

A
WORD
IN ITS
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Contents

THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST

FOOD

CHILDREN BLESSED

THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST

Philippians 1: 12-22; Judges 8: 1-3; Philippians 2: 1-11

J.A.P. We might think in these passages of the Spirit - "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ", and, in chapter 2, the "fellowship of the Spirit". The setting in chapter 1 is for the Christians in Philippi in view of the testimony, known in conditions of limitation. Paul refers to "my bonds" implying that we would have to recognise, in one sense, that the testimony is in limitations in the governmental ordering of God in His ways, and this introduces great and severe stress. The apostle sets out in himself the spirit in which we can go through in regard to the gospel and the present testimony. The gospel itself is not limited, but there are the conditions which are humbling to us in every locality; and where accepted from God, power is available to come in through the supplication of the saints.

Indeed the time in which we live may, as the apostle says, "turn out for me to salvation". That is what is to be arrived at, that the circumstances in which believers find themselves, as taken up with God, will turn out for salvation, for them and for the testimony. So we are not chafing and allowing our spirits to be vexed. King Ahab was sullen and vexed in his spirit (see Kings 21: 4) and that marks Christendom; they want the vineyard but it lies in the fruitfulness of the assembly. Persons in the assembly are not vexed but are finding an answer from God as to matters through which they are passing. There is reduction, and there are humbling matters in the recent testimony of brethren which will remain with us outwardly for the rest of our days. The answer is the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, which is a current matter. John's ministry involves the Spirit in the current sense (although we did not read from John this morning the brethren will helpfully keep John in mind in our inquiry). The Spirit of Jesus Christ is what was seen in the Lord in the gospels, how He met things, how He went through. It is not exactly Jesus Christ's spirit here; it is the spirit of Jesus Christ, that is the Man who was here in testimony as the gospels show and it is to be reflected in

us. The "fellowship of the Spirit" is how that worked out when Paul first came to Philippi.

The scripture in Judges was read to show how the Spirit of Jesus Christ worked out in Gideon in a very difficult situation among his brethren. In Philippians we get "each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves"; that is the spirit in which Gideon salvaged the position in his relations with his brethren in Ephraim, speaking of them as better than himself: "What have I done in comparison with you?".

J.C.E. Paul was concerned, according to the first chapter, that "in every way ... Christ is announced". That was the objective. But then it has to be worked out individually. The announcing needs to be answered to by us, and hence the Spirit of Christ is needed.

J.A.P. That is helpful, and amidst very great stress - "my bonds". Others were making for envy and strife and contention and tribulations; they are the conditions in which the testimony is at the present time. The resource for the Christian is the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. What is in mind involves the local collective idea - "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling", (chap 2: 12) - and Paul's concern was how this should work out collectively in the midst of very great stress; he is showing how the Spirit of Jesus Christ comes in to help.

E.C.B. What Paul is looking for is salvation in the circumstances and not from them, is it not? He was not exactly asking or supplicating or relying on the Spirit to bring him out of prison, but he was looking for salvation in the circumstances. You get a certain sense of this in relation to Jesus: "Father save me from this hour. But on account of this have I come to this hour. Father, glorify thy name", John 12: 27. That is salvation in the circumstances.

J.A.P. That is good. I thought we might see therefore how the Lord was in the gospels. Mr Stoney helped us in saying that support is greater than relief, which is what you are seeking to say, I think.

R.T. Is the anointing like the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, coming into these very circumstances to give us power in them?

J.A.P. Yes. "He that ... has anointed us, is God, who also has sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts", 2 Cor 1: 21, 22. It has been said that when the Spirit came upon Christ, the Economy was in the testimony - the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. What power marked the Lord Jesus as Man as by the Spirit! Maybe you have more to say about that.

R.T. The anointing comes into the suffering position. The anointing oil was sprinkled on the altar seven times (see Lev 8: 11). The idea of the anointing gives power to go through without chafing, as you say, and provides something for God in the midst of it.

J.A.P. Yes, and you get in this passage "your supplication"; that relates to our spirits, the spirits of the brethren going through this distress with Paul.

H.A.H. Does the reference to salvation link with what Peter says: "receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls", 1 Pet 1: 9? As you say, and as the note in Peter points out, it is not temporal deliverance but soul salvation that is in mind.

J.A.P. Hebrews helps us also - "so great salvation", chap 2: 3. It is Christianity really, involving faith and the Spirit.

I thought we might specially dwell on the Spirit and the Lord Jesus in the gospels, the Spirit of that Man, how He met things. I came to me during the night that the wealth of heaven is available to us to strengthen and succour the position, the substance being the Lord Jesus Himself.

D.J.H. It is amazing that it is the same person, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who was here with that blessed Man and is in the testimony with us now.

S.D.K.R. In the oblation the fine flour was mingled with oil and frankincense was put on it.

J.A.P. That is good. The anointing is a mysterious matter in regard to the Lord Jesus, the Spirit coming upon Him; it is unique in that sense in Him, what went up to God in His life here in view of His death. The hymn alludes to the Spirit as the power of His hand

(No.300). You wonder at these things, the Lord Jesus as a dependent and humble Man, and then, "Wherefore also God highly exalted him"; it is what He was in setting out the grace of the dispensation.

D.A.B. It is a capital S here, the Spirit of Jesus Christ; that is the Spirit, the Person.

J.A.P. Yes, I thought the emphasis was on the Spirit.

D.A.B. Do we need help to see the evidence of the Holy Spirit as a Person in the gospels, and then also to be able to see Him more in the brethren?

J.A.P. Yes; so the gospels help us. What was referred to - "on account of this have I come to this hour" - is how the Lord went through things as a man. In Matthew the Lord says "I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth" (chap 11: 25); that was His spirit when all was against Him. His ministry had been refused in Capernaum and in the other places, and the Lord Jesus committed that to His Father. Then He speaks of being meek and lowly in heart, as if to say this is to say this is the way we are to proceed: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me" - entirely opposite to what we are naturally.

D.A.B. The part that the Holy Spirit had is emphasised in relation to the temptations. Jesus was "led by the Spirit in the wilderness" (Luke 4: 1), and in one passage He "drives him out into the wilderness", Mark 1: 12. I wondered if we might see the movements of the Holy Spirit also in other sections - for example when Jesus went into Judea again, whether we see there the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

J.A.P. Yes. The temptations have to be examined because the Lord went through certain things and showed us the way; but none of us here would like to go into areas of temptation where we should not be. "Lead us not into temptation" (Matt 6: 13). But the Lord Jesus went into the temptations as led by the Spirit and He brought in the word of God to meet it. That is another thing. Our brother has spoken about the power of the anointing, and added to that is the

Scriptures. The word of God coming in in the glad tidings helps the brethren through the difficult circumstances we are in at the present time.

E.P. That word in Romans 8 is encouraging, that the Spirit bears witness with our spirit (v 16). I wonder whether it shows the definiteness of the link between the Holy Spirit and our spirit.

J.A.P. Very good. It has been said that our spirits are the highest order of our being and relate to God. A brother wrote to me the other day as to our brother Mr Deck's home going, that he was a brother of a good spirit; it is not to make much of anyone but it is very difficult when you are going through stressful times and tribulation and discipline to maintain your spirit; and thus the prayers of the brethren and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ sustained Paul in these bonds.

E.P. So we have a very helpful word from David in Psalm 37; "fret not thyself" (v 8). When you fret it is your spirit that is fretting inside you.

J.A.P. That is right. So Ahab was vexed. The man Naboth stood for his vineyard and said I cannot give up my father's inheritance. We are not to give up our fathers' inheritance: he lost his life over it. Ahab was vexed and that is what marks Christendom at the present time; but what is to mark the Christian and the preachers and those who testify to Christ - the sisters too – is that the Holy Spirit can be drawn upon, the supply of the Holy Spirit.

D.E.R. So the setting of Philippians 1 is of a militant apostle in the testimonial sphere. He is set for the defence of the glad tidings and as in that He would be conscious of the supplies there are in the power of the Spirit to see him through in relation to the defence of the testimony.

J.A.P. Yes. You might think, when the apostle was locked up in jail, that the gospel would stop. It rather turned out to be for salvation. These contrivances of the enemy to bring in limitations, if accepted from God, will turn out for salvation for the brethren. He has His own way of spreading the gospel.

D.E.R. And if the enemy seeks to come in like a flood the Spirit can ever be counted on to raise the banner, raise the standard, when standards are dropping.

J.A.P. Well, the standard I think is in the Spirit, and He is called the Spirit of truth. That Christian in Bedford, John Bunyan, they locked him up but he preached the gospel from jail and his writings are extending into this day. What a spirit, what a right spirit that man had according to the light he then had!

W.H.S. It is said that, if he was allowed out, he would preach the next day. He was in prison twelve years because of the preaching.

We had ministry a month ago in this city somewhat on the same line as to Philippians and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Do we get the supply in answer to supplication?

J.A.P. I think firstly it is here in the gift of the Spirit.

W.H.S. We know the truth of the gift of the Spirit, but some of us may feel a bit short on the supply.

J.A.P. The gospels are the supply, it is the supply from that Man. He is in heaven now, so our testimony is to have a heavenly character. It comes from that Man in heaven. That is what Stephen apprehended in his preaching.

E.C.B. In this verse the supplication and the supply are two distinct things. There are the prayers of the brethren on the one hand, but then the Spirit 'is always willing to come in. He comes in from Himself according to what Jesus says in John's gospel.

J.A.P. That is right and very good. So it says in Romans 8, referred to already, that "even we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, we also ourselves groan in ourselves, awaiting adoption, that is the redemption of our body" (v 23). That ought to be a comfort to all who are going through a little frailty, that it is part of the limitations; we may chafe under that but the Spirit comes in to help us in these conditions of humiliation.

P.M. Peter says "ye have share in the sufferings of Christ", and then, "If ye are reproached in the name of Christ ... the Spirit of glory and

the Spirit of God rests upon you", 1 Pet 4: 13,14. Is it in view of the testimony going forward in the same dignity in which it went forward when the Lord Jesus was here?

J.A.P. Very good. That is my concern, that we may not get under the pressure, whatever it may be. The details in your life may be different from those in mine and in your locality, but the heavenly standard is to be maintained in the power of the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. That is the current matter. All of the Holy Spirit, speaking reverently, is here since Pentecost. The supply is here too. Zechariah 4 - the tubes emptying the gold out of themselves - may suggest how the brethren help one another to be spiritual.

P.M. In verse 20 of Philippians 1 the object is that Christ should be magnified in the apostle's body, as if there was something formed in him through the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ which was the reflection of Christ Himself.

J.A.P. Yes. I have been very encouraged to read again the history of the Reformation and to see how those men went out of the world, their bodies being smitten and burned, yet praising God as they went out. We would like, before the coming of the Lord, that there might be this kind of manifestation amongst us, in spite of the severity of matters, even between brethren sometimes.

C.H.J.D. I was enjoying the thought, not only of the spirit but the feelings of the Man in heaven. Paul speaks in Philemon of the bowels of Christ Jesus. The references in the passages read are Jesus Christ, the Man as He was here, but that Man has the most beautiful inward feelings of support for us.

J.A.P. Are you suggesting to us that the anointed Man is more what that Man is in heaven at the present time?

C.H.J.D. The same Man with the same feelings; and we need more inward feelings ourselves.

J.A.P. Quite so; and as we look into the gospels, how firm the Lord Jesus was as to the truth. We know the grace of our Lord Jesus, but then it says, "Be firm, immovable, abounding always in the work of

the Lord", 1 Cor 15: 58. His firmness in the gospel with the enemy is all part of what we are saying, but it is in the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

C.H.J.D. So the gospel is a victorious matter from beginning to end. We need to be alerted inwardly as to nothing for God being lost; in the gospel it goes through victoriously.

J.A.P. That is right. Mr Darby said that love of souls soon grows cold, and I am wondering whether we do not need more suitable gospel tracts as well as energy in the public area to speak of Christ as we are led in the matter. Paul's concern in the prison here was not himself. His concern was that the fellowship they had with the glad tidings from the first day should continue.

E.C.B. Is the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ connected in us with confessing Jesus Christ come in flesh? The supply of the Spirit is not intended to have just an inward and private effect. It is intended to work out in demonstration, which the word confession suggests.

J.A.P. That is good, and is part of the exercise in looking at this chapter, that it is the Spirit seen in testimony in the saints. We have brethren in this city and in every locality with whom we used to walk; these sorrows have come about, and it is a critical time how wisely and discreetly to manifest the glad tidings in these broken conditions.

E.C.B. Then do you not get the thought "I, if I be lifted up ... will draw all to me", John 12: 32?

J.A.P. Yes, we should keep to that.

E.C.B. That is what was just referred to, that Christ should be magnified.

J.A.P. Exactly. But then people say to you, Are you one of those brethren that preach down on the street, are you with those Christians that do so and so? We are in a very critical time like Gideon. The tribes were not in unity publicly. Paul said to Timothy that God has given us "a spirit ... of power, and of love, and of wise

discretion", 2 Tim 1: 7. That is how we are going to move through these difficult times before men.

E.C.B. If you are asked the questions you suggest, the answer is the confession of Jesus Christ come in flesh. You do not have to answer directly every question that is addressed to you.

J.A.P. No, you can answer the questioner. The Lord answered the person, and our testimony is Jesus Christ come in flesh, and we hold to that. If our testimony about the Lord is in the Spirit then no one can deny that.

E.P. I think Mr Darby said that the book of the Proverbs shows the way through the labyrinth of this world, and I noticed that in chapter 15 the proverb is "A soft answer turneth away fury; but a grievous word stirreth up anger. The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright" (vv 1,2). These words of wisdom help us in situations in which we sometimes find ourselves, for example with other believers.

J.A.P. Great wisdom is needed at the present time. I think wisdom is to find what is right with another believer and seek to link on with it as far as we can.

L.W.B. In Colossians you get "Walk in wisdom towards those without, redeeming opportunities. Let your word be always with grace, seasoned with salt, so as to know how ye ought to answer each one", chap 4: 5,6. We need help to preach the word in the open air. Do you think we ought to encourage younger ones and ourselves to do that?

J.A.P. When I was a boy in Brooklyn I can remember Mr Taylor leaning on the post box while the young men preached in Nostrand Avenue. He did not himself then preach in the open air but he did in his younger days. We were also saying at home that Mr Darby said in his writings how he was very concerned whether he had ability to speak in the open air, and Mr Raven said that too. Not all have that ability but it is a wonderful thing to be able to say a word for Christ before men.

L.W.B. You can lift up your voice and say, Look to the Lord Jesus and be saved.

J.A.P. So what has been brought before us as to wisdom is very good. "She raiseth her voice in the broadways" (Prov 1: 20) and is saying certain things. Then also you get a woman saying wrong things (see Prov 2: 16). That is what is in our cities, all over the billboards, the wrong things, but then Christians stand up with a supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ and testify to the Saviour at the right hand of God.

D.J.H. Do you in any way connect this with what John says: "of his fulness we all have received", John 1: 16. Then he says, "grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ".

J.A.P. Very good indeed. We have referred to John's ministry and it is a very great subject to bring in, but that is the essence of what we have been speaking about. The One who was here declared God; He revealed the Father to men. "Of his fulness we all have received" would involve the Spirit, I think.

D.J.H. The Spirit was identified with Him in a unique way because of who He was, but it was as He was here as Man.

J.A.P. Exactly, and the conditions here anticipate what we are now in our own time where there are cleavages among Christians; Paul speaks about people announcing the glad tidings not purely. There were persons with the light and maybe the terms of the gospel whose purpose was to arouse tribulation; but whatever it is he says, "What is it then? at any rate, in every way, whether in pretext or in truth, Christ is announced". We are in a day in which many are announcing the terms of the gospel, and how are we to act in those circumstances?

L.W.B. We are to go on rightly in vitality, do you think, preaching the word of God.

J.A.P. We need therefore the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and to see how the Lord met things in the gospels Himself.

B.W.W. Do we see in "whether in pretext or in truth, Christ is announced; and in this I rejoice, yea, also I will rejoice" that, despite all the circumstances, he will go on rejoicing in the preaching? That should be something for us to experience. He speaks in this epistle quite a bit about rejoicing. Is that to strengthen us even if there are difficulties?

J.A.P. That is right: "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice", chap 4: 4. We all need that. In these difficult circumstances the Spirit is anticipating our own day in chapter 1 of Philippians, and how Christians ought to behave.

B.W.W. Which Paul himself demonstrates in what he says here, that whatever the opposition, he will go on.

J.A.P. Yes, and he was not occupied with his own discipline in the ways of God. "Shall turn out for me to salvation" - that is where the victory is, that we might see the circumstances that God has ordered, maybe through our own failures, but as taken up with God and humbled by it, it turns out to salvation.

P.J.H. The glad tidings are food for the saints and very nutritious, because the Spirit is evident in them. Mr Darby has a note somewhere which says, 'The Spirit which is in Christ dwells in us and is the living power of the new life'. That is present power on high and in testimony.

J.A.P. The supply is here; we will not need to talk of supply in heaven; it is coming in through that divine Person, beginning with the anointing; and we are anointed.

R.T. There is a very dependent and brotherly spirit in the way in which Paul writes. He is not writing as an apostle but in bringing their supplications is showing that he is dependent on the saints; the saints have a contribution to make to this.

J.A.P. That is good, and he was very touched by the assembly giving in Philippi, the brotherly expression from the brethren there to him in all his need. Assembly giving is not only giving but *receiving*;

Paul received what the brethren gave him. Giving and *receiving*: what do you say about that?

R.T. It brings in mutuality. Paul as an apostle might have thought things were dependent on him, and he might have asserted his authority many times, but he links here with the brethren. Things are going through with the brethren, not independently of them.

J.A.P. Very good. I noticed today that in Acts 16, where Paul came to Philippi, the last verse says that he saw the brethren. It is the first time the expression is used, "having seen the brethren", that is Lydia, the jailor, and all the brethren there, and at the end of the chapter he says goodbye to the brethren. That is just what you say, there was mutuality in Philippi.

D.E.R. The apostle here is concerned that Christ should be magnified in his body, as though there is as much testimony from what a person is as from what they say. The saints are marked by being holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, as Christ was Himself. So there is the manifestation of Christ here in their life as well as in what they may say.

J.A.P. We too have been saying that lately; the neighbours watch us going to the meetings and then they watch whether we are consistent with that.

D.A.B. Paul refers to what would be worked out in his body, a vessel for the Spirit, just as when Jesus was here, His body was a vessel for the Holy Spirit.

J.A.P. Yes, and the Lord Jesus sets that out, as the hymn says: 'Holy vessel of God's pleasure in His service day by day' (No.30). I would like to be like that.

D.E.B. I was wondering about Mr Taylor's early ministry as to the pouring out of the Spirit initially and once - no second outpouring. There was conflict as to that. Could you help us as to that and then this side of the current supply?

J.A.P. Well, Peter quotes in his preaching: "I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh", and says that "these are not full of wine, as ye

suppose, for it is the third hour of the day", Acts 2: 15,17. Then he brings out the fulness of the Spirit coming in, that these men, Peter and the eleven, were drawing on the supply of the Spirit.

D.A.B. I wonder if there is a connection between Mr Taylor's earlier ministry just referred to and his closing ministry as to the Spirit known objectively, that He is here in that way.

J.A.P. He has come. Do you not think that this thought of supply is good? Maybe we have not thought of that so much.

E.C.B. What has been drawn attention to was in my mind earlier, because there is no question of supplicating for the Spirit, the Spirit is here; and is not the supply connected with such thoughts as the river and the well and the fountain and the spring? The question, to use a very conventional expression amongst us, is what room we are making for Him?

R.T. In Elisha's day it says, "Bring me yet a vessel"; the vessels ran out but "the oil stayed", 2 Kings 4: 6,7. Would that type help us? The supply is there; the need is in the vessels.

J.A.P. Very good, and that was in the widow's area which is what we are at really - the limitations and the sorrows that have come into the testimony. I wanted also to add, in relation to what has just been said, that in Philippi there was the river, the great wealth that strengthens any nation. The river of God strengthens the assembly. Sisters were found there, and the connection between the prayer meeting and the gospel is very important, I believe. We might think about that, too, more than we have.

D.A.B. Recently we were being helped to see that after Pentecost every reference in the Acts to persons receiving the Spirit finds them in the company of people who already have the Spirit that is, in that sense, they are brought within the circle where the Spirit already.

For example, Paul received the Spirit in the presence of Ananias, a man who already had the Spirit. The Ephesians received the Spirit in the of presence of Paul who already had the Spirit, and I wondered if we get a similar thought here, that the supply of the Spirit is here and it would have kept Paul in touch with the company.

J.A.P. Quite so.

E.C.B. You may want to refer to your other scriptures. The immediate context of the reference to the supply of the Holy Spirit is to produce stability in the brethren, is it not? It is not only so that they may preach, but it is to bring about stability in them, and thus the sense of salvation. We have said a good deal about the preaching and so on, for all of which we need the Spirit, but unless we have that stability in the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ we shall not be effective in it.

J.A.P. That is right; and we cannot leave out the sorrows that have come in among brethren and then that it was Christian brethren that damaged Paul. It is not our thought to dwell on that, but they were nominal Christians who were arousing tribulation for this servant - a very serious thing that any would do that - and Paul is meeting the matter I think, in the power of the Spirit.

I thought that the scripture in Judges helps us as to how Gideon in the type met a difficult matter that arose among the brethren; so what we are speaking of this morning is not only in relation to the gospel towards man, but the supply of the Spirit in regard to our relations with one another. It says "Then their spirit was appeased". This is a wonderful conclusion to Gideon's service. A brother referred to the word of wisdom, and we will come to that later in Philippians 2 if time permits, that each takes account of what is in the other. Gideon brings all this forward, he rises to a wonderful type of a Christian, meeting a difficult matter among the brethren with wisdom and discretion.

D.E.B. Was this a characteristic of Gideon? He did not have to stop and think and say, how am I going to deal with this? He was such a man that the spirit of Christ, you might almost say automatically, was able to meet the situation, because that is how he was characteristically.

J.A.P. Yes, that might be, although I find in my own experience that I do have to stop a minute and seek to be the Christian I should be sometimes. I think that would be the experience of all of us, that we

are learning I trust to have more wisdom with one another without giving up anything that relates to righteousness.

H.A.H. The sorrowful contrast to this is in chapter 12 when the same people contended with Jephthah and there were forty-two thousand of them slain.

J.A.P. I have often prayed that I might be faithful like Jephthah because God used him and he was in the faith line in Hebrews 11, but I would like to have the wisdom and grace of Gideon.

E.C.B. Does not the scripture in John 1, referred to earlier, bear on it: "for of his fulness we all have received, and grace upon grace"?

J.A.P. Very good, we need that in our spirits. So the spirit of the brethren was appeased toward Gideon, and that is what we should arrive at in fellowship meetings, that the spirits of the brethren are greatly strengthened and encouraged, because our spirit relates to God and in a certain sense to one another.

E.C.B. That then is how the fellowship of the Spirit is known.

J.A.P. That is what I thought we should see in Philippians 2, when Paul came to Philippi, how he brought the brethren into fellowship.

We often dwell on how the jailor was converted but he was really brought into fellowship, and I had not noticed until this morning that the last verse of Acts 16 says he took leave of "the brethren" - that is what Luke called them - that would be the jailor and his house and the sisters by the riverside; they become brethren. They have come into the fellowship of the Spirit.

E.C.B. I have often thought that, in Paul's closing words in second Corinthians, where he is having to revert to the sorrows that were in the locality, he says "the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all" as if the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit would keep things right in the place.

J.A.P. That is good, and he left the brethren with a sense of blessing. If we have come into a locality or we serve them in any way, that is how we leave the brethren - with a spirit of blessing.

C.H.J.D. Do we need to remember more that the person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, indwelling us and in the assembly is exactly like Jesus. It has been said that if the Spirit had ever become incarnate, He would be exactly like Jesus. Do we need to recognise that the indwelling Spirit brings out in the brethren the features that shone so, beautifully in that blessed Man when He was here?

J.A.P. Yes; so the Spirit here draws on that through Paul: "each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves"; and it comes to me that the Lord Jesus drew attention in the gospels to something good in many persons. It says about the young man that "Jesus ... loved him", Mark 10: 21. He said to Simon: "Seest thou this woman?" (Luke 7: 44); the widow, too, gave everything (see Luke 21: 2). The Lord defended Zacchaeus too. Now if He drew on the good in others, how much more should I do that, find something in someone that I can say is more excellent than myself.

C.H.J.D. And the unexpected glory of the work of God so suddenly appears. Even the centurion overseeing the crucifixion of Christ, when he saw that Jesus cried out with a loud voice, said, "Truly this man was Son of God", Mark 15: 39. What a marvellous testimony so suddenly rendered in a man that was converted!

J.A.P. Well, that is part of the discretion and wisdom that we should have now, to see the good in people, to see the good in other Christians. If a person is saying what is right, "Truly this man was Son of God", you could say Amen to that. The Lord wondered at another man and said, "Not even in Israel have I found so great faith", Luke 7: 9. The Lord is showing us the Spirit of Jesus Christ, how He himself too account of God's work in others, and He magnified it before the unbelieving and the opposers.

D.J.H. He says to a woman, "Thy faith has saved thee", Luke 7: 50. He does not say, My power has saved thee. Do you think also that Romans 16 is an example of Paul on this line, the list of persons there and what he says about them, even as to some that they were

in Christ before him? He always finds something that he can commend.

J.A.P. Very good.

J.C.E. It is remarkable that these considerations lead Paul to write such words as he does about the Lord Jesus: "did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself". He brings Christ forward in a new and living way.

J.A.P. I thought that was how the fellowship of the Spirit works among the brethren, how it worked when Philippi first came into view, and the repentance of the jailor and his house. Those of us in households need to keep repenting. Things were very distressing when the jailor would be almost driven to take his life. We should not just keep that out of our reckoning, that terrible feeling. One of the prophets asks God to take his life (see 1 Kings 19: 4). In the exercises through which we have passed and may pass, such thoughts could come into the mind of anyone. So Paul says, "Do thyself no harm". That is the word to help us in going through a terrible crisis. The glad tidings are unfolded to such a one, and then the greatness of the Person, as you were saying. I would like help on verse 6.

E.C.B. "Subsisting in the form of God": I sometimes think Paul has to use what words are available to him because he cannot describe things in precision as to which he had only impressions by the Spirit; and who is to say what the form of God is? That expression occurs in the Old Testament (see Num 12: 8). That was the condition the Lord Jesus was in, for He was God: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God", John 1: 1.

The contrast is with Adam and then the blessedness of what He was in His manhood, having come into it.

J.A.P. I thought that was where the fellowship of the Spirit is to be enjoyed here today, and I think it is, and will lead us tomorrow in the service of God. We have to bow in the sense of the greatness of this One who emptied Himself. Why did Paul use that expression? Maybe we all need to come to that - "emptied himself" - not that we

can do anything in the way the Lord did. Mr Darby says the note: 'I have no doubt all this is in contrast with the first Adam. The history of the second man is that he made himself of no reputation (or emptied himself) in becoming a man'. Now we are on to the highest level in which we are able, in some sense, to follow knees, we want our tongues to be in the service tomorrow, to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father's glory. I believe that feature should come into the service of God as well as other matters.

E.C.B. It is connected with what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, that "he must reign" (v 25). Every knee will bow.

E.P. You spoke about the disconsolate prophet, Elijah. God says there are fourteen thousand knees, seven thousand people, that have not bowed to Baal.

J.A.P. You might say that those people were very simple but one thing they were clear about was idolatry, they would not bow to anyone but God. There are many like that today, they love Christ even if they do not have all the light, but they are not bowing the knee to the god of this world.

E.P. Our God virtually says to Elijah, Remember, you are not alone!

J.A.P. It is the fellowship of the Spirit, and Elijah in type came back into it too.

LONDON

17 August 1991

Key to initials (*London if not otherwise stated*)

D.A.Burr; D.E.Burr, Redbridge; E.C.Burr; L.W.Burton, Kingston; C.H.J.Davidson, Dorking; J.C.Evershed; D.J.Hutson; H.A.Hutson; P.J.Herbert, Newport; P.Martin, Colchester; E.Palmer; J.A.Petersen, Plainfield; D.E.Remmington, St.Albans; S.D.K.Roberts, Croydon; W.H.Shephard, Bedford; R.Taylor, Barnet; B.W.Ward

FOOD

J.A.Petersen

Judges 6: 11-21; Leviticus 2: 1-3

I wanted to say a word in relation to food in the time of Gideon, especially having in mind the many young people that are with us today. Reports have it that the young people are finding their way to the three-day occasions and other gatherings of the saints and the Lord is observing it. A brother told me in Sweden a week or two ago that there were 55 at their three-day meetings (we are in small times) but that, out of 55, 30 were young people from various parts. It is very encouraging to think of that because Gideon was a young man. It says "his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress". They were exceedingly difficult times, and I would say that in the experience of most of us the time in which we are outwardly is as difficult as any the testimony has been in. Some of it has been brought about by the failures of Christians, failures of brethren too, but in it all God is observing: it says in this passage that Jehovah looked upon Gideon. In Malachi it is noted that He observed His people (see chap 3: 16). He is looking at us today. We could have been elsewhere but we came here. In other places believers are gathered and God is noting it with pleasure.

Thus Jehovah looked at Gideon, a young man, and He is looking at the young people here. He looked at me when I was young and at others, and He has never lost sight of us. Sometimes we lose sight of one another, but we are not to be drawers back.

What God saw in Gideon was very attractive, and I believe He sees that in the brethren here today. This young man was engaged in a very good work concerning the food supply. We were on a farm yesterday in Spaldwick and it was wonderful to see the crops God has given and the people reaping them, and they have storehouses too. Have you ever thought of the storehouses that are in the testimony at the present time? You young men and young women, have you looked into the storehouses - the books of ministry that we

have? In the scripture read in Leviticus 2 it says "the remainder of the oblation shall be Aaron's and his sons". We find that in our reading meetings, as we speak of the glory of the Lord Jesus, there is offered up to God in the hearts of the saints, but then there is something left for Aaron and his sons, that is ourselves, to feed upon, to feed upon Christ, that Man who is out of death. The hymn says that His death is the point of severance from this world (No.192); it takes a long time practically to come to that in our experience. Our Saviour is not here, He has died out of the world, has been buried and been raised again, Christ the first-fruits. That is what Gideon was engaged with here, the fruits of resurrection - Christ firstly, then ourselves. It is a wonderful thing to feed on the Lord Jesus out of death, and to think that the brethren are out of death too. The wheat-harvest is not the first harvest, the barley-harvest is that. Gideon was engaged in type with Christ risen and the saints. We sing sometimes in the morning meeting, ' 'Tis as risen, Lord, we hail Thee' (No.422), and we are with Him in that.

Through faith of the working of God we have been raised with Him from among the dead (see Col 2: 12). It is by faith, so that we are engaged with what is on the other side of death. We have come out of our ordinary circumstances, and God is pleased with that.

Jehovah looked at Gideon; He is looking at you and thinking of you in regard to how, He may use you in His testimony, dear brother and sister. The need is great at the present time for heavenly-minded people, which Gideon represents. If you need help in the New Testament as to Gideon, read the fourth chapter of second Corinthians: "we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassingness of the power may be of God, and not from us" (v 7). Gideon was the man whom God used in the conflict through the broken vessels; when the vessels broke the light shone. Some of the vessels of our dear brethren are breaking; then the light is to shine out - Christ is to come out. So we thank God that if we do have some frailties - and we all have them - in those frailties Christ is to become everything to us, so that we may not be overpowered by the human condition in which we are at present. God has seen fit to put His testimony in earthen vessels; Paul could have said 'our

bodies', but it is earthen vessels; then as the vessel breaks the light shines out and the enemy is overthrown. The earthen vessel brings out in the Christian dependence on God for everything; we are needing mercy every day. The Psalmist could say, "I will sing aloud of thy loving kindness in the morning", Ps 59: 16. How great are His mercies! That is what we have to come to as we get older, the mercy and loving-kindnesses of God. God is observing us as we get older too, but He is especially observing young people, and He would like to assure you of His interest in you, and to speak to you, and He has these storehouses, the grain has been gathered. We saw at that farm storehouses where the grain is kept, not only moved from the fields into the market-places but where it is stored, a most important matter! Think of these books we have, these ministries we have, beloved. Men laid down their lives for us. Some of them stood in this room and laid down their lives for us, and sisters served then as they do now and took the notes so we could have it all, and we only have to look into it to see how it is helping us in the current time.

This man Gideon represents a current-time Christian, not living in the old world wishing that he lived forty years ago, but in the present time, and the scripture uses that expression "the present time"; Rom 3: 26. This young man Gideon was in his father's house, without the full sympathy of his father it may be, but he was threshing wheat in the winepress, which is the side of tribulation; that is what we get in Romans 5 (v 3). The Christian comes into that through faith, and "tribulation works endurance; and endurance, experience; and experience, hope; and hope does not make ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us". That is what Gideon was getting into, the spiritual line of things through faith, through tribulation, and learning through it; not among those who never came to the knowledge of the truth, but coming to something in his soul, and God was observing. It says of this angel that he "came and sat under the terebinth that was in Ophrah". He came to sit, and we are sitting here today with great interest in what is going on in the

testimony. This young man was engaged with the food supply - one of the most important matters at the present time, including the printed ministry. In our localities it is not only expositions of doctrine imparted to us but food for the souls of the brethren, which is Christ here, Christ buried, Christ raised again, Christ at the right hand of God; that is the food for the brethren, and to keep that before them.

Then to keep before the saints that we are raised through faith and the working of the power of God who raised Him from among the dead. These are matters to be reached in our souls. And then here God himself comes into the matter. First an Angel of Jehovah came and sat; then God comes into the matter: "And the Angel of Jehovah appeared to him, and said to him, Jehovah is with thee, thou mighty man of valour". First it is an angel of Jehovah, then it is the Angel of Jehovah. This is how the Lord Jesus comes into the meeting, I would venture to say, how He comes into the gathering. The angels help us: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out for service ...?", Heb 1: 14. They helped us to get here. Then it is the Angel of God; Jehovah comes in and He is looking at the brethren. The Lord Jesus is looking at the brethren, and He is looking at each one of us, taking account of the work of God.

We were speaking earlier today about the Lord Jesus and how He came into certain circumstances and noticed things that no-one else noticed, and that is what we want to do, we want to notice what is spiritual and good among our brethren. You have a privilege that is very wonderful - to come up to the gatherings of the Lord's people and to see God's work in them, and to value that work. So this meeting, we may say, with Gideon was enlarged. I hope the meetings today will enlarge us all and that we understand that God has an interest in our being here; He is looking at us, is evaluating us, and wants us for His service. He was pleased that this young man was engaged in the food supply. That is the urgent matter at the present time, how to recover our brethren, how to recover men to the light of the glad tidings and the truth of the assembly. Naomi and Ruth were recovered to the food supply: they heard that there was food in Israel (see Ruth 1: 6), and that is the thing at the present

time, are we valuing enough what the Spirit is saying to the saints? It is food for the soul. It is barren outside, it is barren in Christendom, although it may be that God moves the water, as the man in John 5 experienced once a year. There may be something, but there is a continual supply of help by the Holy Spirit amongst us and we want to value it and not be unduly critical of those who are helping us.

And so this meeting (Judges 6) is enlarged, I would suggest, and God is coming into it. God looked upon Gideon and said, "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel"; and God calls him a mighty man of valour. It is the only time in Scripture that a man who was not a military man is called a mighty man of valour. If you are engaged in the food supply in your locality, God would say to you that you are a mighty man or mighty woman of valour. All the spurs are not won on the battlefield. It says "the king himself is dependent upon the field" (Eccles 5: 9); that is that the great ordering of things in the assembly involves the food supply. We might have a fine city in London but it is dependent on what is in such places as Spaldwick, the crops. And as it is among men, so it is among us, that we are dependent upon the food supply. Gideon secured it at great cost and suffering. There are men who stood in this room that suffered for Christ to bring us the truth of eternal life, to bring us into the truth of the assembly, to bring us the truth of Christ in heaven and His body here. They suffered, were criticised, were maligned for that, eventually being separated from by some for these precious things that are in our storehouses. Just think of the sufferings of our brethren. So we would certainly value the Lord's servants who were the mighties in the revival, and we have in consequence these storehouses and can draw on them to learn a little about eternal life and the atmosphere that is proper to the assembly.

The next thought in mind, dear brethren, is very simple but it is very profound, that is food for God. When we come together in our gatherings, not only on Lord's day morning, there is to be something for the heart of Christ. It says of David he "longed, and said, O that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem," 2 Sam 23: 15. Those mighty men interpreted David's feelings and

affections and secured the water for him. The Lord Jesus is coming in; according to Psalm 110, "He shall drink of the brook in the way" (v 7). He is with the saints in the testimony, and He is looking Himself - a divine Person, a real Man in glory - for some satisfaction from His beloved people. He is with us in the way, and would you not like to refresh the Lord Jesus? It is not too much to say these things, dear brethren. This man Gideon was very hospitable. He says "If now I have found favour in thine eyes, shew me a sign that it is thou who talkest with me. Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present". Is it not wonderful to come to a meeting with your local brethren, and say that we would like to detain divine Persons, to give Them a present, to give Them food? We think of food in relation to ourselves, but "My food", the Lord Jesus said in John 4 (v 34). "I have food to eat which ye do not know" (v 32). That is the line that we are on at the present time, and what is that food for Him? It is the will of God accomplished in the saints; that is His food. "My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me", John 4: 34. Now the food of divine Persons is to enjoy in the saints who are fulfilling the will of God at the present time; it is food and satisfaction to Their hearts.

This man brought forth something. Hospitality is a great thing, and Gideon was hospitable, as was Abraham. Gideon would not let this man go; he was very deferential, very careful; he says "and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again. And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid of the goats, and an ephah of flour in unleavened cakes" - that is a young person maintaining separation from the world, maintaining himself or herself in selfjudgment. The "unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor 5: 8) underlies the Lord's supper. That is the food of the locality, to feed on the unleavened bread and the passover, and all that Jesus did for us, His precious blood shed. Let us ever hold that in our hearts, even when we speak to the Father in the service of God, never forget that it is through the redeeming blood of Jesus. We feed on that Man and what transpired on the cross, and to be maintained in the unleavened state means that we

are judging ourselves. The heart is wretched, just as wretched today as whenever you and I were converted, but the Spirit has taken up His abode in us, and He is recalling us constantly to Christ and to communion. This young man Gideon was a selfjudged man, and he brought this to God, an offering corresponding to the death of Christ. Then he was subject to God: the Angel told him how the offering should proceed. We need to get into these storehouses, beloved, and see how the service of God ought to proceed - not just the motions of it but the reality of it. "Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them on this rock "; that is, God is in control of the local gathering. We not only have to offer to God what is right, but it is how we offer. This passage is taken up with how Gideon must lay this out before the Angel of Jehovah. How careful we need to be in the things of God, in regard to His service, to be in accord with our worship and our praise, and that we are subject persons. "And he did so". That was Gideon's locality so to speak - this rock. There was the rock that followed them which was the Christ (see 1 Cor 10: 4). Now Gideon is established on that rock. "On this rock" (Matt 16: 18): that is where you are, your stability. The stability of the rock is Christ, but then it is "on this rock I will build my assembly," and that the service of God properly is always in the assembly. People have tried to take the Supper to themselves: they go off and do other things, and say that they still love the Lord, but are they under this regulation? So it is commendable in this young man, Gideon, that he is under regulation and listening to God telling him how the offering is to take place. Then it is accepted, and how it is accepted. "The Angel of Jehovah put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. And the Angel of Jehovah departed out of his sight". What a time it was! Very confirming! Gideon was a brother who looked for confirmation. I do the same. We are not too old to look for confirmation that we are in the right place at the right time, and that God is helping us. How often the servant in Genesis 24 was concerned, step by step, that divine support and leading was coming in that he might in type secure the bride for the Lord Jesus.

I close with the thought in Leviticus 2. Moses' ministry, the first five books of the Bible, would be a great storehouse, one of the storehouses of God. How often the Lord Jesus, and the apostles later, drew on the five books of Moses, this great servant, in their ministry. "Mouth to mouth do I speak to him": that is what God said about him. It is fulness in the offering in Leviticus 2 in the type, nothing unleavened here, but fine flour. That is the Lord Jesus, the oblation to God: "his offering shall be of fine flour". That is what we talked about this morning, the Man that was here, the Man of the gospels, the Man of John 8 that Mr Bellett spoke about. The gospels speak about that Man; He is the fine flour. This is the present that we are offering up to God. What Moses has given us in his writings we see the fulfilling of in the Lord Jesus. Then the Holy Spirit came on the Lord Jesus (the offerer here refers to that): "and he shall pour oil". The priest would know that, that what was here under the eye of God in Jesus the Spirit came upon Him, restfully, complacently.

For the first time the heavens opened on that Man who was here and glorified God and did God's will. What a wonderful sight for heaven! The fine flour was there and the oil poured on it – the priest would understand. The Spirit came upon Him. Then, dear brethren, it says "and put frankincense thereon." It does not say who put that on, but I think that is what the lovers of Jesus do. The Lord says of a woman in Matthew's gospel, when she was criticised for anointing Him, "she has wrought a good work ", chap 26: 10. That is our appreciation of Christ, the frankincense. It does not say who put that on here, but Mary anointed the feet of the Lord, and the woman in Simon's house anointed the Lord - His head in one gospel, His feet in another. "Yea, he is altogether lovely": that is what the saints are saying. They put the frankincense on. God sent his Spirit to dwell upon his Son, the Spirit came upon Him Himself, but the frankincense is some measure of our appreciation that we have in order that the house may be filled with the odour of the ointment. The Lord Jesus said "She has done it for my burying". It was not an ordinary matter, He accepted *that* anointing, it was some appreciation of the Man who was there and was about to go into death. "She has done it for my burying" - that was the divine

appraisal. The Spirit came upon Him - that is a divine matter - but how wonderful that He should be anointed among His brethren and above His brethren. That is what we do, in that sense. God has done it, the saints are meeting that with acclaim, about the greatness of this blessed Man. And so it says, "And he shall bring it to Aaron's sons, the priests; and he shall take thereout his handful of the flour thereof, and of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof".

You see, beloved young person, you do not need to have an understanding of everything, you have a handful. That is what is offered up, a handful, just what you and I can take account of in our small way: "line upon line; here a little, there a little", Isa 28: 10. We cannot say everything in our readings, we cannot bring all the doctrine in; the question is what is the Lord saying tonight in our localities? It is a handful, just get enough and then there is what is offered to God. It says inverse 3 "And the remainder of the oblation shall be Aaron's and his sons': it is most holy". These men who have been fathers in the revival have illuminated to us what the fine flour means. We have a little of it in our hearts, so that we are not just quoting the ministry but only to strengthen this matter of the storehouses that we have and to draw upon them. Then the frankincense - what was put on Jesus when He was here, what that woman put on. She represents the affections of the saints for Christ, and oh dear sister, I do believe the closing ministry of Mr Taylor should be revived amongst us in this particular aspect, and that is the importance of the sisters amongst us. We have more than sixty hymns written by sisters. It was not the apostles who poured the ointment on the Lord; it was a woman who did it, unnamed in some gospels. It is what you and I can do, that we bring in the fragrance that alone should adorn Himself, and it is connected with the Spirit.

That is a marvellous matter, that the Lord Jesus should take that into account and give us some understanding as to what that woman did was for His burial. He not only died on the cross, e was buried, and that body was anointed for burial, and He lay there for three days and three nights and God raised Him up, and now we are coming into the joy of these things. Remember this: the remainder is

for us. The gospels have been given to us that it might be for us, that we may dwell on all that is precious in Christ to God, and all that is precious in Him to us as Saviour. We dwell on it, the remainder is for Aaron and his sons to enjoy. You belong to a family, it is not a one man matter, we are in the family, that is John's ministry, and the result of the family in a right way is regulated by the Lord Jesus, so that the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

LONDON

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CHILDREN BLESSED

Scripture is rich with blessings, both from God and also towards Him. For ourselves the word means to be made happy by receiving something from His hand. Even the fields around us partake of divine blessing when they drink in the rain and yield useful plants.

There are blessings which come and cease but those which God gives to the believer in the Lord Jesus are for eternity as well as for time.

Although there is always blessing in thinking about Jesus we must remember that He is now in the glory into which He has ascended up. Luke's gospel says that He was "carried up into heaven" as He was blessing His apostles, and now sits at the right hand of God. The exercise of faith on our part and the service of the Holy Spirit are therefore necessary to the receiving of these heavenly blessings.

Jesus welcomed the little children and blessed them, taking them into His arms - one of the fifteen or so parts of the Lord's holy body mentioned in the New Testament; can you find them? One great blessing that even the littlest ones have is to know God as Father who cares for them and watches over them. Timothy, from boyhood, had known the sacred letters which, by faith in Christ Jesus, were salvation to him and were enough to make him a man of God when he grew up. Do you, too, read and learn the Scriptures?

J.C.Evershed