

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 235

October 1992

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John 13: 21-25; 18: 15-17; 19: 25-27; 20: 2-11; 21: 7, 20-23

J.R. I suppose if there was one impression we had this morning it was of the Lord's love. We never fail to get that impression at the Supper. I was just thinking, after the meeting this morning, of the significance of what the Lord said according to 1 Corinthians 11: 24: "This is my body, which is for you". That loaf comes to each one of us. We are not sitting at a table, as I suppose the disciples did at other times, with a dish in the middle and all helping ourselves, but the loaf comes round to each one of us, and it is meant to give each one of us an impression of the Lord's love for us, just as in chapter 13 the Lord washed the feet of each disciple. He brought the hand-basin round to each one and washed the feet of each one and each one would get His own impression of the Lord's love for him. That fact apparently affected John in chapter 13. It is the first time that he speaks of himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. Jesus loved all the disciples, loved them with the same love, but John had the consciousness of His love. That is what the Supper is meant to convey to us, not only the general idea of the Lord's love for us all, but the Lord's particular love for each one of us, and that is what affected John. So he speaks of himself sometimes as the "disciple whom Jesus loved" but at other times as "the other disciple". When he is not acting in the full consciousness of the Lord's love he does not speak of himself in that way, but when he is, he calls himself the "disciple whom Jesus loved", in the conscious enjoyment of it; and that is where we are meant to be. There is no power like it in the world. What is going to preserve us, dear brethren, is not our love for the Lord but the conscious sense of His love for us. Peter in his self-confidence at the end of this chapter 13 speaks of his love for the Lord; he failed in that, and we all fail in our love for the Lord, but what will preserve us is the conscious sense of the love of Jesus for each one of us, and to act and continue in the influence and sense of that love.

J.S. In the bread coming round we get a general sense of the Lord's love, but as it comes to each of us do you think His voice might come to each one of us: "My body ... for you"?

J.R. Exactly, for each one; and then the sense of that love, and the influence of that love, puts us together in a fresh way. It is important to get that touch. Maybe we do not always get it - it can be a kind of routine - but the Lord intends that each one of us should get a sense of His own love, just as He washed the feet of each one of the disciples. It is the refreshing experience of the Lord's personal love for each one of us. I can remember when I first had the consciousness of the Lord's love for me. I have not always acted up to it but it made a difference to my life, and let each of us, young and old, get the impression of the Lord's love for each one of us.

M.W. Would you say that someone who had this precious sense of the Lord's love for them personally would have an enormous advantage? It is mentioned just after the Lord being troubled in spirit and at once it tells us that there was someone in the bosom of Jesus.

J.R. Exactly, one "whom Jesus loved". It is as if John received this impression from the Lord when He washed his feet. When He washed John's feet He was not washing Peter's feet: He washed the feet of each one. Peter did not get the benefit of it immediately but John did, and he calls himself the disciple whom Jesus loved, and he continued - not without ups and downs, like the rest of us - with that lasting impression of the Lord's love for him personally. I mean something to the Lord; each one means something to Him.

M.W. So in a situation like this such a one would be restful.

J.R. Quite so. I wonder if John lying in the bosom of Jesus, leaning on His breast, would feel His heart beat. He was near enough to the Lord to get that impression. I remember reading in ministry that the heart of a man beats in heaven. To get the consciousness of that into our souls, into our lives, would preserve us and help us.

J.M.M. Does it give him a certain access to the Lord's mind that apparently the others did not have?

J.R. Exactly. At the beginning of chapter 13 it says, "Jesus, knowing that his hour had come that he should depart out of this world to the Father". How did John know what the Lord was thinking? Then it says, "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given him all things into his hands, and that he came out from God and was going to God". John knew what was going through the Lord's mind at this moment because he was near enough to Him.

J.M.M. And the others seemed to recognise that He had a unique access to the Lord.

J.R. The access was by means of his sense of the Lord's love. He could not boast of his love for the Lord exactly, and none of us can, but we can certainly experience the Lord's love for each one of us. We sing sometimes:

Thine is the love, Lord that draws us together (hymn 4)

not exactly our love, but the sense of being loved by Him, proved in the emblems, for instance: "This is my body , which is for you". It does not say 'for you' about the cup in 1 Corinthians 11. The cup has a wider bearing, but the loaf has its own special touch, it seems to me, to each one of us.

J.S. The loaf is specially connected with the personal love of Christ. Is that what you are saying?

J.R. Exactly. It says, "also the cup", 1 Cor 11: 25. The cup is something additional. The blood is the basis for the whole universe of bliss, but "my body ... for you" is for the personnel of the assembly at the present moment. It is something special available to us, "my body ... for you", being the believers at the present time and those of the nations, too, coming into 1 Corinthians 11.

J.S. But John does not name himself here. It says "one of his disciples ... whom Jesus loved". Why do you think he puts it that way?

J.R. I do not know, but it seems to me that he makes the setting available for us. I do not think the Lord loved John specially. I think He loved all the disciples, the same as He loves all believers, but

John was in the conscious sense of it, and that is open to every one of us.

J.S. Do you think in one way it might indicate that John deliberately laid himself out for this?

J.R. I think so. He is found physically next to the Lord Jesus in this supper time. He happened to be the one who was lying physically next to the Lord Jesus as they lay at table. How he came to be there we do not know. Whether he desired it, or whether the Lord appointed it to him, we do not know, but on this occasion he had this very privileged position, and actually we can be as near to the Lord Jesus as we desire. His bosom is open to every one of us; His breast can be leaned on by any one of us. John was in the experience of it.

D.S. I am sure that is right. I was thinking of what was said as to the loaf. In Matthew the Lord says, "Take, eat", chap 26: 26. It is not just a question of receiving it into our hands but of taking it into our affections, appropriating it.

J.R. Surely, and it is meant to have a lasting effect upon us, especially in the week ahead of us.

J.G. If John had the place of privilege beside the Lord in His bosom, did it mean that his affections were for the Lord all the time, including the testimony and what might have been more responsible? It was constant with John.

J.R. Yes, but it seems he was not always in the full enjoyment of it because he sometimes calls himself the other disciple. It is interesting that it is only when he acts according to the influence of that love that he calls himself the disciple whom Jesus loved. The Lord knows that we vary, we go up and down a bit, but let this have more effect upon us than it has in the past! Let us be more conscious of the Lord's personal love for each one of us.

J.M. I would like to understand a bit more of the impact of the Lord's body. He does not say, 'This is my soul' or 'This is my spirit'. Could you help us on that?

J.R. I have thought a good deal about it: "This is my body, which is for you", not even 'which is given for you'. It is "for you"; it is something very precious that the Lord means to be for us - "my body". I would like help on it myself. I would like to know what you would say about it. It is a very full idea: "This is my body, which is for you", as if all the Lord is and all that is expressed in Him is for us. On the other hand His body was here for the will of God but it is "for you" which is an expression of His affection for each one of us. What do you say about it?

J.M. You would understand that this is still true. It is not just that He died on the cross for us. It is true now.

J.R. Exactly. All that the Lord is, all that is expressed in Him, is for each one of us to be in the conscious enjoyment of.

P.G. Our appreciation of that would be by the Spirit.

J.R. Exactly, That is very important, the Spirit would feed us with this love.

J.M. It strikes me that what you are saying is rather too much to take in.

J.R. We could never exhaust it. It is so full: "my body, which is for you". Who could compass it?

B.G. It is the body of such a one. Would John not have been impressed by that, that such a one washed my feet, such a one loved me?

J.R. That is very important.

J.M-e. It attracts our heart to Him.

J.R. Exactly. "My body" is all that was expressed here in His manhood, and all that is expressed now in His manhood.

J.M. Who could define His soul or His spirit? But His body is, as you say, what is tangible. It is that which "our hands handled", 1 John 1: 1. It is within our range.

J.R. I am sure it is. We will never exhaust it. There will always be more and more to appropriate: "my body, which is for you".

J.M. I feel I need to be honest with yourself and amongst the brethren: I have felt for years woefully inadequate as to my appreciation of the love of Christ for me.

J.R. Yes, but even John did. I think when John writes this gospel, in certain incidents he would say, 'I cannot say the disciple whom Jesus loved here; I have to say the other disciple'. He was not always up to the standard; he was not always up to the fulness of what he had experienced in the bosom of Jesus. It is just as we experience, but the Lord is very gracious with us, very priestly in His support of us.

M.W. Would it be, therefore, that John had in his soul a retreat, a kind of hiding place, a resting place? When the beloved brethren were troubled and all looking one at the other, he has this kind of retreat to retire into. Is there something of the atmosphere of that about it?

J.R. I am sure there is. He was in the secret of it, what was in the Lord's mind.

M.W. I wish that I knew more about this.

J.R. We all do. I think it involves the Lord's headship. It is a question of being near enough to know His mind, not only His command but His mind. It is the wisdom, the resource, that is there, available to be drawn upon, but John is near enough, is in the secret, the only one in the secret, in this section.

J.S. Is it of significance that he is spoken of as being in the Lord's bosom before he actually leans on His breast?

J.R. It is "in"; it is '*en*' (see note to v 23); It is more inward. 'On' is more support. But as "in the bosom of Jesus" he would be certainly conscious of His love.

J.S. I wondered if that might be the order in which we have to learn it, that we come to appreciate the Lord's love and learn something that we can rely on, and when we need to rely on it we can lean on to sustain us.

J.R. I am sure that is right; and when problems arise there is the breast. The priest had the breastplate; all the tribes were on the

breastplate. It was on Aaron's heart, but Aaron's heart was not great enough to carry that breastplate, but the heart of Jesus is.

J.S. Just to be simple, on the Lord's day we have particular opportunity connected with the Supper - for example, of enjoying the Lord's love just by itself. Maybe on Monday we have to go out and face things and need the support of His love. Would that be like the breast?

J.R. I am sure that is right. It is something that is constant. Paul says in Romans 8, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (v 35). Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, we may not always be in the enjoyment of it; but that love never varies. Nothing, no circumstance, can separate us from that love; it is constant, but we are not always in the constant enjoyment of it.

P.G. The Lord brings in manhood what is pleasurable to God.

J.R. That is right, after His own order. It is a wonderful thing to belong to that order of manhood!

J.S. What you have said about when John is not quite up to the mark is interesting. In chapter 18, where he refers to himself as "the other disciple", he was in circumstances which were not altogether where he should have been.

J.R. Exactly, and he brought Peter in too. It seems that John was known to the high priest and was known to be a disciple. He did not require to be challenged. To Peter the porteress said, "Art thou also of the disciples of this man?" I suppose he calls himself 'the other disciple' because he is not shining as he ought to have been as one whom Jesus loved. He was not acting in the consciousness of that love, and we can find ourselves, of course, in these circumstances too.

D.S. Maybe he used his influence to bring someone else into circumstances that he was not able for which would be a challenge to us.

J.R. That is right. John seemed to be able for it, but, as you say, he brought someone else into it who was not able for it, and so he calls

himself 'the other disciple'.

P.G. The Spirit has brought about this manhood that is after Christ and that applies to all the saints sisters as well as brothers.

J.R. Surely. He is called the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of Jesus Christ, - the Spirit of that Man. In 1 Corinthians 6 it says, "But he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit" (v 17) and the note is 'The Spirit which is in the Lord himself dwells in us, and is the living power of the new life'. The Spirit which is in the Lord dwells in us so we have His Spirit - a tremendous advantage!

P.G. The Spirit has right as being a divine Person.

J.R. Quite so. In chapter 19 it says, "And by the cross of Jesus stood his mother, and the sister of his mother, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. Jesus therefore, seeing his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved". John is here fully up to corresponding to his consciousness of the Lord's love. It is actually a remarkable scene around the cross. It is like a family gathering. Standing by the cross of Jesus stood His mother and these sisters and John. There is this little, you may say, family intimacy: "Woman, behold thy son ... Behold thy mother". It is a scene around the cross of familiarity and liberty, apart from the suffering circumstances for the moment. That is by the cross of Jesus; that is the public situation.

J.S. So in chapter 18 John had been in the palace of the high priest and in chapter 19 he is standing by the cross accepting the public reproach of the cross. Do you think we will value the family setting among the brethren as we accept the reproach of Christ?

J.R. I am sure that is so. It is a remarkable scene here, these verses from 25 to 27. There are these three or four women and then the disciple whom Jesus loved and Jesus message to each one, an intimate family gathering for the moment.

A.W. As we are conscious of the Lord's love it would promote movement. There would be more desire to be in His company. You see that in his running forward in the next section we read.

J.R. Exactly. It is able to bear the reproach of the cross of Jesus. What will sustain us in the reproach of the cross of Jesus is the conscious sense of the love of Jesus. The disciple whom Jesus loved was thus supported standing by the cross of Jesus.

M.W. What about that expression "standing by" - "and the disciple standing by, whom he loved". What does that convey to your soul?

J.R. It is a kind of loyalty, standing by the cross of Jesus.

M.W. While we are called to activity and action and speaking, here was a situation which the Lord appreciated - that someone was standing by.

J.R. Really standing by inwardly, sympathetic in loyalty to Jesus personally and available to Him.

D.S. You never know when you might be called upon. Do you think he was a suitable vessel for this wonderful service that the Lord had for him to do - to look after His mother? I feel impressed with that, the affection the Lord had that His mother should be cared for in His absence. John was a suitable person.

J.R. He was the only man there, the only one available. The Lord had natural brothers, four of them at least, but He commits His mother to John because he was the only one available. It is good to be available for any situation.

D.S. You never know when the Lord may dispose of us if there is something He has in mind.

J.R. All those standing by would be, in that sense, available.

J.M. These Marys are the aristocracy of heaven. Each one has a personal experience, mostly known to us through the Scriptures, and John is presented last as one now able to take his place amongst these persons - a very high honour!

J.R. Other gospels say that they all forsook Him and fled, but here there is that little company, a very little company, but there they are, attached in responsive affection to the Lord's love.

J.M. Basically is it not so throughout this gospel, the women make the grade, if I can use that expression; the men do not?

J.R. That comes out in chapter 20. John speaks about himself as "the other disciple, to whom Jesus was attached". There was something good in what he did here in running to the tomb, running faster than Peter. That was something, I suppose - not very much actually - and he reached there first; but then it says, "and he saw and believed". John saw and believed, but then he went to his own home. Of course, his home was a good home, Mary the mother of Jesus was there, but it says, "But Mary". John, as it were, says 'I did not do too well; I went to my own home: "but Mary ..." I will hand you over to Mary, Listen to this! This is what Mary represents: "but Mary ...".

J.M. That was true love.

J.R. It was true affection. She knew the love of Jesus and responded to it.

J.M. She was noted for her actions. It is good to sit back and join her.

J.R. The Lord was indispensable to her; she could not live without Him. Nothing in the world mattered. You could have offered Mary the best business proposition that ever arose; she would not be interested. The only thing that mattered was the Lord Jesus. This kind of affection is what we need, especially in our time.

J.S. As John wrote this he would see that this was someone who excelled.

J.R. Exactly. He would say, I did not do too well. In fact you wonder that John did not say to Mary, I have seen and believed. The disciples seem to think of themselves and their own home: "The disciples therefore went away again to their own home. But Mary stood at the tomb weeping without". He says, I did not do too well, but I want to occupy you with Mary.

P.G. It is a very beautiful word that Jesus says to Mary: "go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father" (v

17).

J.R. Again she was the only one available to convey this message. The disciples might have been; John might have been, but he went away to his own home. Mary was the only one available to receive this most wonderful message.

P.G. "My Father and your Father": that is a term of relationship. It is not just being forgiven; it is a relationship. We are brought into relation: He is "my Father and your Father".

J.R. Exactly, an eternal relationship.

J.S. Would it all indicate that the Lord is looking for loyal persons to whom He can commit things? To John He commits His mother; to Mary He commits this wonderful message.

J.R. That is right. There may be few. Maybe there are few in our day who are available for such things. John, as you say, was the one to whom the Lord's mother was committed; Mary was the one available here to receive this message. It may be there are only a few, but I would like to be among them. I am sure you would too.

J.S. What you are saying is indicating the way into it because each one personally has such a sense of the Lord's love that they become trustworthy.

J.R. Exactly, and, therefore, at the Supper the love coming to each one ought to have that effect. If it has its full effect, that would be so.

J.G. Paul might have come into the same kind of thing as John enjoyed because he speaks about the cross to the Galatians: "I am crucified with Christ", and then he says, "I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me", chap 2: 20.

J.R. I am sure that is so: "who has loved me". We often quote, 'who loved me', but it is not exactly that; it is, "who has loved me". That is, His love was recent in his mind; it was present; it was not a historical matter. "Has loved me": that is up to the present moment, the perfect tense.

M.W. We are told about the two disciples in verse 8: "Then entered in therefore the other disciple also who came first to the tomb, and he saw and believed". I take it he had reached something, that he saw and believed, but are you saying that what we have with Mary is an advance on that?

J.R. He would be more intelligent than Mary, but the Lord imparted His message to Mary. The strength that Mary had was affection.

M.W. I find it very attractive. We get right mentally and think that believing is everything. I want to be more like Mary.

J.R. John writes, "But Mary". He really says, 'I did not do too well. I certainly went in and saw what I saw, but Mary saw two men. She went in and saw two angels who must have appeared specially for her benefit, I suppose.

M.W. "As therefore she wept, she stooped down into the tomb": that was a movement of affection, so she gets something special all to herself.

D.S. Does this feature represent something that is attractive to the Lord Himself? He says, "Woman".

J.R. Exactly. Then He says, "Mary". It is like the loaf coming to each one: "Mary", the Lord's interest in each one, especially persons like Mary. "He calls his own sheep by name", John 10: 3.

J.M. Education in these conditions is rapid. Most of us find education a sorry business, but the teaching of John's gospel - chapter 4 and then this chapter - is that education can be a very rapid matter.

J.R. That is right. It is a question of affection, not only the mind, but reaching the affections.

J.M. I wondered also about the expression in verse 2: "to whom Jesus was attached".

J.R. That was quite good. Up to that point he was quite active and he heard this word that the stone was rolled away, so he went so far. But he does not go the full way. He was not exactly like Mary.

J.M. The word used, according to the note, implies something of lovableness. It is not the other word which implies the attitude of love. That is a point too.

J.R. It is. It is the word Peter used, "I am attached to thee", in chapter 21. In the 21st chapter, in verse 2, in this independent expedition, he calls himself one of the sons of Zebedee. He is not up to the mark. He could not call himself the disciple whom Jesus loved in this diversion. We can all be diverted, but we can be recovered. He is recovered in verse 7: "That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved says to Peter, It is the Lord". He is able to discern where the Lord is in that difficult situation.

J.M. It was still true in verse 2. The Lord's love does not go up and down. It is not that when I am wrong He does not love me quite as much.

J.R. Exactly. It is not that, but he is not in the conscious sense of His love. First of all it is important to get the impression of the Lord's personal love for each one of us, and to seek always to act in the conscious sense of it.

J.S. You mentioned in thanksgiving this morning that, along with being in the sense of the Lord's love, there would be some impression of a body that was now fully for the will of God. Do you think that would come to us as to whether in our measure we can answer to the will of God?

J.R. I am sure. The loaf is meant to build up a constitution that would be here for the will of God in our measure, the same will as the Lord was here for.

J.S. I wondered if that might bear on our consciousness of the Lord's love.

J.R. You mean maintained in the will of God.

J.S. As we are practically held in the will of God it would provide a basis for constant consciousness of the Lord's love.

J.R. Was that not the Lord's experience, devoted entirely to the will of God? He had a sense of the Father's love: "The Father loves the

Son, and has given all things to be in his hand", John 3: 35. "On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again", John 10: 17. Was He not in the conscious sense of the Father's love when He took the loaf? And we can be in the conscious sense of His love by appreciation of the loaf, and in our measure have the same will before us, the will of God.

J.M.M. I am reminded of the earlier reference in John where it says, "the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him", chap 1: 18. I find it striking that it can be spoken in the same way of the Lord in the bosom of the Father as it was for John to be in the bosom of Jesus. I wondered if that supports what you have been saying. It was a position that the Lord knew. "Who is in the bosom of the Father" was something that was unbroken except, of course, when He was forsaken.

J.R. Very good. That refers to Him as man down here and as man as He is now. He came into that relationship as man - in the bosom of the Father, the setting from which He has declared Him. The declaration comes from that point of affection, "the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father". The word is not '*en*'; it is '*eis*'. It is what He came into as man.

J.S. You mean that it implies that He moved into that position. It is not something you can take back into a past eternity.

J.R. We used to sing:

Son of God, Thy Father's bosom
Ever was Thy dwelling-place.

We would not sing that now. It is what He came into as man.

P.G. Do you think the consciousness of these things is by the Spirit?

J.R. I am sure that all the consciousness and all the enjoyment is by the Spirit, even the conscious enjoyment of our sins forgiven is by the Spirit.

P.G. It is an amazing thing that you are brought into that kind of love by the Spirit. He makes us living.

J.R. Yes, it is life out of death. Ephesians regards us as "dead in your offences and sins", chap 2: 1. The Lord came into death to bring in life. He Himself is in life out of death, and we have the same kind of life, life out of death, by the quickening power of God.

P.G. He has it by right as a divine Person; we have it by the Spirit.

J.R. That is it exactly.

M.W. Would it seem from verse 7 that the disciple whom Jesus loved was quick to identify the Lord coming into a situation, and then he is influential?

J.R. Exactly; "That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved says to Peter, It is the Lord". The Lord was on the shore, but He gave commandment. He says, "Children, have ye anything to eat? They answered him, No. And he said to them, Cast the net at the right side of the ship and ye will find" (vv 5,6). They did not know then who He was. He was a stranger, but then John says, "It is the Lord". "That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved says to Peter, It is the Lord". He must have had a sense of the love that was behind this standing on the shore and indicating what should be done, taking command and the result was great fishes.

J.S. Do you have something in mind as to the later verses you read?

J.R. Yes, again John speaks of himself: "Peter, turning round, sees the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also leaned at supper on his breast, and said, Lord", as if John treasured that experience. He is fully in the good of it. Then this sense of the Lord's love gave the Lord an advantage because He could call attention to John, and gave Peter an advantage because he could see someone who was as he ought to be.

J.S. Quite so, but he is following in the consciousness of being the disciple whom Jesus loved.

J.R. And in the maintained consciousness of leaning at supper on His breast. He has maintained this impression away back in chapter 13. He has maintained the enjoyment of it; and so we are meant to

have certain impressions and retain them, or get back to them if we lose them.

J.M. You used the word experience. I think when we use it we have pretty largely in our minds wilderness experience, but you are suggesting there is a body of knowledge built up of formation by experiencing the Lord's love at times of privilege. Is that what John is referring to here?

J.R. I am sure that is right. I am ashamed of myself often as to the little effect of the Supper. Each week ought to build up something in the way of depth of the appreciation of the Lord's love and, therefore, an incentive in our lives. It ought to increase with us. We tend to get very formal, regard it as a very important meeting, but maybe that is all. What do you say?

J.M. Your word of faith last night is coming to me again. These experiences would be a lever in the soul so that, when we hit a rough patch, it is not that we get discouraged, but we can say, I know the Lord loves me still. It is kept fresh and new. It is every week.

J.R. The Lord's supper is a tremendous occasion and maybe we do not fully appreciate what is available for us. It is the Lord's provision for us.

J.M. Wisdom and love.

J.S. Peter says here, "What of this man?" The account would bring us back to what our own experience with the Lord is. There is no good looking round on somebody. The essential thing is our own experience with the Lord.

J.R. The Lord's final word to Peter is, "Follow thou me". That is intimate: Follow thou Me. John was already following, an example to Peter. The Lord says, Be like John, "Follow thou me". John is one who continues. It is not that he should not die but just a suggestion that he continues, and so he did late into the apostolic day. He saw the ruin come in but he continues in this sense of the love of Jesus for him. It is this that would maintain us.

J.S. "The disciple whom Jesus loved": I suppose it is open to each of us to put ourselves there. Do you think the Lord will find that in the scene when He comes? - "If I will that he abide until I come".

J.R. I would like to be in that category, I am sure you would too, and I trust that all here desire to be in that category.

M.W. As to that expression, "Follow thou me", I notice that, in our scripture in chapter 18, it says, "Now Simon Peter followed Jesus, and the other disciple"; but here it is "Follow thou me". Has the heart that loves the Lord to keep the eye fixed on the Lord Himself, especially in view of the Supper?

J.R. And the effect of the Supper through the week too. "I became in the Spirit on the Lord's day", Rev 1: 10: that is what the Supper brings us into, another area, in the Spirit. We come together not exactly as husbands and wives, and fathers and mothers and families, but we come into another area:

Here nature's voice is silenced,
And nature's claims give way. (hymn 376)

M.W. I am glad you quote that because we sang that this morning where we broke bread. It was one of the many sweet impressions I had.

J.R. "Became in the Spirit": the Supper helps us to do that.

B.G. Does John represent what is reliable, especially in this setting here? As was mentioned, it is like the Lord having the will of God in the heart. John was reliable, like the Lord Jesus.

J.R. Exactly. What will help me to be reliable is not exactly my love for Him but my conscious sense of the Lord's love for me, because my love varies but His love never varies. The power, the influence of that love, is what is going to preserve me to continue and every one of us.

J.M. It leads to this definite, analytical discernment of the Lord's voice: "And Jesus did not say to him, He does not die; but if I will".

DUNDEE

29 March 1992

Key to initials

B.Grant; P.Grant; J.Gray; J.Mather; J.M.M. J.M.Macfarlane;
J.Renton; D.Steven; J.Strachan; A.Walker; M.Wood

CARRYING, WALKING, RUNNING

James S.Gray

Exodus 19: 4-6; Numbers 21: 16-20; Philippians 3: 12-16

I was thinking of how touching it is that God should speak of carrying His people; "I have borne you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself". This expression links very directly with what our brother referred to in Malachi 3 as to the treasure, what the saints are to God, 'my own possession' (see note to v 17). God has carried us in view of that. Would that our souls could be affected by the expression of divine love that God has been prepared to carry us when we were able for nothing else. The initiative has been with God; He has taken the action from His side in view of our redemption. What a work it was! 'Jesus, the Lord, our night broke through' (hymn 382); there was no initiative with us, it was with God. And now God is saying, I have a claim on you, "I have borne you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself". Let that precious claim come home to our hearts freshly tonight. There is more in mind; God has much more in mind, but He has gone as far as to be prepared to do the whole activity: "I have borne you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself". Will I not then recognise the divine claim in the presence of such affection and such power to carry? God says in one of the prophets, "Even to old age ... I will carry you", Isa 46: 4. How comforting that is! Reference has been made already to the aging of many of our brethren, but that is God's word, "Even to old age ... I will carry you". God is prepared to keep on carrying us: how precious!

God does not expect us only to accept carrying. I think that we should be prepared to begin to walk. Numbers 21 points to that directly. No doubt other scriptures do too, but I think it points to the preparedness to walk, movement in view of possession, movement in the recognition of the blessed Spirit of God. God Himself says, very touchingly, "I it was that taught Ephraim to walk", Hos 11: 3. How precious that is! He did not know how to walk, and so God

taught him how to walk, and so as to you and me. I think therefore it would be right to say that, in contrast to carrying, walking would involve intelligence. We need to know how to do it, and how to do it in this context would be in the recognition of the blessed Spirit of God. The divine teaching as to how to walk would involve, as well as other things, that the Holy Spirit is recognised, recognised in how we occupy our time, recognised in what we read, recognised in the way that the direction of our minds makes us set for the eternal things which are of so great value.

I was struck with the fact (and of course there has been teaching about it) that this scripture in Numbers shows that the movements are direct and immediate and straight to the land from the point where the well is recognised. There are others here who could speak from much more experience, but I can say in a simple way that, as soon as one recognises the Holy Spirit's place in any matter, whether it be our personal lives in their various aspects, or our relations together in the assembly and with believers everywhere, it causes us to make progress. We make definite progress if we recognise Him. He is all powerful, and He has infinite wealth to untold to us in the great heavenly inheritance.

Then I thought of the activity on the resurrection day. Think of how urgent the activities were. They began early in the morning and the disciples were running. It may not all have been intelligent, but they began to move quickly when Christ was risen. I think that there may be room with us - I speak for myself - for greater concentration of energy towards the eternal things. What was in all their minds on the resurrection day was that Jesus was risen: "The Lord is indeed risen and has appeared to Simon", Luke 24: 34. And as soon as the women had that precious message "I ascend", it says, "Mary of Magdala comes bringing word to the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had said these things to her", John 20: 17,18. I bring that forward to connect with the thought, that we might seek to progress in the measure of our activity towards the great divine objective. We have had teaching as to the well and the recognition of the Holy Spirit. "Then Israel sang this song, Rise up, well! sing

unto it". I think that would involve that the great breadth and extent of the divine inheritance which was now in view for the people required in type that the Holy Spirit might be recognised as the only means for substantial entrance into it.

Then just a touch as to Paul's movements. We might say, 'What more is there to attain, Paul? You are able to speak about your intelligence in the mystery even'. Paul says, "I do not count to have got possession myself ... I pursue". Think of that! He speaks of himself elsewhere as "such a one as Paul the aged", Philem 9. I am not sure whether it was exactly at the same time as this, possibly it was near to it, but here is a man in the fulness of maturity, in the appreciation of the divine inheritance and all that is involved in the way of possession, and he says "I do not count to have got possession myself". He is not only walking now, he is running: "I pursue". How personal it is! Let us be stimulated by the attraction of such a one who has been taken possession of by Christ Jesus, we who are much less formed in divine things, but have these precious truths before us as an objective. Then Holy Spirit would set them before us; and as Paul says, "fix your eyes on those walking thus as you have us for a model" (v 17). How was Paul a model? He was a model only because of his likeness to Christ. We are to set our minds, fix our eyes on those, as well as fixing our eyes on "Jesus the leader and completer of faith", Heb.12: 2.

In contrast to the thought of being carried on the one hand, and of walking and moving directly in urgency, Paul is now exercising all his energy in pursuit of the possession of the heavenly inheritance. As I read it I wondered whether I could say 'I pursue', "I do not count to have got possession myself; but one thing" - or with me is it more than one thing, is it divided, divided attention? But with Paul it was one thing, "forgetting the things behind, and stretching out", his muscles are in activity in view of possession of the great heavenly inheritance. "I pursue, looking towards the goal, for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus". These are exhortations for us. "As many therefore as are perfect, let us be thus minded". I say it to myself, there is room for improvement, there is room for

stimulation, if not in others, there is room with me. Let us be thus minded, let us desire to have an appreciation of the great value of the divine carrying and how ready God is to continue carrying. We ought to be prepared to take up responsibility and to walk, to learn to walk, and then to run and to pursue, so that our muscles may be in exercise spiritually in view of reaching the great goal, which in its actuality may be so near. We may sometimes of necessity be occupied with the things behind, but sooner or later we must forget them, and stretch out to the things before. May God help us in view of possession increasingly, for His Name's sake.

LONDON

24 December 1991

SPIRITUAL IMPRESSIONS IN THE FORTY DAYS

Paul Devenish

Luke 24: 24-49

It is in mind to say a little about the presentation of the Lord's supper in Luke, especially in the light of the spirituality of the forty days. The fact that "he disappeared from them" would emphasise the mysterious and spiritual character of the Lord's movements during this time when He was in His resurrection body, free from the limitations connected with His body of flesh and blood - "being put to death in flesh, but made alive in the Spirit", 1 Pet 3: 18.

In Luke 22 the Supper is introduced formally or officially, the twelve apostles being mentioned: "when the hour was come, he placed himself at table, and the twelve apostles with him" (v 14). In chapter 24 we see suggestions of the Supper in an informal or family setting. The occasion in the home, and the breaking of bread there, was not the Supper, yet spiritual impressions were carried immediately to the company including no doubt the informal way in which He was with them, taking the place as the house-father. We are to enjoy the affectionate, family character of the Supper. Mr Taylor said this was a great family affair. We celebrate birthdays and anniversaries when all the members of the family come together -

family affairs. But the Lord's supper is the greatest family affair. We cannot afford to miss this wonderful occasion when Jesus comes.

"And as they were saying these things, he himself stood in their midst". "These things" would relate to the way He was personally manifested to them in the breaking of bread. Possibly it was the manner in which He broke the bread that served to open their eyes. In chapter 22 it says, In like manner also the cup (v 20). Everything He did and does is distinctive and the way it is done would have a certain heavenly grace which would bring Jesus before the soul. "And their eyes were opened, and they recognised him". This was really the point of recovery, as I believe it has been with many of us and we trust will be for many others that have lost their way in relation to the truth. Christ Himself must be the centre of our gatherings. How skilfully and attractively He secures the attention of these two erring ones! "Jesus himself drawing nigh" speaks to them of His sufferings and of His glory, and "he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself". He awakens their affections by this personal presentation of Himself. They say, "Was not our heart burning in us as he spoke to us on the way".

I believe this chapter brings forward the personal service of Jesus: "it is I myself". The Lord's presence is not imaginary, nor is He at a distance. He says "Handle me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as ye see me having". He is a real Man. He could be touched, handled. He was seeking to impress them with the reality of His manhood. "He took it" (the part of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb) "and ate before them". He did not partake of the Supper, but here he shares the meal that they provided. He would say to us, Have you anything here to eat? What is available for the Lord? This was something they had in stock. What stock do we have of love that He can enjoy with us mutually?

These impressions which the disciples received during the forty days remain in the assembly as a treasure. None are lost. They are preserved in the hearts of the saints. We should look for a personal manifestation of Jesus. Christianity is no orthodox religion, nor are we to be content with a distant apprehension of the truth. Our

meetings are not to be merely a pleasant exchange of information, of terms with which we may be familiar. We have so much light that we could have a letter-perfect occasion without any heart receiving a personal impression of Christ.

If we speak about the truth we see every feature of it beautifully shining in Jesus. "The truth as in Jesus" (Eph 4: 21) would mean that it shines in moral perfection in Him. There is nothing contrary in Him to hinder or obscure the shining. Christianity is not a system of doctrine only; it is surely a wonderful system; (let not the wrong use of the term 'system' spoil for us the beauty of the divine system), but Christianity is Christ. Without the Person it would be meaningless.

In Luke we do not get the detail of the forty days set out. Christ is ready to go to heaven and tarries on the way to express to the disciples features of the truth which are to characterize the dispensation. I believe this chapter would show that the whole dispensation is to be marked by the personal manifestations of Jesus, not so much formally or officially but familywise. This suggestion is to characterise our occasions of gathering. No doubt there is pattern for us in the way He opened up the Scriptures: "And having begun from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself". Notice "all the scriptures": these are to yield impressions of Christ. "Ye search the scriptures, for ye think that in them ye have life eternal, and they it is which bear witness concerning me", John 5: 39.

In verses 46 to 49 Jesus speaks to the disciples about the preaching of the glad tidings. No doubt the promise of the Spirit which they were to await - "And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but do ye remain in the city till ye be clothed with power from on high" - was in view of the manifestation of Christ personally by the Spirit in the glad tidings. The means, therefore, of these precious personal manifestations is the presence of the Spirit. Let us therefore have faith in the Spirit who would make these experiences a living reality now.

ORLANDO

February 1992

SATISFIED CHILDREN

There must have been some children amongst the company of five thousand persons who came to Jesus in the hill-country about 100 miles from Jerusalem. There was at least a little boy who had a few loaves and some fishes, which the Lord, by a miracle, caused to satisfy the needs of all the people who were gathered there and who were by this time very hungry. Actually twelve hand-baskets of fragments were gathered up for needs elsewhere. It was the same Lord Jesus who used Paul, meaning 'little', to satisfy with his ministry a vast number of believers in the truth.

The life of faith must be maintained by food, and the familiar word 'bread' is often used in the Bible. Possibly there are more varieties of it in the Scriptures than we have for our daily needs. For instance there is the manna in the wilderness which was called the "bread of the mighty". As the "bread of God", Jesus had come down out of heaven, available to the whole world. He is also the "living bread" and the "true bread". It is one of the very many promises in the Bible that by feeding on "the bread of life" the believer will never suffer hunger. Do you feed on the Lord Jesus Christ?

J.C.Evershed