

A
WORD
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Contents

THE FULNESS

"MORE BLESSED TO GIVE"

TRAVELLING CHILDREN

THE FULNESS

Ephesians 3: 14-21; Colossians 1: 15-20; Joshua 17: 3-6, 14-18

J.A.G. I thought we had some impression on Lord's day of the fulness of God. I was struck with this scripture: "be filled even to all the fulness of God". I am not sure whether I can say very much about it, but I am quite sure the Lord will help us as we are together. The section is very rich and wealthy wealth: it is the realm of divine love. The Spirit serves us, Christ dwells in our hearts, we are with all the brethren apprehending the immensity of it, and we have to do with "him that is able to do far exceedingly above all which we ask or think". It is a glorious realm and it is not for the future; it is for now. It can be entered into now and lived in now. The scripture in Colossians came to me because we might have some fresh glimpse of the glory of Christ. He is the one who is to dwell in our hearts through faith and whose love sustains us at the very centre of this great divine realm - a wellknown love. We are sustained in it. What a Person He is! The daughters of Zelophehad seem to me to set forth the energy and the desire that is needed to take the inheritance, to have increased entrance into this great divine purpose. I think that kind of thing is Joseph's true greatness, and so he needs more of it. The hill country is not enough for him: he wants it all, He is appreciative of what has been given to him of God. In Joshua we are in the realm of the birthright, I think, and eternal life, but this is more than eternal life. Here as in Ephesians 3 it is the fulness of life in Christ Jesus. It will be our eternal portion. We are to live in it, dwell there. It is from this realm that the city comes down to have to do with the earth and administrative things, but this is where we live.

J.C.E. There is plenty before us. I was thinking that the expression "fulness of God" is a relative one, relative to the saints. It does not mean that He is limited in any way, but He has come into the compass of men and is in them the fulness.

J.A.G. I think it is all that can be known of God in revelation: "filled even to all the fulness of God". We are to think of all the families; we are to think of the assembly as the tabernacle of God, the very centre of it all, and consciously sustained in it by the Lord Jesus. How precious that is! We can let our hearts go out without reserve in this great realm of divine love.

D.J.H. This thought of "fulness" is entirely spiritual but very real, very precious.

J.A.G. It is indeed, because there is the full display of all that God is, known in love. Jesus has made Him known. We need great help in our links with divine Persons and God is so anxious to make Himself known to us.

E.P. Is it very liberating to know that we have been taken into God's favour "in the Beloved"? There does not seem to be any kind of limit to that.

J.A.G. There is no limit to it and we are there "holy and blameless before him in love", Eph 1: 4. It is very beautiful. That is the first chapter where we are looking in, but here we are at the very centre of it, "fully able" - there is no lack of ability. Every single person is to be "fully able to apprehend". That is with all the saints; so we can speak to one another freely and happily and enthuse with one another over the grandeur of what God has brought us into.

E.C.B. Things are presented in the last part of this chapter as apart from conflict, are they not? It is entirely from God's side. One does not like to use the word 'only', but we only have to pray for it.

J.A.G. It is beyond the realm of ministry too, is it not? Think of the riches of the Father's glory: "in order that he may give you according to the riches of his glory". What could we say about the riches of the Father's glory? I think Luke 15 brings out the riches of His glory: the glory of His grace and the glory of His love, the glory of sonship, all the resources of divine love to set us up in this, make us sit down and enjoy the blessedness of reconciliation.

J.M. Does it indicate the infinite resources that God has to bring every thought of His through despite all that may occur?

J.A.G. Yes, and to enjoy it. What a difference between sitting eating the fatted calf and being in the far country! That may be one of the scriptures from which Mr Raven concluded that where there had been distance, now there was complacency. How complacent this realm is!

J.M. It immediately goes on from "the riches of his glory" to "to be strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man"; so that the resource is in us to reach out to these wonderful things, great as they are.

J.A.G. Yes, we come to appreciate Christ as the Father appreciates Him. We were speaking last night about Genesis 24: "all the treasure of his master was under his hand" (v 10); but then in his address he says "Jehovah has blessed my master greatly, and he is become great" (v 35). Then he brings out all that Abraham had, and then he says, "And Sarah, my master's wife, bore a son to my master after she had grown old; and unto him has he given all that he has". I think that is the Father's Spirit.

D.A.B. Do you think we might have and yet not be aware of unused capacity for these things? I was thinking of the wedding in Cana where it says He "manifested his glory", John 2: 11. There were the stone water-vessels and they had two or three measures in them; there was some uncertainty about how much there was, but it was not very much, and He says, fill them up.

J.A.G. It is fine to bring that in because every Christian should be exercised to attain to their potential. There is nobody getting overloaded: God has given us power to attain to these things.

D.E.R. The idea of fulness has the thought of complete display in it. In the scripture in Colossians we see that Christ Himself is the complete display of the Godhead. In the scripture in Ephesians we see the apostle's exercises that in the assembly should be seen a complete display of God.

J.A.G. Yes. To touch it, to find it, is a marvellous matter in your affections and it cannot be hid when you touch it. Then all the fulness dwells in Him bodily - we did not read that - "and ye are complete in him", Col 2: 9,10. You need nothing else but what you have in Christ.

D.E.R. The apostle is exercised in Ephesians that the saints should come to this point of being filled to all the fulness of God, that God should be completely displayed in the assembly.

J.A.G. Yes, God in His nature in the assembly - complacent love. We perhaps should use this kind of prayer more often, bow our knees to the Father. It is like travailing, is it not, that the saints might come into the full enjoyment of their inheritance?

S.D.K.R. Would you say a little more about this potential and how we develop it and use it?

J.A.G. We begin to realise what it is when we get through Romans 7 and are led by the Spirit of God, sons of God, and then the divine inheritance. We have to find, as in Colossians, Christ personally greater than anything. That is the secret way into it, and the Spirit is anxious to promote Christ; that is His business here.

D.A.B. We will not discover the capacity of something until we fill it up. Perhaps if we were more in the way of having this kind of thing poured in we would discover what capacity we had.

J.A.G. I think so. Of course, here in chapter 3 we are in the heavenlies. To get there we come through responsibility. As you know, as you take on responsibility, you need help to fill it out and that is how we grow into it - but let us enjoy our place in the heavenlies!

E.C.B. Has not every believer the same potential?

J.A.G. Well, here we have "all the saints".

E.C.B. God has taken up every believer for the same purpose and with a view to filling each one to the same extent. Our present capacity and our present entrance into it vary - we might even feel it

varies from day to day - but the potential is there; God will have every man perfect in Christ (see Col 1: 28).

J.A.G. Every believer is a man in Christ. Now, how far are we going to go in growth as a man in Christ? "I know a man in Christ", 2 Cor 12: 2. Paul's experience of that showed how he had attained his potential.

E.C.B. So in 1 Corinthians 13 Paul says, "when I became a man" (v 11); that is, he realised his potential.

J.A.G. He had to say to them, "I ... have not been able to speak to you as to spiritual, but as to fleshly; as to babes in Christ", 1 Cor 3: 1.

M.A.J.T. In the feeding of the five thousand, they were all filled. The Lord Jesus supplied the food, and He supplies the food for us today that we might be filled, and there were twelve baskets left over.

J.A.G. Yes, and then there were seven, and they went away satisfied. We should covet that. The exercise in the meetings is that we should have something from Christ by way of food. That builds us up.

S.H. Is God's delight in the Lord Jesus seen in the Old Testament in the burnt-offerings, Christ offering Himself without spot to God?

J.A.G. Yes, it is, and that was probably in our brother's mind when he spoke about the unlimited favour in which we stand as accepted in the Beloved, identified with Christ.

C.E.H. We can only reach up to our measure; that is our potential, and it is for us to find that out. Paul refers to it in the next chapter.

J.A.G. Yes, he does: "But to each one of us has been given grace according to the measure of the gift of the Christ". So every single Christian has something from Christ, and it is to be used. Here, of course, it is all perfect, and I think we should bathe our souls in the wonder and blessedness of this section in Ephesians. This is where we live. This is the heavenlies where the blessings are.

L.A.B. So that ministry is to bring out the best robe and clothe persons so that they are free to enter into and enjoy the fulness.

J.A.G. Exactly, so that you go in there in the blessed consciousness of the Father's love and disposition and favour. Then you will get music and dancing, will you not?

L.A.B. I was impressed last Lord's day with the wonder of the place God has given us in Christ. It involved a divine Person coming into manhood in order that God might convey to men something of the richness of what He has in His heart. Does that link with what you have in mind?

J.A.G. It does. I think we will never fully appreciate or apprehend the immensity of the fact that a divine Person has come into manhood to take up sonship so that God's heart and God's house might be filled. Who can compass the immensity of that? That is why I thought Colossians - not that we should go on to it immediately - shows us freshly the glory and greatness of that blessed Person.

E.C.B. Would you say something more about the riches of the Father's glory? As you said, it is a very full expression. It is not exactly the Father's counsel or purpose or Person, but the riches of the Father's glory. Does it connect with "I have glorified thee", John 17: 4?

J.A.G. Yes, I think so. I find we are rather limited in seeking to explain or set out all that is conveyed in that term, "according to the riches of his glory", but I think that brings out the standard of things that marks this - everything is in accord with His glory. God is glorified in it.

E.C.B. Everything says glory. In chapter 1 you have the expression "the riches of his grace" (v 7) and Psalm 84 says, "Jehovah will give grace and glory" (v 11). Does that come in here?

J.A.G. Yes, and He is the Father of glory and He raised Christ from among the dead by His glory. Think of the perfection of the work of Christ that the glory of the Father could come into that tomb and raise that blessed Man.

D.J.H. So it speaks in Colossians of "the might of his glory": "strengthened with all power according to the might of his glory", chap 1: 11. That is what operated in the resurrection of Christ.

J.A.G. It did. That worked in the Ephesians so that they had not looked on the Jordan. You can understand that, as "the might of his glory" was apprehended by them, they could not see any water. They are prepared to go over into that realm. I think that is eternal life - very beautiful - and He sustains us. The glory of Christ will sustain us eternally but it is to sustain our hearts now so that we have no other object before us but Christ, Christ personally and Christ in the brethren, and, as our brother says, the object of ministry is to bring out the best robe.

D.J.H. So it says as to ministry that we are to arrive at "the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ", Eph 4: 13. The word 'fulness' comes in there again. We were speaking about capacity. Ministry has in view arriving "at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ". You could not think of anything greater than that.

J.A.G. I think "the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ" is apprehended as we look around this realm of glory – "the breadth and length and depth and height" - and He is the One who has brought it all in for God. That is the office that He fills. He is not only the Messiah, but He is the Christ of God.

J.M. Do you think that union with Christ underlies these verses in Ephesians 3?

J.A.G. I think so: you are united to Him when He dwells in your heart through faith, the Father's Spirit strengthening us with power in the inner man, rooted and founded in love and established in our souls in the grandeur and glory of God's nature and God's disposition, and Christ dwells in our hearts through faith. Then from that point of view we can see the scope of things.

R.T. The Father's giving and the Spirit's strengthening all seem to be to that end, "that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts". Would you say more about Christ dwelling in the heart.

J.A.G. It is a very fine position. It is not just a visitation now and then but it is a settled position. You have arrived at this point where there is no interruption of your communion with Christ. Divine Persons are active in the realm to sustain it for Their own pleasure. I have often wondered about that scripture in chapter 4: "the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ"; "the knowledge of the Son of God", the One who has made God known; but then the grandeur and glory and fulness of all that He has brought in for God as well as making God known. So you can understand that He who builds the house must be the Son. If you look round the sections in Chronicles at the greatness of the house and the whole economy and the setting up of it, I think in type we have some impression of "the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ". The whole thing is according to the pattern.

E.C.B. Is being "filled even to all the fulness of God" found as the Christ dwells in the heart through faith?

J.A.G. Yes, and you are sustained by His love, "the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge". Think of the freshness and vitality of the saints as in this position! Everything is fresh and vital and you are consciously moving in the love of God, sustained by the love of Christ.

J.M. The thought here of "the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge" would actually go beyond His love for the assembly, would it not?

J.A.G. I think so; it is what He is as a divine Person. It "surpasses knowledge". He is a Man and always will be, a blessed Man dwelling in our hearts through faith, but He Himself is God and so His love cannot be limited; it "surpasses knowledge".

D.J.H. Why is it "through faith"?

J.A.G. I think all that bears upon the present time. We will not need faith in eternity. We will not speak about the "inner man" when we get to heaven.

D.J.H. That confirms what you said at the beginning that this is now.

J.A.G. It is now. It is not just for a short time at the end of the morning meeting either.

E.P. In Chronicles it says, "And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of Jehovah to its place, into the oracle of the house, into the most holy place, under the wings of the cherubim", 2 Chron 5: 7. It seems to me that when that happens not only is God satisfied but there is something of the fulness of His thoughts, that Christ should be there.

J.A.G. I think that is very fine and helps in the type because that is its place, and Christ's place, beloved, is in our hearts. His place was not in the wilderness. Going through the Jordan was not the ark's place or going round Jericho was not the ark's place, but this is His place, and the Father claims it with His glory: "and the cherubim stretched forth their wings over the place of the ark" (v 8).

R.T. From the way Peter writes in his epistle, do you think, as he reflected over the mount of transfiguration, he came to the Christ dwelling in his heart through faith?

J.A.G. Yes, indeed he did, and he goes on to say, "And we have the prophetic word made surer ... until the day dawn and the morning star arise in your heart", 2 Pet 1: 19. He is in the gain of a coming day. That is what we should be, beloved. We are of the day; we are not of the night, but of the day. The morning Star has risen in our hearts and very soon the Sun of righteousness will appear, but at the moment we are in the light of the day and in the enjoyment of it.

E.C.B. In the scripture referred to in Chronicles, when the ark came in the whole system worked and not until then.

J.A.G. Not until then. The ark, Christ, gives the impulse to the whole realm. What a Person He is! As a Man He is able to do that, set on the whole position responsively to God. All the families - we must not just think of the assembly, great and glorious as that is - but there are all the families, named of the Father, and in some way they are linked up with Christ, but the impulse comes through the assembly. Think of the glory and the grandeur of His service to God as He sings in the midst of such a company: "in the midst of the

assembly will I sing thy praises", Heb 2: 12. There is a full answer to the declaration of the Father's name.

E.C.B. Is there implicit in this scripture both His manhood and His deity? We cannot speak of them in a certain sense as together but His manhood and His deity are here. "The love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge" must be what He is as God, and yet revealed in His manhood in the fulness pleased to dwell in Him: you cannot dissociate His deity and His manhood.

J.A.G. How glorious His position is as Mediator! "For in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily", Col 2: 9. It has been said that manhood has become the shrine of Deity. Who can compass that?

L.A.B. I was thinking of John 17 in this regard, the vastness of what is brought in, but the final touch is "that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them" (v 26). That seems to be eternity in its blessedness, because the realm of glory will display something of the vastness and fulness of the love of God in Christ. That seems to me to be very much linked with what you are saying.

J.A.G. I am sure it is. You come to that point - I love to think about it - when you are able to love Christ with the same character of appreciation and love as the Father loves Him. Is that not wonderful? - "that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them", that kind of love in them. Their love for Him is the same as the Father's and that is, I think, what is in mind when the Lord Jesus in John 17 speaks about being one: "as we are one; I in them and thou in me (vv 22,23).

J.M. Does "the love of the Christ" also involve that we have some appreciation of the Father in the character - not in the measure - in which Christ appreciates Him?

J.A.G. That is the point, I think, in the service of the Spirit as the Spirit of God's Son. That is why I referred to that scripture in Genesis 24: "And Sarah, my master's wife, bore a son to my master after she had grown old; and unto him has he given all that he has" (v 36). He had not actually done that until chapter 25.

J.M. That is involved in union, is it not? - that is that I love what Christ loves and I love in the character in which Christ loves, so that the way in which we have been helped in the service of God is that from union we are led by the Spirit to the Father. You can see the rightness of it.

J.A.G. Surely, so that from that position the assembly comes down fully capable of representing God amongst all the complexities that might be. God is fully represented from the point of view of our links with Christ in union. So you go to Proverbs 31 and read about what a wife should be, what the woman of worth is, what the church is in her holy activities to maintain the interests of Christ because He dwells in her heart through faith.

T.J.B. Does Christ dwelling in the heart involve formation? We have commented on the reference to "through faith", but then it refers to being strengthened and it also refers to "being rooted and founded in love". Does it include the idea of what is formed in us? It is interesting that he says not that the Christ does but "that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts".

J.A.G. Yes, I think it has to be formative. It could not be otherwise. As we proceed on the line of the Spirit's teaching in these epistles there is bound to be formation. "Holy and faithful brethren in Christ" in Colosse, but here it is "faithful in Christ Jesus", persons who have experience with God. Go to the book of the Acts and see how the assembly was set up here, how they came completely clear of everything, burned all the books and that sort of thing, and provided an area that the Spirit was free to open up. As Paul says, he had announced to them "all the counsel of God", Acts 20, 27. So that coming under the touch of the love of Christ is bound to be formative because we must consequently become like Him.

T.J.B. I am encouraged by the reference to "being rooted and founded" which includes both the idea of growth and the idea of construction, but it is where it starts. It is the love of Christ really and you are formed in love according to that Man.

J.A.G. Yes, so here is a family likeness, is there not, amongst the brethren?

M.S. We are speaking now of the assembly and we have spoken largely of being filled as an individual matter, but is there a sense in which that is added to as the saints are gathered together? Even on an occasion like this, one contributes something from what they experience, someone contributes something else, and as the occasion proceeds we have a sense of the fulness being poured into the occasion.

J.A.G. Yes, I think the filling goes on in meetings like this and you come to the service of God and out it comes. You are beginning to understand a little of what is in mind by the fulness of God.

D.E.B. Would you say something about this reference to "him that is able to do far exceedingly above all which we ask or think". Nobody would question what God is able to do, but sometimes we do not seem to see the effects of it.

J.A.G. Well, it works in us: "according to the power which works in us". Mr Darby, in Notes and Comments, uses Psalm 132 to show this. David asks for something; God gives him a lot more.

S.D.K.R. Would you say a little more about "the power which works in us". What is that?

J.A.G. I think that is Joshua. That is the Spirit. He is working in us to sustain us. It is the Father's Spirit, and that is the power that works in us to sustain us and to set us forward, you might say, into the greatness of what is possible, what is available.

R.T. Is that consequent upon Christ dwelling?

J.A.G. Yes, it keeps us up with it. We can maintain the pace, can we not?

R.T. In the earlier references it is the Father giving and so on but now it is "in us". It is not given to us; it is "in us".

J.A.G. The Spirit, as you well know, is mentioned in every chapter in this epistle.

J.M. There is no suggestion of weakness here. It is "strengthened with power by his Spirit" and it is "according to the power which works in us" and then "to him that is able". What you are confronted with is power to bring us into these things. There is no suggestion of weakness at all, is there?

J.A.G. No weakness whatsoever. In chapter 1 we are to know the power: "the surpassing greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of the might of his strength , in which he wrought in the Christ in raising him from among the dead" (vv 19, 20). That is the power which works in us here. We know it here. So we are quite ready to believe that God can do "far exceedingly" - not just far, but "far exceedingly" - "above all which we ask or think". What confirmation, what confidence, this should give us!

D.E.B. I am thinking about present circumstances; John 17 has been referred to and the Lord prays "that they may be one, as we are one" and yet you see the effects of breakdown in brotherly relationships and so on.

J.A.G. Well, do not let us be the one that breaks them down! Let us be the persons who live in the heavens, exercised to get into the sphere and get to know it.

D.A.B. That verse in John 17 was written in the ruin, was it not? We might have said, John, you can hardly speak about that kind of thing now. But do you think he had this Ephesian view? He understood that unless he had all the saints in his mind he would really exclude himself from the enjoyment of these things of which we are speaking.

J.A.G. Yes, because there is no breakdown whatsoever with new creation and this is new creation.

D.A.B. Is it not in one another that we see and work out these things? The features of Christ that we have now available to us are seen in one another, are they not? Do you think that is something that should much more influence our relationships than perhaps it does?

J.A.G. I think so. As we understand the truth and are exercised to walk in it, we approach things from God's point of view. I had this impression as to being filled even to all the fulness of God. I did not think it was very much of an impression and did not know what I was going to say about it. Well, where did I see that? I saw that in the young men taking part in the morning meeting, their hearts going out in affection to the Lord Jesus and to the Father. They did not say much. There was not the expression of great wealth and that sort of thing, but there was fervency and freshness and genuineness. Now that can be filled.

J.W. The side of brotherly relations comes in in the next chapter, does it not? Do you think we have to go in and then we can come out in that way? Is what we get in chapter 3 the climax of going in, as it were?

J.A.G. Yes, I think so. You see how brotherly relations have been established in chapter 2, how reconciliation has been effected.

J.M. We read in Joshua as to the daughters of Zelophehad, but in the Numbers setting, where there is the earnest desire for the inheritance, it goes on to the bringing in of Joshua instead of Moses, as though it gives God moral ground for the leadership of the Spirit coming to light in the saints. Do you think it would be a great thing if we could stimulate one another to have a real desire to go in for the inheritance?

J.A.G. I am sure it would and we can only do it as we enjoy it ourselves. It is not exactly ministry; it is beyond ministry. Paul could minister for evermore about the greatness and grandeur and glory of It, but now he shows the thing, and that is what a man in Christ does.

R.T. Perhaps the greatest breakdown of all was the people not wanting to go into the land. Caleb and Joshua stilled the people, saying God is able. Would that be this strengthening?

J.A.G. Well, it is very encouraging that the Spirit brings up the daughters of Zelophehad, because there was division in the family. Half the tribe stayed over. They would come over and fight the wars

and they would enter into conflict and speak to you about how to deal with matters and whatever, but they did not live there.

J.M. That whole section is very interesting, is it not? You first get the refusal of the manna and then the despising the pleasant land: then Numbers 21. But then there is the socialising with the world which is a tremendous hindrance to going in for the inheritance; it is after that that the daughters of Zelophehad come to light and then the reference to Joshua as taking the place of Moses. All that is perhaps very current for us at the present time.

J.A.G. Very fine! "Charge Joshua, and encourage him and strengthen him", He says, Deut 3: 28. That is the leadership and I think that is the power that works in us.

E.C.B. That power is total, is it not? It corresponds to the Father "is able to do exceedingly above all which we ask or think". It is not "according to" in the sense of 'so far as it is possible to you, but it is total.

J.A.G. That is right and the standard of things is total.

D.J.H. It is unconditional. It says, "the power which works in us". It does not seem to have any conditions.

J.A.G. Yes, it is unconditional. That is why the inner man, for instance, as far as I understand, is not a comparative reference. There is the inward man and the outward man and so forth, but the inner man is new creation and the saints are related to that in themselves. So here is absolute perfection:

"In Christ Jesus" - new creation,
We are graced in God's own Son'

(Hymn 37)

E.P. Do you think that the apostle had that in mind when he wrote to the Philippians, "What ye have both learned, and heard, and seen in me, these things do; and the God of peace shall be with you", Phil 4: 9?

J.A.G. Yes, very fine! "But whereto we have attained, let us walk in the same steps", Phil 3: 16. We could have read Philipians 3 perhaps instead of the scripture in Joshua because it is the same Spirit. The glory has laid such a hold of Paul that he is cutting loose from everything here; not only is he laying it aside, but he counts it as filth. Now going back to what was said about the breakdown in Numbers, that is where I think the scripture in Colossians is so important, that Christ's personal greatness holds our hearts and we are drawn over to where He is because you cannot live without Him.

J.M. Yes, and your reference to Philipians, I read recently that there is no type of a Philipian. The older brethren used to teach us that Joshua and Caleb were really Philipians. It is a question whether Christ has laid hold of our affections, is it not?

J.A.G. It is indeed. Rules and regulations are no use. It must be Christ personally because we are bound up with a system of life and love. Anything below that must fall into the category of brethernism. These daughters of Zelophehad are great personalities. They are Colossian people, I suppose.

J.M. The name of each one ends in Jah, does it not?

J.A.G. Tell us about that.

J.M. I think it is what you are saying, that they are great personalities. Think of what God was in their affections! Think of the appreciation they had of the riches of His glory! Caleb said, "for we are well able to do it", Num 13: 30. These daughters of Zelophehad are the subjective answer to what is seen in Caleb, are they not?

J.A.G. They are, and he says, I am as able today as I was forty years ago; I am eighty-five this day and the thing is still burning in my heart; I have not weakened or waned in my affections and I am quite prepared to go ahead and take the inheritance.

H.A.H. He said the land was in his heart and that would confirm the way these women are the subjective answer to that.

J.A.G. It would. These women are Joseph's true greatness. If we have this kind of thing in the meeting it becomes contagious.

E.C.B. It is interesting to notice in regard to your earlier remark the way in which scripture is written in relation to breakdown or potential departure. John's gospel and Colossians and Hebrews begin with the glory of Christ and that would save us from failing into brethrenism and technicalities and preoccupation with administration and all that kind of thing.

J.A.G. The great delivering feature, it seems to me, throughout the book of Numbers is that there is always the appearing of the glory. The glory appeared. It appears in a meeting and confirmation is there. "And it came to pass, when Aaron spoke to the whole assembly of the children of Israel, that they turned toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of Jehovah appeared in the cloud", Exod 16: 10. Think of the wonder of divine grace that the Lord is ready to manifest Himself in His glory to save the brethren.

E.C.B. I think it is possible that quite a lot of the time we are trying to work our way through the wilderness so that we will reach the land. Have we not to start in the land and work our way through the wilderness?

J.A.G. Yes, because we are in the land, you might say, right away. When Christ was raised from amongst the dead, the saints were raised with Him, the church was raised with Him: "and has raised us up together, and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus", Eph 2: 6. So what we have been speaking about in Ephesians is really the heavenlies. It is that spiritual elevation that is proper to Christianity, a realm of things that is beyond death.

G.C.B. How valuable it is that we begin the week with the Supper. We begin with what the saints are in purpose.

J.A.G. Yes, and we are ready immediately to leave the wilderness. Think of all the help the Lord has given the brethren over the years in the recovery. The Supper used to be at the end of the meeting, and many dear brethren in Christendom work up to the Supper and never leave the wilderness. We have the Supper and celebrate it in the

wilderness and the Lord comes and we leave the wilderness. Then we touch the inheritance and the inheritance is really Christ, our place in His love and our place in the Father's love.

R.T. Does it involve the brethren too? It says they wanted an inheritance "among our brethren".

J.A.G. They are exceedingly mutual people. Their names can be juggled around.

R.T. There is nothing independent about them. It is "with all the saints".

J.S.G. Does the bringing in of "these are the names", and then naming them one by one, link with the thought of "all the saints" - the personality and something distinctive of glory in each one?

J.A.G. That is so. Everyone is a personality. Each has her own impression of Christ. Everyone has his or her own history with Christ and the personality has been developed on that line.

J.S.G. Should it encourage us that these things should not be beyond any one of us however simple or limited we may feel? What God has wrought in each one and the availability of the Spirit and our appreciation of Christ, however simple we may think it is, should be the ground for entrance into these things.

J.A.G. It is, because we are not to undervalue ourselves or write ourselves down because, as called of God, the saints are great persons. "Called saints", Paul says to the Corinthians, chap 1: 2.

D.A.B. Would you say it was the desire of these women that led to Manasseh having a part in Canaan? It seems to be how it reads in verse 5, that but for their desire the whole tribe might have been in Gilead.

J.A.G. They are concerned about the birthright. That is Joseph: he is the birthright, and that is eternal life. So there are ten portions and that appeals to me to be a touch as to the fulness of the birthright.

D.A.B. Ephraim in the next section you read starts fretting about whether he had enough and seemed to be looking for something

outwardly, but I wonder if he had really exploited the inheritance that these women had secured among their brethren. It was adjacent to his own; had he really perceived the potential and value of what had been secured through these desires?

J.A.G. Ephraim and Manasseh, literally that is Joseph. How many meetings, how many of us, have been held in our affections and we are here today because of the daughters of Zelophehad in the meeting, who have earnestly pursued the path of the truth and have in their measure claimed their inheritance and enjoyed it and have encouraged us, in our waywardness it may have been, to come and enjoy this? This is the inheritance. They did not come to us on the basis of Matthew 18 or anything like that, or say, You are worldly, or whatever. They shewed us how the thing worked; they were not prominent persons, but good, substantial saints who were going on with God.

D.E.R. All the tribes had title to their inheritance, but some were more slack than others in taking it up. These daughters of Zelophehad shine in the fact that they are not just concerned to have the title to the inheritance but that they might be entering upon it themselves.

J.A.G. They pursue the thing rightly, legally. They are not embarrassed. They come before Eleazar the priest and before Joshua the son of Nun and before the princes and they set out their case. I think the Lord loves to have people come to Him like this and say, This is what we want; we want the inheritance. There had been defection: half the tribe are living in their circumstances, they have been overcome by the Canaanites who have chariots of iron. You might say - a very pleasant place to live, Gilead, fine for cattle and whatever, but as soon as there is any conflict, they are the first to go. Our place is in the heavenlies. It has often been said that Mr Raven was concerned about brethren coming short of the purpose of God

J.C.E. Do you think it is a fine thing to see these sisters all with the same mind, not appointing another person to go and plead their case but they are all in it together?

J.A.G. Yes, they are characterised by speaking right: "The daughters of Zelophehad speak right". God says that - see Num 27: 7.

E.C.B. They are holy and faithful brethren.

J.A.G. They are "holy and faithful brethren in Christ", and Christ has the first place in all things as far as they are concerned.

R.W.F. What was decided in their case became a statute of right. Does that mean a way through has been made? For instance, what Paul entered into and enjoyed, we can enter into and we are to take that up.

J.A.G. We are to take that up. "A man in Christ" is every single believer: they are men in Christ. Then you go on and see that there is new creation, and that can be developed. Your place in Christ is total, as was said, but new creation is developed in the souls of the brethren. Grow in it and finally it will all be new creation and even the heavens and the earth will be new and able to sustain this glorious scene of divine love. I have been encouraged by Joseph at times. I think the daughters of Zelophehad were his true greatness.

So there is nothing wrong with trees, quite legitimate, no evil in trees, but it says, go and cut them down. To come into the inheritance and develop it in all its fulness, all these legitimate things, if they stand in the way, have to be overcome.

E.C.B. You might say they are to clear the ground. I suppose the heavenly conflicts in Ephesians enter into that.

J.A.G. Heavenly conflict maintains the ground clear. You see the working: "according to the working", Paul says, Eph 1: 19.

E.C.B. The hymn says:

'To hold in faith and constancy
The ground that Thou has won' (No.192)

That is what these tried to do.

J.A.G. Yes, that is what they are doing, clearing the ground, and then they are going to develop the inheritance. They are going to

produce features of Christ. That is what all the various productions of the inheritance point to.

E.P. Do you think the man referred to in Deuteronomy 26, who brought the first-fruits of his cultivation in the land, would initially have cleared the ground?

J.A.G. That is very fine. He says, "I am come unto the land that Jehovah swore unto our fathers to give us" (v 3). He has it all in his basket. He is the basket, which is the inner man, I suppose. Then he lays it down. Breakdown in past history has nothing to do with that basket or those fruits. They are laid down there. The priest is there and he lays them down before the priest and then he says, We have broken down in brotherly relations and we have made a mess of things; my father was a perishing Aramaean, and so forth. And when he gets through that, he picks up the basket again. Now he is the priest.

T.J.B. The footnote says, 'even to its extremities' (see note to Josh 17: 18). Is that like "breadth and length and depth and height"?

J.A.G. I think so. It is the whole scope of it, the vastness of the inheritance. They want the whole thing. I think Joseph has right desires.

G.C.B. This "If thou art a great people" (v 15) is no 'if' of doubt.

J.A.G. No, and then he says, "Thou art a great people" (v 17); you will be able to do it. Even these Canaanites with their chariots of iron you will be able to overcome.

E.C.B. That bears on relationships and that kind of thing because what Joshua is really saying is, You live up to what you are.

J.A.G. Live up to what you are as in the calling of God; you have been called to this; this is your inheritance; you are a great people, go on and show that you are great.

H.A.H. That is Colossians again: "If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ", chap 2: 1. It is not a matter of doubt.

J.A.G. There is no doubt. "Seek the things which are above" - that is the daughters of Zelophehad - "where the Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God: have your mind on the things that are above not on the things that are on the earth". It is solemn to think of that letter being read in Laodicea where they sought the things upon the earth. That did not come out of the establishment either: it came out of brethrenism.

E.C.B. There is a world that is beyond brethrenism, is there not? Do you not think there is a certain amount of help needed, even in the imaginations of the brethren, to see that there is something beyond a system of things here?

J.A.G. I think the inner man points to that line of things. I am certainly not being critical of the brethren whatsoever, but we very often rest on externals instead of getting to the kernel of the thing - peripheral, I think, is the word.

E.C.B. Yes; the inner man is where you meet all the saints, is it not?

J.A.G. It is indeed. To be able to hold all the saints in your heart is a marvellous thing. They are all in Christ's heart.

D.J.H. In Ephesians 1 faith in the Lord Jesus and love for all the saints seems to give Paul a basis for praying in relation to that power being towards us. It seems as though it is essential. I like what you said earlier, that it is not only all the saints, everyone that belongs to the assembly, but all the families. I think we are being helped as to embracing all the saints, and to see that it even goes beyond that.

J.A.G. Yes, "of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named". How many heavenly families are there? We know what there will be on the earth. There will be Israel and the saved nations and then what is being transferred from the millennial condition into eternal conditions. What a scope there is before us!

D.J.H. 'A sphere vast, yet finite' (Hymn 129).

J.M. What we are saying is touching what is spiritual, is it not? As was just said, there is a world beyond brethrenism. There is a world beyond the earth, beyond what is physical and natural. We are

touching what is spiritual here that is for the enjoyment of the saints and for the heart of God. I think that, as we enter into our inheritance, so He has His inheritance in the saints.

J.A.G. It is a poor thing if there is nothing beyond this world. What is the earth in any case? But you think of "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints", Eph 1: 18. Think of what He had in these five women, for instance, then what He has in Joseph, what He has in Judah, what He had in the various tribes and what He has now in the assembly!

D.J.H. Our enjoyment of the thing is not the end; the end is what God receives through our enjoyment in it.

J.A.G. Yes, it is almost mutual: "let us eat and make merry", Luke 15: 23.

J.M. Our entrance into it actually and finally is just before us, is it not? Surely it should whet our appetite and raise our interest, that every hindrance to it might be set completely aside so that we might enjoy this power. I was noticing it does not only say, "Thou art a great people" but it says, "and hast great power" (v 17).

J.A.G. That is the power which works in us. It is another way of saying, I suppose, "for our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens, from which", Phil 3: 20. We are in that position, in the heavenlies, and we are awaiting "the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory, according to the working of the power which he has even to subdue all things to himself". That happens just in an instant.

D.J.H. It is "the power which he has". It is not that it will be taken on in a future day but He has it.

J.A.G. Yes, He has it at the end of Matthew's gospel.

S.H. It is a completed work in Ephesians, is it not? We have to take it up but it needs our going through Jordan, does it not?

J.A.G. Yes, it has to be the acceptance of death, not from the point of view of death but from the point of view of your appreciation of the

greatness of Christ personally. It is wonderful that the Spirit of God has given us such a presentation of Christ's personal glory in the letter to Colosse so that we are brought over in our hearts. So you do not find your life here; you find your life where Christ is.

L.A.B. For the encouragement, possibly, of those that are younger the suggestion of all this is in the epistle to the Romans, is it not? - "and we boast in hope of the glory of God", chap 5: 2. Then there is the "power of his blood" (v 9) and "the power of his life" (v 10). It seems to me that that is to encourage us to see that, wherever we may be in our souls, this is the line of things that God would set our hearts on.

J.A.G. Yes, "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", Rom 5: 5. Then we have, you might say on that line of what the land is, what the inheritance is.

L.A.B. Is not the power for us to enter into it on the line of the Spirit not only shedding abroad in our hearts, but producing which is according to the divine nature in our souls in order that we might enjoy this sphere of things?

J.A.G. Very fine that! Not only is there the leadership of the Spirit but He "bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God" (Rom 8: 16). and we say, in the intimacy of love, we use the language of Christ, "Abba Father". That is nearness. You could never get anything finer or nearer than to be sustained by the Spirit in the consciousness that God is your Father.

T.J.B. It is all a question of what God can do. The section that you read in Ephesians is partly a prayer and partly a doxology, is it not? It is a question of what God can do in us, and then there is an ascription to Him: "But to him that is able to do far exceedingly above all which we ask or think". It is a question of God and what He is as filling the soul, do you think?

J.A.G. I am sure it is. The fulness really is the response to God from all His operations. We have to use that kind of language, I

suppose. Do not let us use it technically, but let us use it with holy adoration!

J.W. One said, We have the power: do we have the heart? That is what you are trying to encourage us to have, the heart for these things.

J.A.G. "That the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts". He has taken up residence. It has been said that when the queen was in the palace the royal standard was up and it showed better in a good breeze.

E.C.B. I recall Mr Lyon having a reading in this city on the assembly in sonship which is some fairly deep material, but it is arrived at through union, is it not?

J.A.G. That is the point. We need to appreciate that union with Christ is carried forward through the whole of the service of God. It is not something we drop when we refer to the Spirit. It is carried forward and the whole outgoing of the service of God is from the point of view of the assembly's association consciously with Christ.

E.C.B. I think Mr Darby says in his letters that union is on the way to sonship, but as you say, it is not lost. It cannot be lost, just as the best robe which was referred to earlier is never taken off. But through union with Christ you come into the enjoyment of what sonship is and therefore, the display of the city in Revelation 21 millennially corresponds to the eighth of Romans, does it not?

J.A.G. Yes, it does indeed; it has the glory of God. I was quite interested in a remark a brother made to me a week or so ago: the main thing in Revelation 21 is the tabernacle, although it is "new Jerusalem ... prepared as a bride adorned for her husband". Mr Taylor said that is only put in there for identification so you know what the tabernacle is.

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"MORE BLESSED TO GIVE"

James Alex Gardiner

Acts 20: 35; 2 Samuel 9: 1-8, 13; 19: 24-26, 30; Isaiah 35: 1-4

Paul, as we know, in the twentieth chapter of Acts is speaking to the Ephesian elders. He has called them over to say these things to them. It is a very solemn consideration that a meeting such as Ephesus, which had touched the inheritance and enjoyed it and which could understand and intelligently enter into the fulness of divine thought, when the trial of jealousy came, you might say, in the second chapter of Revelation, Jesus has to say to them, "I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love" (v 4). No longer could it be said that He dwelt in their hearts through faith. Externally everything was in order, but the vitality of their Christianity was gone. That is really solemn. Not that I want to occupy the brethren with what is negative but it certainly is a warning to us to maintain and strive to maintain in freshness and in vitality our links with the Lord Jesus, our own personal links with Christ.

Well, he is speaking to the elders and he has committed them to God, and to the word of His grace (v 32) - very beautiful! The inheritance is in his heart and as he is going to leave them he says, "And now I commit you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up" - how we need to be built up! Think of the upbuilding character of the word of God's grace! - "and give to you an inheritance among all the sanctified". It was in his heart that all the brethren, wherever he met them, should come up to the divine standard. He is going away and he says, "I have shewed you all things, that thus labouring we ought to come in aid of the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive".

I would like to show if I am able, beloved, from the scriptures I have read, how that works out, how we come in aid of the weak, how we remember the words of the Lord Jesus, "that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive". These, I believe, are Ephesian features and David in 2 Samuel 9 is a real Ephesian, looking for persons to bless. It could have been different. He could

have shown animosity, looked for some reparation. That is not his line. That is not the riches of divine grace. David is looking round for persons to bless. How much more Jesus, beloved! He wants to recover persons, wants to make them strong, wants to impart something to them, impart life, bring them out of circumstances of barrenness and limitation into the grandeur of the circumstances that are proper to assembly life at the level of Jerusalem.

So when David moves on this line the Spirit immediately says, "king David". This is royalty at its height and in its beauty. How influential he is as he moves on this line! King David said, Surely there must be somebody, there must be somebody who needs some help! "Is there not yet any ...?". Think of the appeal of Christ to our hearts! 'Would you like to come into the inheritance and enjoy My love? You know that I love you, Jesus says, 'but I want you to be conscious of it in the power of the Holy Spirit, know what headship is, know what divine leadership is. I will lead you into the great thoughts of God, lead you into them in a way that you will enjoy them and prove the substantiality of them. So David hears that "Jonathan has yet a son, who is lame on his feet. And the king said to him, Where is he?" He is coming to the aid of the weak and he is going to put into practice the words of the Lord Jesus: "It is more blessed to give than to receive". Normally, I suppose, we relate that to the collection and maybe you give somebody a pound or two if you feel they need some encouragement, but the grandeur, beloved, of Christianity - "It is more blessed to give than to receive" - is not exactly related or limited to what is material. Persons who were up to Ephesus, sitting in the heavenlies, were full of divine resource. They know what "the unsearchable riches of the Christ" (Eph 3: 8) are, and here is king David dispensing "the unsearchable riches of the Christ". Think of the wonder of divine grace, the fulness of it. He is searching out every corner of the kingdom. You might have said, As to Mephibosheth, you can forget about him. No, that will not do. It is all the saints. That is what is needed, every one of them. So he sends and fetches him; Mephibosheth comes and David says, "Mephibosheth". That was fine. That put him at ease. He was

reconciled. We were speaking in the reading about reconciliation: having been reconciled to God through the death of His Son, he is now going to be saved through the power of Christ's life. These are wonderful things, beloved. David says, I will provide everything for you because you have nothing; you are poverty stricken. And so we are naturally. God wants to make us wealthy persons. You need to be wealthy in divine love. He says, "put this to my account" (v 18), I will pay, I know the import of the words of the Lord Jesus. Paul virtually says to Philemon: "It is more blessed to give than to receive". Well, David proposes this. He says, "Fear not" - see how he sets us at ease! - "for I will certainly shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father". Oh, beloved, let us drink into the wonder of the divine disposition! -

'Love's disposition now made known,
Thy saints are filled with gladness'

(Hymn 456) We find that every Lord's day as we drink into the cup: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood", Luke 22: 20. Not only is it relief, but it is the testimony to the fulness of divine love and we are given to drink into it - as much as you like, no restriction, drinking into the marvellous fulness and glory and wonder of God's disposition known in love. That is what Mephibosheth finds. What a difference from being housebound in Lodebar where no doubt there was almost poverty, maybe they were on the breadline, I do not know, but it is a place of no pasture, and when that happens you come into the nervous tension department and all that sort of thing and you are brittle and there is no give, no elasticity, you cannot absorb things. Why? Because you have no resource. Well, David says, We are going to change all that; it is all going to be altered; I am showing you how to come in aid of the weak. You might have thought, one casualty, what is that? Only one! It is very interesting that in the state of things at Corinth - and it was bad - there was only one person withdrawn from and that person is recovered. We need to think about that. We need to learn how to keep down the casualties Numbers 33: "These are the journeys of the children of Israel ...

under the hand of Moses and Aaron": not only authority but priesthood. Paul makes absolutely certain that when he writes to the brethren at Corinth and stresses his apostolic authority, he brings immediately alongside it the brother. We need to think about these things and be balanced in the way we handle matters. David shows us how to come to the aid of the weak, how to put into practice the words of the Lord Jesus that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

So here is Mephibosheth now at the king's table. He had never eaten like this before! He had never had this kind of company before! He had never enjoyed this kind of fellowship before! Think of the conversation at the king's table! I believe, in some measure, we were at the king's table in the reading. We were having something from the king. We were enjoying the king's provision. How lavishly the Lord sets out His table! You can have as much from this table as you like! And there is Mephibosheth and there are the king's sons enjoying the king's favour and enjoying the king's provision. Mephibosheth is becoming like the persons in Hebrews 11: he is being made "strong out of weakness" (v 34). This is how we acquire strength: "for we being still without strength" - we had no strength - "in the due time Christ has died for the ungodly", Rom 5: 6. Are we going to be strong? Paul does not say he is weak. He says, "but we ought, we that are strong, to bear the infirmities of the weak" (Rom 15: 1), and we are to receive the weak person, he says, without question. We are to help persons, know how to make persons strong. The need is therefore great that we know what the king's table is, what it is to feed at, what it is to drink in the wonder of the fulness of the expression of divine grace that David sets out here. Imagine taking Jonathan's son, Saul's grandson, up to his table! No recrimination! He does not every now and then say, Well, you know, your grandfather Saul No. This is royalty, beloved, king David, and unless it is so with us we will not be able to stand faithful in the day of apostasy. It is very remarkable that Mephibosheth comes up through the service of Christ in type in this book of Samuel as an Ephesian saint. He is marked by Ephesian

love. Two persons in the second book of Samuel are Ephesians: Uriah the Hittite and Mephibosheth - most unlikely people! But they come out in faithfulness to Christ and they manifest that they love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption. Beloved, how marvellous it is to have affection for Christ that cannot be corrupted! That is the Mary of John 12 - one who loves our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption.

In 2 Samuel 19 it says, "And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king". He had not conformed to the order of things of the day. He was associated, you might say, with the reproach of the Christ. Like Paul, if you had looked at him, you would have said he is the "offscouring of the world, the refuse of all" (1 Cor 4: 13), he is not in that society. It says here, "Now he had neither washed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace". You might say, that is most unhygienic, but that is not the thought. The thought is he is in mourning, he is in sorrow. The throne is empty. Things are in wrong hands. He is saying, I am not going to associate with it. Thank God David was never a party man. He may have failed many times, but at the height of the crisis he says, "Carry back the ark of God into the city", 2 Sam 15: 25. That is Christ's place, not with me, not with them, not with anybody else. His place is right in the centre of Jerusalem. God began to help them from that point. And so there is a company, and here is Mephibosheth. Look at the strength he has! Look at the pressure that must have been on him all the days that Absalom was there with all his beauty and all his corruptible enticements, one who "stole the hearts of the men of Israel", 2 Sam 15: 6. How fine it is to see the incorruptibility of Mephibosheth's affections, and he comes out like David! David is below par here. David failed in door-keeping which is something we need to think about; he let in Absalom, unrepentant. I believe the Lord maybe would raise the matter of doorkeeping amongst us: keep the door, then we are amongst the singers. The gate is there and the gate is the standard. Go through the gate! Come under the scrutiny of the elders; they sit in the gate! They

have Christ before them. They have the principles of fellowship before them. They are not looking for numbers for the sake of numbers. They are looking for persons who have a desire for the inheritance, who wash their garments and come in through the gates into the city and take up their right to the tree of life. Christ dwelling in the heart, beloved, is probably another way of saying the tree of life is in the midst of the street and of the river (see Rev 22: 2). Think of the wonder of it: He has the same place in your heart as He is in the flow of the Spirit! The holy city is a wonderful place. I suppose it is from that street that Mr. Darby had the thought of composing that hymn:

'Where the saints in glory thronging'

(No.206)

Not many streets, there is one street; it connects with the gates, access to the tree of life, Christ there available to every single person. You do not have to go up side streets to find Him. He is there: "In the midst of its street, and of the river ... the tree of life ... in each month yielding its fruit". Think of the freshness and vitality of it! And then "the leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations". Well, here is Mephibosheth, he has proved faithful and he has been slandered and he is not taking up his case. He is not seeking to push for justification, which we like to do, maybe in our own quiet way. He is like David characteristically. David is slightly out of character, and Mephibosheth has understood what is meant by the words of the Lord Jesus when he says to the king, "Let him even take all". "It is more blessed to give", he says, "than to receive". He says, I understand what divine grace is all about, I know its power, I know its working, I know it reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, and he can have the lot because I am in the enjoyment of eternal life and have been all the time that Absalom has been in power. Is that not wonderful? That is Christianity in the face of apostasy. That is what the recovery is. We may forget at times that we are in a recovery and we are being recovered to the greatest of divine thoughts. Our souls should be steeped in the promise to the overcomer in Philadelphia, Christ

opening up all that is in His heart to such a person, telling him about His God and about the city of His God and the name of the city of His God, the new Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven from His God (see Rev 3: 12). Think of that conversation, the wealthy kind of communion that belongs to that level of things. I think Mephibosheth is a wonderful person. He is not claiming his inheritance. He is not seeking to take up his case. He says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive", his yieldingness is known of all, he is a real Philippian. We would like to be like that: Philipians are the testimony to Ephesians. You have been in heaven and come out like a Philippian. Your yieldingness is to be known of all. Your mind is full of the various beauties and things that belong to the humanity of Christ: "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are noble, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are amiable, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if any praise, think on these things", Phil 4: 8. Let our minds be saturated, you might say, with these beautiful features that come out in the manhood of Jesus. All these are features of royalty. The king himself "meek and lowly in heart". There is no arrogance about Jesus, nothing like that. That is the worldly way of doing things. Think of Paul beseeching "by the meekness and gentleness of the Christ", 2 Cor 10: 1! We would like to be like that. We would like to have these qualities about us. They are influential qualities that are effective in the way things are done in the assembly, and they flow from hearts that love the Lord Jesus in incorruption.

I refer to this beautiful scripture in Isaiah where we have what in our day would relate to the purpose of God: "The wilderness and the dry land shall be gladdened; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose". That can happen now in our hearts. Are there any evidences of wilderness about me? any dry land? any depression? Depression is in the desert, areas in my soul where there is sadness and depression - not that we are not to feel things rightly. That is not what is in mind. He is going to come in and lift us up to the divine level. Think of Him gladdening the dry land, causing

the desert to rejoice and blossom as a rose! Think of the fruitfulness, the fertility, that Christ brings into the soul! The Spirit having way, He will bring out the fragrance of the rose! Think of the perfume that belongs to the saints! Isaac said to Jacob, "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which Jehovah hath blessed", Gen 27: 27. You can feel that about Mephibosheth; there is a field that the Lord has blessed. Think of the greatness of the divine proposals here: "It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and shouting: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it". What is that? I think that is the glory of sonship, the greatness of it, the dignity of it. That is Christ: "His bearing as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars", Song of Sol 5: 15. How dignified Jesus is! He would bring about these features in us, features that have developed through proper and true heavenly breeding. People go to finishing schools to finish them off so they can conduct themselves in accord with what is proper to society. Think of how God in His finishing school brings about breeding, makes persons like Christ so that they know how to conduct themselves, how to behave. Paul goes over his conduct to these elders at Ephesus, how he was with them from the first day until now, and he goes over the whole history of things, and he shows them what first works are. The Lord says, "thou hast left thy first love ... do the first works", Rev 2: 4, 5. Go back to Acts 20 and you will see what first works are, the labour and toil that Paul put into the building of that assembly, not only teaching in the school of Tyrannus, but visiting the brethren in every house, exhorting them, admonishing them with tears. How earnest, how real the whole matter of divine love and divine purpose was to the apostle and the results come out in this chapter.

So it says here very beautifully, "Strengthen the weak hands and confirm the tottering knees", "come in aid of the weak". Do not write them off! Strengthen them! A brother said in the reading, Shew them the glory of Christ! Shew them the purpose of God! Shew them that in your soul what was once desert is now blossoming like the rose, that you are carrying the fragrance of heaven, the aroma of heaven, about with you! Think of that fragrant

incense beaten small: that was Christ to God's nostrils. Even at the moment of the abandonment, according to the type, there was the fragrance of the incense on the mercy-seat! How beautiful is the holy humanity and person of Jesus!

Well, we are to encourage one another on this line. "Say to them that are of a timid heart, Be strong; fear not". There is no cause for fear. All the call, beloved, is for encouragement. All the call is for entering into things - "Go up boldly and possess it", Num 13: 30. It is your inheritance, and all this divine facility is available to us so that we are strengthened to go in and enjoy what is really our proper portion.

So it goes on to say: "Be strong, fear not; behold your God: vengeance cometh, the recompense of God!" That is another dispensation and that is another day, but think of the wonder of it: "And the mirage shall become a pool". You fancied you saw something and when you went there it was not true. Well, it is going to be true in this case. Think of the mirage becoming a pool! "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and torrents in the desert". Think of the abundance of God's provision and His committal personally to His purpose! He is going to make it effective in the souls of His people. So we need to be with Him to facilitate the effectiveness of it, facilitate Him in His working so that we come into this great and glorious position - very beautiful! "And the ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and come to Zion with singing; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads". There is no joy like this. This is what eternal life is. We know from the teaching that, whilst it is one of God's prime thoughts, He brought it forward to meet the condition of death that came in judicially upon man. So that it is in the wilderness and it is in these conditions of breakdown and sorrow and the pressure of death and the various pressures that are on the spirits of the brethren, it is in these circumstances that eternal life is to be known and enjoyed. This is the area of it here. In that sense we antedate what will yet be seen millennially when the

blessing will be poured out upon the nation. The blessing will be commanded upon the nation: "for there hath Jehovah commanded the blessing", Ps 133: 3. Hence the need, of course, for brethren dwelling together in unity. Live together in unity; know how to live together, how to work together. It is fine in local meetings: you know your local brethren, you know how they are going to respond, they know how you are going to respond to whatever comes up, and you are able to cope with it, and the Lord gives grace that we can cope with it, and things are worked out according to His mind for His glory.

So it says here, "They shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away". May the Lord encourage us to think about these things, to learn how to come in aid of the weak and how to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that "It is more blessed to give than to receive"; "God loves a cheerful giver", 2 Cor 9: 7, somebody who is cheerfully giving. They are dispensing. They are not keeping it to themselves. If you have some impression of Christ, impart it, let it loose amongst the brethren and you will marvel at what you find, how that will grow, how it will come back to you and how you will send it out again with something added to it. These are great matters: "It is more blessed to give than to receive". May the Lord encourage us in it for His Name's sake.

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TRAVELLING CHILDREN

It is easy to forget that the infant Jesus was taken by His parents to stay for a time in Egypt. The journey must have been a perilous one but Joseph had divine cause to undertake it. The distance would seem to be about two hundred miles and the family would not have travelled in a well-appointed chariot such as the Ethiopian eunuch had when travelling on the same road years later. It is not easy to say how old the child Jesus was when the family returned to Israel, but the arch-enemy Herod had died. The family returned by heavenly direction to Nazareth so that Jesus should be called the Nazaraean.

In the scriptural account of the later life of Paul there is much of interest in his travels. Indeed there is a great deal of prophecy of the testimony of the Lord hidden in them. It is quite likely that there were children in the same voyages which the apostle undertook. At a place called Tyre where Paul and his company, and indeed all the passengers, had to wait seven days before continuing their course to Palestine, the local Christians cared for the hindered travellers, and on the departure of the ship the children with their parents knelt down on the seashore and prayed.

As to the journeys of the Israelites in the wilderness, there was a special word, through Moses, that the children should go with their parents and elders. Many of them would, in the course of time, remember only the manna to eat and only the water from the rock to drink. These were types of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you feast on Him?

J.C.Evershed