. As was said in the reading, we need to be watchful.

We see those dark, dreadful clouds of apostasy rising, sweeping across Christendom. How watchful we need to be to keep ourselves in the sunshine of the love of Jesus, the love of God. It is there and there alone we see things clearly. Deborah speaks of "the rising of the sun in its might", Judg 5: 31. The enemies are scattered. You watch the rising of the sun in its might. Those that love Him see the sun rising in its might. I believe it is the first allusion in the Scriptures to those that love God. (You can look it up.) That is how it is - like the rising of the sun in its might. How watchful we need to be! How the Lord as coming into every situation will see us through!

I just want to allude to this: "Yet the firm foundation of God stands". And what is the foundation? "Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of his throne", Ps 97: 2. The first basic feature is righteousness. We pursue it, and faith, and love, and peace "with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart", 2 Tim 2: 22. Oh let the word search us, beloved! Let it search us! See if there be anything within me that is inconsistent with purity of love for Him!

Call on Him out of a pure heart! It is very searching. It is meant to be, so that we know consciously that we have a firm foundation. It stands. Who can describe it? I doubt if we could. We can just say what scripture says: "Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of his throne". Beloved, it comes back to the fact that God is who He is. God is His own Object in everything. God "works all things according to the counsel of his own will" Eph 1: 11. Who of His creatures can say to God? Job says that. Who can answer to God? It is the more wonderful that He has revealed Himself in the person of Jesus, come so near, and we should be growing in the knowledge of God.

So stand firm; stand in the truth. Be lovers of the truth! The "love of the truth" is what we have been at. Let us be formed in the affections proper to the revelation of God in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Whatever storms may come we do not know; He

knows. Let us be watchful and see that we have our feet firmly established in the knowledge of Himself.

Then it says "hold fast". That was the word to Philadelphia. It was said also to Thyatira (see Rev 2: 25), but to Philadelphia there is something added: "Hold fast what thou hast that no one take thy crown", Rev 3: 11: Beloved, we are so near the end. The new day is about to break. It is not the crown yet. Do not look for a crown now. There are no medals in this war. The crown is His and His alone.

Those twenty-four elders cast their crowns at His feet. That is where they belong. Let the glory ever be His! But when He comes, we shall come with Him and we shall share His glory then. Now it is to "hold fast the instructions" it says, "which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our letter". What a heritage has come down to us! I sometimes wonder if we value it as we could value it, what has come down through "faithful men, such as shall be competent to instruct others also", 2 Tim 2: 2. Let us value what has come down to us, beloved, in these days of recovery and hold fast to it, not weaken it maintain the precious truths in practice, and that can only be in the power of the Holy Spirit.

So we remember the instructions, the commandments of the Lord - that would be the Scriptures. They are infallible. Their authority is beyond dispute. Thank God for the ministry of the word. That is not inspired. Its authority lies as it is supported by the Scriptures, and you value it, thank God for it. But we want more than the books. Dear brethren, we have said it before, more than ministry is needed. It is God who is able to make it effective and form us in it, and when the storm comes we are not "tossed and carried about by every wind" that comes; we stay steady. How needed it is! As long as we are here I suppose inevitably things will come up and have to be faced in the light of the principles of God's house. Let us be formed in them and in the feelings they would produce in us. We do not go by the letter; we maintain the letter in the spirit of it. That is what Paul says, the spirit of the new covenant. If we go by the letter it tends to law; if we go by the spirit of the new covenant it tends to liberty and happiness and encouragement among the brethren.

Well Naboth did not give way. He did not barter his inheritance. He would not give it; he would not sell it; he was prepared to die for it, which he did. The opposition came from a religious source, Ahab and Jezebel. Now we know - we need not go into the detail of that - it is still current. Do you understand what I mean? The opposition from that source is still current in its ruthlessness, its injustice. There was no charge against Naboth, yet he was destroyed. He suffered because he valued the inheritance of his fathers. The three things I fear, dear brethren, are that source, the infiltration of the world which is idolatry, and the third is the intrusion of my natural mind. As Paul says, "But we have the mind of Christ", 1 Cor 2: 16 . That is not claiming anything. It means the state is such that we think as Christ thinks. If something comes up in the local meeting or in ministry, how do you approach it? As He does. How restful we need to be, not pushed about our feet on the rock, holding fast to the truth, valuing the inheritance, prepared to suffer for it. "Be thou faithful unto death", it says, "and I will give to thee the crown of life", Rev 2: 10. How needed this is, dear brethren. Naboth suffers unjustly from that religious element, and he accepts death rather than compromise his valuation of the inheritance of his fathers.

Now I want to come to the two witnesses. I know it does not refer directly to this time. It is yet future in its literality. But the principle of the witness is with us. You know, as I do the word witness means martyr. This dispensation began with one: it began with Stephen. He was a witness; he was faithful unto death. He did not compromise the inheritance of his fathers. What a wonderful thing: the first time a man on earth saw a Man in heaven! He says, "Lo I behold the heavens opened and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God", Acts 7: 56. Think of what that meant to that beloved man! How did he get it? Why was he privileged to be a martyr? Do you know why? He accepted deacon service. Dear young man, dear young sister, start doing something for the brethren. Start serving others! You will be amazed at the reward. The Lord is no-one's debtor and what is done for Him will have a

reward if not here, then there. Stephen will stand out: "thy witness Stephen", Paul says, Acts 22: 20. What ground he took. He says, 'I held their clothes; I gave my consent'. What humility would mark that beloved servant, and, beloved, we share that humility. More and more we come back to the fact that the present moment calls for a deepening spirit of humbleness. It is easy to say it, not so easy to be in the reality of how the Lord feels about the breakdown to which we, I, have contributed. And what is next to His heart? Let us be prepared to give our lives for Him. Jonathan loved David "as his own soul", 1 Sam 18: 3. That was not enough. You must love Jesus more than yourself and be prepared to give your life if necessary. I do not know how the dispensation will finish; maybe with martyrdom. I doubt if the devil would risk that. Never was Christianity brighter than in the days of the martyrs. There may be some suffering in China and other areas of the world where Christianity is persecuted. The Lord knows every one of them and is able for it. We need to be expanding in our affections and outgoing in our feelings that what God is doing is one whole matter and that is the assembly. The distinctive family of this dispensation is the assembly and she is almost complete. Most have gone; just a few of us are left; maybe far more than we realise – just think of them! I think the Lord has widened our vision during these days to see the extensiveness and the glory of His sovereign operations. Naboth gave his life rather than surrender or barter or compromise the inheritance of his fathers.

So these two witnesses are the same, clothed in sackcloth. That is the becoming clothing of a witness. I doubt if you would find it in the stores in Westfield. I do not know. I think they might wonder what you are asking for. We have to find it from the divine abode. It is through thorough self-judgment we become an effective witness here in the world where our Lord was crucified. Dear young brother, dear young sister, all of us, when you walk down those streets out there, do not forget it is "where also their Lord was crucified". Separation from the world works from within, not from outward

commandments, valuable as they are. It stems from inward devotedness to the One who was crucified and slain.

These witnesses remained firm. They were not buried. That means that the witness to their death remained. What a wonderful thing - one body! I suppose there is a certain witness typically, not literally, to the fact that there is still a testimony here to the one body: "so also is the Christ", 1 Cor 12: 12. Christ is here in testimony. Oh let us value what has come down to us in the light of the assembly as the mystery of the body of Christ and be true to it and be prepared to lay down our lives. "And after the three days and a half the spirit of life from God came into them": what a witness, what evidence of life is coming in. That is John's line of things. It came into the very end of the journey in Genesis 24: "she sprang off the camel" (v 64). That is life coming into evidence. She is now ready, completely ready for the heavenly Man.

How near we are to it! Let us be a witness to it until He comes! So the word is "Come up here; and they went up to the heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them"; not that they will do that at the rapture. They will behold the appearing, it would seem; the rapture will be secret. How near it is, beloved. The next thing to happen is the raising of the sleeping saints; these bodies will be changed, together caught up. That is the word to the witnesses.

They represent that: "Come up here; and they went up to the heaven in the cloud and their enemies beheld them".

I just want to leave this sense of encouragement - two things: stand firm - remember that - and hold fast. For His Name's sake.

PLAINFIELD

27 May 1991

Minor editing by E.C.B.

This is the last address by our brother.

RESPONSIVE CHILDREN

At a time when children in the temple were praising the Lord Jesus, some evil persons complained. Jesus replied that if the children were silent then the stones themselves would cry out! This is not necessary now because there are "living stones", as Peter touchingly describes those who believe in Jesus and to whom He is precious. Some of these 'stones' may be quite small, but being living they can grow up as it says, "to salvation" in God's great praise system.

I have read that Psalm 117 is the middle chapter in the Bible and it must be the shortest. It should be easy for the young growing-up children to learn it by heart, even with the hard word "Hallelujah" meaning 'praise ye the Lord'. Another Psalm says that from the rising of the sun until it sets God's name shall be praised. Yet another tells us that His praise is to the ends of the earth. There is therefore no time and no place where there is not some response to Him. Are you filling out your place in this glorious system?

J.C.Evershed