

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 261

December 1994

Contents

THINGS WE HAVE COME TO

THE THINGS THAT REMAIN

THINGS WE HAVE COME TO

Hebrews 2: 10; 3: 1-3; 12: 22-25

R.T. I thought the Lord may encourage us to speak of some of the things we have come to. We are so apt to take our impressions from the confused state of things that is abroad and the breakdown arising through man intruding into the things of God. But it is a fine thing to see that God has not changed His mind or His thoughts. It is very striking, in the book of Numbers particularly, when the people failed and breakdown had come in, that God brings in the word, "When ye come into the land of your dwellings", Num 15: 2. God would remind us of what He has called us into, that His thoughts have not changed but, too, that He has made a way to secure them all in Christ. I thought that these scriptures may help us to see the way that God has operated to work out His thoughts, and the One in whom He has operated in bringing many sons to glory. It is what God is doing, it is still His mind to bring many sons to glory. How He has done it is through that One already made perfect, the Leader of our salvation. Then we are to be partakers of a heavenly calling. What we have been called into has its centre and source and origin in heaven. Then we have some detail in chapter 12 of the beauty of these things to which we have come. We have come to them now; it is not that we are coming to them but it is what the gospel calls us into, it is what divine grace calls us to have part in. We all feel how little we have part in it but maybe we could be encouraged today to see that it is not only open to us but it is the Spirit's mind and His service to bring us into the joy of them now. In spite of what has come into our histories and what we have had part in, it is still God's mind to bring many sons to glory.

L.McF. So the greatness of His Person is brought before us immediately: "it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory". These "all things" are a very wide thought, would you not say?

R.T. Yes, it brings us back to the greatness of God, "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things". There are certain things that have come into man's hand which have ended in breakdown, but these are things that God has retained in His own hand, including the saints. So that "for whom are all things" means that He is the great end, and He is the great operator. The hymn says, 'O God, the thought was Thine, Thine only could it be' (No.92). It was His mind to bring sons to glory and now He has operated to secure His joy in them. So it is to encourage our hearts that, in spite of what is broken and the weakness we feel, God is the great operator and He is working out His own thoughts in His own way.

J.A.P. It is of interest that you say God changes not. Is that not one of His names? He says "For I Jehovah change not", Mal 3: 6.

R.T. He is the same, He does not change. We have been taken aback by many things that have happened in the history of the testimony, but God has not been taken aback. He does not change in His thoughts by what we have done or what has come in; He is still bringing many sons to glory. It is "many sons", not a few, but all those who were purposed, those who were in His mind; He still regards them in their true dignity: "bringing many sons to glory".

C.F.D. Maybe you would say a word as to what this glory is.

R.T. I think it is bringing us to Himself. I suppose it includes what we have come to in Hebrews 12; I think it is bringing us into His own circumstances, His own surroundings. What would you say?

C.F.D. It is a very beautiful expression; we often draw on this scripture at the time of the service of God on Lord's Day. It seems to be something that relates to the persons themselves and yet has to do with the place into which they are brought.

R.T. I think it is where divine grace and love would have us to live; it is bringing us to glory. We have our part in responsible matters of course, but divine love and grace set out in the gospel are to bring us into divine arrangements. I think the glory would be something of divine arrangements which we touch in the assembly. You will remember that when He brought them out of Egypt, it says He

brought them out and He will bring them in and plant them in the mountain of His inheritance (see Exod 15: 17). So God has wonderful thoughts even now of which the saints are to be in the joy and the liberty.

L.McF. This would be in His purpose for us before time began, though it awaited the fulness of time - God sending His Son - for us to have our part in it. Is that right?

R.T. I think so. In Christianity things have become fixed, you may say. It says earlier in the chapter: "But now we see not yet all things subjected to him, but we see Jesus" (v 9); there is a Man in whom God's thoughts have been set out and in that Man we can see the thoughts of His purpose unfolding.

G.D.P. Did you have some thought about sons being the full thought of maturity, not just simple believers but sons?

R.T. That is a very fine thing to lay hold of today, that in spite of our history God is regarding us in the true wealth and dignity that divine grace has put upon us. You say some more about it.

G.D.P. I thought from your opening prayer that you had that in mind, maturity going on to full thoughts, until we arrive at the full grown man. Is that right?

R.T. Very good. So in the times we are in, broken times, it is very easy to settle for a lot less and rearrange our circumstances short of what divine love and grace would have us to enjoy. We feel these things very much. But God's thoughts have not changed, He is bringing many sons to glory, and in doing it, "to make perfect the leader of their salvation through sufferings", to give expression to His thoughts and to bring the saints into the joy of them.

C.S.E. In the thought of many sons there is no limitation; the limitation is on our side. But God is bringing many sons in, and that opens our minds to a vast area that is under His hand; expansion is in mind in that.

R.T. God has greater thoughts about us than we can ever have for ourselves; He is bringing many sons to glory. The effort of the

enemy is to cause us, as I said, to settle for less. But it is beautiful the way God is operating and has operated through "the leader of their salvation through sufferings". There is One in whom it has all been established and in whom the way has been set out; He the firstborn, the Son, the Beloved; already, we may say, in glory, the great Forerunner of a wonderful company, is He not?

C.F.D. Bringing us into the idea of the divine arrangement is very suggestive. Do you think bringing many sons to glory involves the whole mediatorial setting of things and the functioning of it?

R.T. I think so. Ephesians would open it up more I suppose, that through Christ and by one Spirit we have access to the Father (see chap 2: 18). It is emphasising the Person there more, but here it is the environment into which we are brought. Think of divine grace bringing many sons into circumstances where everything is suited to divine love. It says He has done it and in doing it He has made perfect the Leader of their salvation through sufferings. What a substantial basis has been laid in the sufferings of Jesus for God's heart to expand and bring many sons to glory!

J.A.P. The expression "it became him" is a very wonderful expression, as if to say, This is what our God will do.

R.T. It is very beautiful, there is wonderful feeling in it; "it became him". He did not leave man after the fall; He has not left us because of all that we are as of Adam's fallen race, but it became Him in the working out of His thoughts to make perfect the Leader of their salvation through sufferings. He has operated, as we are so often reminded, from His own side. The footnote tells us as to the Leader that there is only one, it is the One who has worked out the whole plan of divine love and thus has made the way for God to be free to bring many sons to glory.

L.McF. Do you think service is in view? It would seem to be a primary thought of the blessed God. Even in relation to Israel He says, "Let my son go, that he may serve me", Exod 4: 23. So it does seem that the service of God is very much in view here.

R.T. Yes, I think so. It would issue in that, not so much service in the wilderness but service in the land, we may say - sons at home, is it not? How sweeter and fuller the service becomes as we touch something of the environment in which divine love would have us to be at home. The song at the Red Sea was one thing - very beautiful - but when you come to David's Psalms and the dedication of the house, you see something of service and sons being brought to glory. It helps to have our thoughts transferred to the One in whom it has all been brought to pass; firstly as the Leader of our salvation and then the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. The whole system is upheld and centred in Christ, a glorious Man.

C.S.E. Would you say a further word on "to make perfect the leader of their salvation through sufferings"? Why do you think it is put that way - "through sufferings"? You might say, because of who He is, He could have used other means to do it, but it is through sufferings.

R.T. I think it brings before us very beautifully the manhood of Jesus. Many things were done by angels but here it has been done in a Man, and the sufferings have brought out the feelings of the Man. In the majesty of His Person death had to give way: "Lazarus, come forth", John 11: 44. These are things He did in His power. I think it is to endear the Person to our hearts; He fills this position having gone a suffering way and, in that suffering, a basis has been laid in righteousness so that man may be cleansed to come into the position of sons in glory.

C.F.D. Would the position that the Lord has taken as Apostle and High Priest of our confession emphasise His manhood? I was wondering whether the appeal to us to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession would show how the Lord has moved from His own side to bring this all about. The Apostle would suggest the side of authority and power, the High Priest would have in mind the moving into the inward side of things where all these features that you have been speaking about can function according to the mind of the Lord.

R.T. Yes, I think so. It is very beautiful that it is all centred in Jesus. Feelings come into it; our brother has referred to His being made perfect through sufferings. It is not that He fills an official position as an official but a Man as the Apostle and High Priest. Not only is the mind of God made known but the people are being brought into it through the operation of divine grace. A brother used to tell us that he heard Mr Raven say that as Apostle He maintains the calling at its height and as High Priest He maintains the people at the height of the calling. That is a very choice expression and worth thinking about, that as the Apostle He is from God's side, He holds the whole system up; it will not break down. It broke down under Moses, but Christ as the Apostle maintains everything for God, that will never break down. But then in His priestly grace He considers for the people and He holds us in relation to the greatness of that calling. That is Jesus; it is not Moses and Aaron, they were the men who set it out in type, but there is a Man, Jesus, who is able to hold things for God, and there is no breakdown there. He suffered and, on the basis of His blood being shed and His being raised from the dead, He is maintaining a whole system of things for God; but in His grace He is touching the people. It is worth considering, is it not? "Consider" it says, the heavenly calling and the One in whom it is all centred and set out.

J.A.P. In the book of Numbers to which you referred, Moses and Aaron were quick to intercede when the breakdown came. Do they answer to what the Lord Jesus is currently maintaining on high and the Spirit here?

R.T. It is all part of what flowed out of the sufferings of Christ, and the Spirit here is the answer to the High Priest above. You think of the High Priest there above with the names on His breast and on His shoulders; the answer to it is that the Spirit is here serving us in view of the saints being maintained in the glory of that position above. It is a wonderful wealth we have come into and come into now in these very circumstances of weakness and breakdown that we feel so much.

A.S.H. "To make perfect the leader of their salvation through sufferings" - "make perfect" - would it be right to say that He is looking for perfection in the leaders?

R.T. Well, He has found perfection in Christ, has He not?: "This is my beloved Son", Matt 3: 17. But then that perfection is filled out in the position He has taken because of the way He has suffered. In His death and in His blood He has removed every stain of sin, and in those sufferings He has laid a basis in righteousness for God's heart to come out to bless the sinner, but more than that, to bring sons to glory. What a God He is!

C.F.D. Is the writer trying to elevate the thoughts of these Hebrew believers to see that, great as Moses was and high as he was in their estimation, what has been inaugurated and brought in through the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus, is greater than anything that ever went before? The glory connected with this system far exceeds anything that belonged to Judaism and he would try to lift their affections and their thoughts to come into that.

R.T. I think we can do with something of that today. What was set out in Moses and Aaron declined. When there was revival, there was a good priest and a good state, but things declined. Here things cannot decline; "consider the Apostle and High Priest ... Jesus". Things are in good hands, not only is the system righteously established and maintained but the saints are in good hands. We are in the hands of this High Priest, this One who is known to us in His personal name, Jesus. So that, as you say, he is asking the saints to consider this, not consider how man has intruded or the enemy has spoiled, but to consider that in this Person, Jesus, things have been established for God, and the saints are held in relation to their living part in that system.

L.D.P. I was concerned as to the expression 'leader' and notice it refers to the Acts where it is the originator and completer of things. I am thinking that it is distinctly Christ's position.

R.T. There is only One, is there not? And there is nobody to take His place, "the leader of their salvation". It does not depend on any

other. As you follow through the footnote it says that the word applies only to Christ. It is used only a few times in the Scripture. "The originator of life ye slew", Acts 3: 15. It is the same word and it applies only to Christ, "the leader of their salvation". So that the whole race, you may say, takes character from the Leader of their salvation, and He has made the way through suffering that we may follow into the joy of what He is leading us into.

A.S.H. Peter in Acts says, "Let the whole house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him, this Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ", Acts 2: 36. He is all in all both Lord and Christ.

R.T. That is a good word - to know assuredly. We get shaken sometimes, but, "Let the whole house of Israel know assuredly". God has placed the heavenly calling in good hands and all is proceeding under His hands. So we, those who are partakers of the heavenly calling, have to consider, too, the centre of the system, Jesus.

K.N.P. Does this considering involve contemplation?

R.T. I think it means taking time. How many voices there are abroad today, how many influences are at work that would occupy our time and distract us from the system that God has established. "Consider the Apostle" fixes our attention on the centre of the heavenly calling and the assurance that it has all been brought to pass. It says, He is faithful in all God's house.

J.A.P. There is a note of Mr Darby's on the word 'consider' in chapter 12. He says, 'Weigh so as to judge its value, and sometimes in comparison with other things'.

R.T. It is a needed word for us - to be able to look away from what is around us; and later: "consider well" Him. But we have here that God has established everything in Christ and from that position the heavenly calling is to be enjoyed today.

C.S.E. The Spirit of God wants us to make time to consider these things well, to consider Jesus. There is so much about Him. In this

section He is the Leader and He is the Apostle and the High Priest, the same one Person. And there are many other titles and glories that are great enough to occupy our consideration, do you think?

R.T. Yes, but a Man bears them all, they all hang upon Jesus. It is very fine to think of it. The Apostle is needed, the authority and the principles and the grace that He has set out, are all needed, but there is a Man able to maintain the calling at its height. But that same Man is able to maintain the saints at the height of the calling. The combination of authority and grace that comes in in the expression of divine love is very beautiful.

D.McF. I was wondering about the expression, "holy brethren".

R.T. It is a wonderful thing to be in the gain of, to look at the brother next to you and regard him as one of these holy brethren. We have all known what it is to be overtaken and fall below our dignity, but it is fine to pray for the brethren as part of the 'holy brethren'. Though they may at the moment be outside the enjoyment of the position, we should be able to pray for them and regard them as holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, and encourage one another to come into it through considering that it is all centred in Jesus, the Man who would appeal to the affections of every believer.

L.S. In John 20 Mary comes to the Lord on resurrection ground. He says, "Touch me not", and then He gives her that word, "Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God" (v 17). That was the thought at the very beginning of resurrection, He was bringing many to Himself. She would touch Him alone but He would have the thought to bring others in.

R.T. Yes; and where were they, do you think, when the Lord gave that message about "my brethren"? They may have been at home, maybe discouraged, they may have thought that things had not worked out as expected. The Lord says, "Go to my brethren". Mary knew who they were. It is like the holy brethren here. The saints are never to lose their true dignity and character and place in our

affections though the circumstances that may come in that way for the moment may overwhelm us.

L.McF. So priestly service would be in view; the sons are to be priestly.

R.T. It helps us to change our thoughts when we consider Jesus, the Man who has gone through and the Man who has established everything in relation to God. So that we need to be helped to pray for our brethren like this, and regard ourselves and one another as holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling. Maybe the world and self have intruded, maybe sin has been allowed, but God has His thoughts about them as the holy brethren; and as the Apostle and High Priest the system is still functioning through coming to Jesus for us to have our living part in it. So in chapter 12 it says "ye have come". You have come to it now, I understand; we have not come to what could change but to what divine grace has established for present enjoyment and experience. So it says, "but ye have come"; it is not what you have not come to. There are many things, brethren, we ourselves feel that we have allowed and become ensnared in perhaps - things that we really have not come to. But we have come to what we spoke of earlier, to divine arrangements where God has set out His thoughts for the saints to be at home before Him.

C.F.D. Is there a moral reason why he refers to Zion first: "ye have come to mount Zion"?

R.T. That is a beautiful area of things, is it not: "ye have come to mount Zion". Mount Zion never breaks down. We have come to what God has established on the basis of His mercy and His love. There are some beautiful psalms about it, are there not? It says of all the tribes He chose Judah, the mount Zion which He loved (see Ps 78: 68). I always remember that it was remarked in past ministry that we get two Jerusalems but only one Zion. Jerusalem refers to what God may have placed in relation to man's responsibility, so He makes a new Jerusalem, but Zion refers to the purpose of His love and what He has established Himself apart from breakdown, that the

saint through divine mercy are brought to have their living part in. What would you say about 1t?

C.F.D. I think what you are saying is very helpful. How the saints at that time would have needed this and maybe how much we need it at the present moment. What you come to first is a whole system of things that is established by God, immovable, it cannot break down, it is all from His own side, mount Zion, absolute stability. They needed it and you feel that we are at a juncture where we need it ourselves.

R.T. I think it would be quite right to say that you can substitute the word 'assembly' for 'mount Zion' · we have come to the assembly. We have come to an area of things that is the fruit of divine purpose; not the assembly on the side of breakdown but the assembly as in God's purpose where we are to find our living part.

C.F.D. I think your use of the word 'assembly' helps us. Maybe mount Zion is a little more mysterious to us, but relating it to coming in from God's side involving His purpose helps. God can be hindered in no thought of His and He is going to see the assembly through and He is going to see it through now in our own time, do you think?

R.T. Yes, I think so; and we come to enjoy it. It is a fine thing to come to enjoy what divine love as prepared. It is all divine preparation - mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, angels, the assembly of the firstborn. Man had no hand in any of these things but through divine mercy we have been brought to have a living part in them where God has His arrangements and we are to find our home.

L.D.P. Do these verses in Psalm 48 fit in: "Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King" (v 2); "Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments. Walk about Zion, and go round about her: count the towers thereof" (vv 11,12). We see failures, but we are told to walk about Zion, go round about her, count the towers.

R.T. How beautiful a vessel the assembly is as the fruit of divine purpose! That is what we have come to. As you say, beautiful in elevation. It is not part of man's arrangements. That Psalm is very beautiful and encouraging; "go round about her". How much there is to engage us in assembly experiences, the preciousness of this vessel, what she is to Christ, what she is to God; and we have come to have our part in it. The verse you quote is very beautiful - to go round about it, to consider her bulwarks. What attacks the enemy has made against it, but there she is still to be enjoyed today. It may be in smallness and outwardly broken circumstances, but we have come to what is divine in its conception and proceeds from the thoughts of divine love, and we have our part functioning in it. So as you come to mount Zion, as we come to the assembly, different principles affect us. We are in the world but worldly principles have no place in mount Zion or the assembly. We have come to what God has set out according to His own thoughts.

G.A. In 1 Kings 10 the queen of Sheba came and saw Solomon's glory. It says, "I gave no credit to the words, until I came and mine eyes had seen; and behold, the half was not told me: in wisdom and prosperity thou exceedest the report that I heard" (v 7). Would that fit in with the position we are in now? It exceeded the report.

R.T. Yes, I think that is true. As we come to Jesus we see that He is beyond every comparison. But then He has a counterpart, we have come to mount Zion. It is not only that we love the Lord Jesus and have come to find Him as our Saviour and come under His influence as our Lord and Head, but we come into what belongs to Him here. Mount Zion is the place where He is expressed, I think, the place that He chose. It says of all the tribes He chose Judah, the mount Zion which He loved. So that the assembly is the vessel of divine choice. We have not only come to Christ but we have come to the assembly where He is cherished and where we are to find our part and our enjoyment.

C.S.E. There is another Psalm, 125: "They that confide in Jehovah are as mount Zion, which cannot be moved; it abideth for ever" (v 1). I am thinking of the link with the assembly. The Lord says, "On this

rock I will build my assembly, and hades' gates shall not prevail against it", Matt 16: 18. So mount Zion is something stable, immovable you might say.

R.T. Yes, that is not on earth, is it? Think of the nations and the countries and the systems here today that are changing; countries' boundaries changing, their names changing, their legislation, it is all changing, but we have come to a system of things that proceeds from God and where His mind is expressed, and we have come to find our life in it now. I think that would help us to be assembly persons, assembly-minded persons. They are very scarce today. We are mixed up with worldly influences and all these other things but I think this would help us to be assembly-minded persons, that we are considering for God's dwelling. Mount Zion is where He dwells, is it not?

J.A.P. Another Psalm, by recovered men - the sons of Korah - brings out the thought that God loves Zion: "Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion", Ps 87: 2. That is the place of assembling, is it not? I think you should say more about that.

R.T. If you read that verse it will tell us more.

J.A.P. "Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion more than all the habitations of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God ... And of Zion it shall be said, This one and that one was born in her; and the Most High himself shall establish her".

R.T. It has been said before in this city that it is better to go to the meeting than to sit at home.

L.McF. That is right. I think God's sovereignty should affect us more. These sons of Korah were affected by the sovereign mercy of God, and He has taken us up and given us to have part in such a glorious system of things.

R.T. Yes. We have been taught that the gates of Zion represent the saints assembled and the habitations of Jacob being in our houses. There are many excuses for us to stay at home, we are tired and one thing and another, but it is better to come to the gates of Zion, is

it not? We come into a fresh sense of mercy, and divine grace quickens our affections to see the arrangements that God has made and included us in those arrangements. Would that be right?

G.D.P. I was thinking of the living side of things, the city of the living God. It is terrible to get into a half-dead state, is it not? Would that be fitting in with your thoughts?

R.T. Heavenly Jerusalem where the sun is always shining, the city of the living God. It is what is above the clouds, above the breakdown. We have come to have part in what is elevated and where God finds His joy and where the saints can find their home.

G.D.P. What would you say about "the assembly of the firstborn"? Does that fit in with the many sons brought to glory?

R.T. Yes. I am sure you remember better than I do what has been said about this verse, that mount Zion is the country, heavenly Jerusalem the capital, and the assembly of the firstborn the society. What would the country be without its society? That has always challenged me, that we have come into a heavenly society, come into divine arrangements, but we have come there into the assembly of the firstborn, everyone there with a robe on, everyone in their true dignity, everyone there clothed in the worth and the excellence of Christ for His eye and for His pleasure. So the assembly of the firstborn registered in heaven connects somewhat with what we were saying about the holy brethren, what the saints are in the thoughts of God and what divine grace has made us - the assembly of the firstborn. We are there with equal rights, nobody made to feel that they are not wanted or inferior, but they are equal and all like Christ. They are registered in heaven, they would not be on man's registers - the offscouring of the world, Paul says (see 1 Cor 4: 13) - but the assembly of the firstborn registered in heaven. There is not time to go into the details of these things, but the centre of it all is Jesus again. It has come through a Man in whom the whole system is set out and who imparts His own character and features to the whole system in which through grace and mercy we have been called to have our part in now.

C.F.D. Would registered in heaven involve the fact that they are citizens there? That is where their name is, that is where they belong. That is in a sense their point of origin. It seems to stand completely over against the idea of what belongs to the earth, do you think?

R.T. Unknown yet well known; unknown here, strangers below, citizens above; they are in this divine register. Think of how love has registered our names there!

C.F.D. Would this involve the idea of the book of life? It might not be the same thing exactly but that is another area in which the name is registered in heaven, in the book of life, do you think?

R.T. Yes, and who registered it? It is very feeling to think of that. We could not register it ourselves. The father usually registers the birth, does he not but here it is our heavenly Father who has registered our names in heaven. What love and what grace has entered into it, and they are never to be removed. It is fine just now and again to take a look at the name that is registered there, despised by men, maybe persecuted. The Lord says, Blessed are ye when men persecute you (see Matt 5: 11). It is fine then to have a sense that God has registered those names in heaven, not only mine but the names of my brethren.

C.S.E. Where your name is registered is where you can vote. It is good to be on that roll. It is like "our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens", Phil 3: 20. It is very elevating to think of where we are recorded - a heavenly recording. That helps our spirits, do you think?

R.T. Yes, that is where we have rights, as you say. It is very good that being registered there gives us right to be there. Not that we can ever work up to it, but divine love has registered us there saying, This is where you belong, this is where I will have you, though we are denied our rights and persecuted below.

L.D.P. Is that "my new name", Rev 3: 12?

R.T. Well, we are getting into deep waters now. But it is the name that divine grace has placed upon us. It is not named after the Jacob order of things, it is Israel, is it not? God changed Jacob's name. What marked Jacob was the man after the flesh, but the man of divine choice was called Israel, 'prince'. It would be a name that is suited to that register. These things are, as we have said, to elevate us in our thoughts, and it has all been made possible as having come "to Jesus, mediator of a new covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling", the righteous, unchallengeable basis on which the whole matter has been established, so that we may now in the presence of weakness know something of our heavenly part that divine love has purposed for us to enjoy.

NEW YORK

21 May 1994

Key to initials

G.Ashby, New York; C.F.Dadd, Plainfield; C.S.Elliott, New York; A.S.Hinkson, New York; D.McFarlane, New York; L.McFarlane, New York; G.D.Pfingst, Plainfield; J.A.Petersen, Plainfield; K.N.Pye, New York; L.D.Phillips, New York; L.Stank; R.Taylor, Barnet

THE THINGS THAT REMAIN

Robert Taylor

Haggai 2: 1-9; Psalm 90: 1,2; Hebrews 13: 8,9

I desire to say a word, with the Lord's help, on the things that remain. That severely limits the things we can speak about because there are very few things that remain as they were. Time has made great changes in everything here. Indeed the Lord sums it up: "treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust spoils", Matt 6: 19. That covers about everything, either the moth gets it or rust gets it. Men try to make the most enduring things but they are all perishing. Everything here will be wound up too. When we speak about things that remain we must come to God - "Thou remainest": what a fine word that is! 'Changeless through all the changing years' (Hymn 15). It is fine to have a point of reference in life, some stable centre from which you can take direction. The seaman needs the stars or the sun to get a point of reference. It has to be in the heavens; there can be no point of reference in things here. A Christian has a point of reference in Jesus where He is. The Man who has been exalted to God's right hand becomes a point of reference for the Christian. 'Changeless', as we have sung, 'through all the changing years'.

So here God, speaking to the people, says, "The word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, and my Spirit, remain among you". What a word of encouragement! What a history had come in from the time that word was spoken, but God had not changed His thoughts about them - the word remains. Then He says, "my Spirit, remain among you" - a faithful God. What a word of encouragement this must have been to the godly remnant! He brings it in here to encourage them to work. That is what I would like to do - to encourage all our hearts to be committed to the work. How much there is to cause the failing knees and the hands to hang down as we look on our part in things and see what has been allowed in God's ways. God says, My word, My Spirit, remain among you; it has not changed. Laying hold of that would help us to

work. You say, Is it worthwhile? Well, God is addressing the remnant here; He says, "and to the remnant of the people". God would be addressing us now like that, the remnant of the people. Few there may be, but God thinks it worthwhile to speak to them to encourage them. However few there may be God looks on them as part of the whole and He is encouraging the remnant to work, to lay hold of what He has left among them - My word and My Spirit remain among you. Oh, what cause there was for Him to take them away! They had broken the covenant, they had proved not only unworthy but unfaithful. What cause there was for that covenant to be broken! God says, The word remains that I covenanted with you. He is faithful to what He has said; He is bringing many sons to glory in spite of what has come in. Then He says, "and my Spirit, remain among you"; it is there to be availed of, it is there to be freely known. As you read part of the word you might say it would condemn them because it was their side of the covenant, but God says, If your side has broken down, My side remains, a faithful promise true to Myself. So He encourages them. I would like to apply that to our time. I think the word may be applied to what the Lord says: "On this rock I will build my assembly, and hades' gates shall not reva1l against it", Matt 16: 18. Into this dispensation that we are part of there has come to light this vessel that Christ is building: "on this rock I will build". That building has not stopped because of the breakdown, or the poor material, you may say, from man's side, but there is the material under the hand of Christ that is the product of heaven's activities. The Lord said to Peter, "flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in the heavens". So there is what remains. You may say, It is hard to point to it. But it remains and the light of it shines in the remnant. In the remnant there remains, as we have been so often taught all the characteristics of the whole. The only difference between the remnant and the whole is the quantity: the quality is still the same, only the volume is reduced. It is the time we are in dear brethren, the quantity has been reduced but the quality is to remain; and God addresses the quality in the remnant that is left. The Lord would encourage our hearts as to what has come in through His word as to His assembly, "my assembly" He

says, and hades gates shall not prevail against it". That remains and will remain until the rapture. In this wonderful time there is developed a bride for Christ through divine grace which is to be His counterpart, soon to be displayed in her own beauty and glory because she has a glory that belongs to her and her alone. The assembly will have a glory that outshines the glory of all other families. In a broken time the light of it is there and the remnant would seek to walk in the light of it, mourning that there is not the quantity, but seeking to work that the quality and shining may be maintained. It says, "be strong ... and work: for I am with you". Think of the Lord's promise; He said to His few: "I am with you all the days", Matt 28: 20. In these days in which we are, the days of breakdown, the days of reproach, He says, "I am with you".

It is very striking in this chapter how often it refers to "Jehovah of hosts". What a word to the remnant: "Jehovah of hosts". What an encouraging word that He has His hosts. He has them all. So few are available, so few known to us, but He is Jehovah of hosts, He remains the same, and He will have hosts too, He will have many families. What a company the redeemed will be!

'Hark! ten thousand voices crying
"Lamb of God! " with one accord;
Thousand thousand saints replying
Wake at once the echoing chord' (Hymn 14)

What a company - Jehovah of hosts! It is not referring here to angels - there will be hosts of them too - but the hosts would be the redeemed. Jehovah of hosts - what a company! How beautiful to think of them, majesty belongs to them. What an encouragement to them that God should take this title to address the remnant of the people: "I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts". Then He says, My word, the word that He has spoken. What light has come into this time, as I say, of the preciousness and the uniqueness and the peculiar glory of the assembly, outshining all other jewels as the pearl of great price. The Lord is securing it through these conditions that we are in. "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts". What a mixture there may be around! God, in

His disciplinary ways, is not spoiling the silver or the gold, He is refining it by removing the dross in the sufferings of the present time; but "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine", that will not be damaged. God is very particular in His administration and in His government - "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine". O, how precious it is! Much may be surrounding it but it is there and He has His eye upon it, and the remnant would have their eye upon it too. You can just visualise this passage being read to them, perhaps like us, feeling the loss of so many of their brethren, and how the former glory had gone, thinking there had been better days in the days of their fathers. How encouraging this word would be as it was read to them: "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine", God unchanged and that same word remains among you. May we be encouraged to work, dear brethren, to work at these great things that we have been brought to have our part in- Christ and the assembly.

Then it says, "my Spirit, remain among you". O, what grace! The Spirit has not gone; He has been offended, He has been insulted, but "my Spirit, remain among you". God Himself is there. It is not angel's voice but it is, My word and My Spirit; God Himself has come to be among them, identified with those suffering people. The blessed Spirit of God is still here. As I said, He has been offended, insulted, ignored, despised, yet He remains among you. What grace! I would encourage us to make room for Him. If He is here, what things are possible; He is not in the world but, it says, "remain among you"; the Spirit here with the saints to develop these assembly features, to maintain them in the light of their heavenly calling. It has been remarked before that the Spirit becomes very prominent in what we may speak of as the remnant epistles - in Timothy, which would have that character, things depend on the Spirit when men have broken down; in the book of Revelation, when all is broken up, the Spirit is emphasised: "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies". Those assemblies from Ephesus to Laodicea, whatever their state, My word and My Spirit remain among you; the Spirit is here. It has been well said that that covers the whole church period from Ephesus - the assembly

set up in its freshness and glory at Pentecost - Laodicea - representing the decline and the departure that has come in in the course of the testimony. Yet the Spirit is speaking: "my Spirit, remain among you". Whatever conditions we may feel, dear brethren, the Spirit is still speaking. This chapter would be to encourage us to have an ear to hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies. He is not speaking to the world, but He remains among you speaking to the assemblies, "fear ye not". I think the Spirit is particularly with the saints in suffering circumstances. Peter tells us that, If you suffer, "the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you", 1 Pet 4: 14. What a beautiful word! You think of the suffering saints, persecuted by their employers, as they have been in this country and others, the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. What dignity marked the suffering saints! How God would clothe them with glory! If men despise them and shut them out from their societies and their arrangements, how God would honour them; the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. I think the Spirit draws near to us particularly in the suffering circumstances of the testimony in which we are today. The Spirit joins His help to us to comfort and to encourage and to strengthen us to work in the light of the whole, to be strong and to be courageous, for there is what remains and will remain to the end. Through all the circumstances of assembly history, decline, departure, recovery and revival, in it all there is My word and My Spirit remaining among you. What a point of reference, as I have referred to earlier, to lay hold of, that God is speaking and He is there to work out His own designs and His own thoughts; "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine ... The latter glory ... shall be greater than the former". This dispensation. dear brethren, is not to end in breakdown or confusion, it will end in glory. It will end in the whole assembly being caught up to be with Christ. What a view to have before us that the end is glory, the latter glory shall be greater than the former. It does not refer to numbers exactly but to the accumulation of what the Spirit has wrought through the dispensation. We all mourn the limitations of the present time, and many would speak of the former days being better, but I do not think that is spiritual thinking. I think the Spirit is leading on, there has

been progression through the dispensation and the Spirit is developing something that is going to exceed in glory the former. We just need to think of how the Spirit's voice has developed among us in what we speak of as the service of God. The older brethren can think back on how in the Spirit's gentle grace, there has been developed something that is precious to the heart of Christ, and response from sons' affections to the Father that is greater than the former. Now the Spirit is going through and, as we are with Him, we come into the blessedness of the latter glory of this house. He is not building another house because there has been breakdown; that is what men do, they abandon one thing and try to start something else. That is not God's way; He says, My word is still there and My Spirit is still there and "this house", the same house, the same assembly that was there and began at Pentecost and went through the dark ages when seemingly there was very little. What spoils there will be from this dispensation, worked out through the sufferings of the saints and the Spirit of glory and of God resting upon them. It will be said in that day, "What hath God wrought!" Num 23: 23. It will all come in to display to a wondering universe. Do we not look on to that, the day of His appearing, "when he shall have come to be glorified in his saints, and wondered at in all that have believed", 2 Thess 1: 10? The assembly will be with Him. Indeed, I think it is true that the assembly will add something to the glory of Christ as He appears; she will be with Him. The assembly with Christ will be the wonder of the universe and there she will shine in her own glory alongside of Him. We are having part in that today, dear brethren, amidst all the circumstances we are in. The silver is being refined, the gold is being purified, and it is soon to be in its true place when the assembly is alongside of Christ. May our hearts find recourse and encouragement to lay our hands to the work, to be committed to what is here in remnant conditions to which God is committed. Think of the Lord Jesus being committed to it the Spirit being committed to it and the Father being committed to it; may we be more committed to it. May there be proceeding in our local gathering. however small the silver and the gold coming to light,

what is divinely wrought in the saints that God has His eye upon, and may we appreciate and value it increasingly.

I refer to Moses; he says he found a dwelling-place in God. He spent the latter part of his life in the wilderness with a complaining people. The Psalm has its added beauty as you think of the man Moses and what he had to bear with the people through the wilderness. He says, "*Thou* hast been our dwelling-place in all generations". God remained the same. How many hard days Moses had; they spoke of stoning him and returning to Egypt, what a hard day that must have been! These thousands of people were all against him and saying, Did you bring us out here to die? Think of him going into His dwelling-place; he says, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place". What a comfort, dear brethren, in the reproach of the present time, that we have a dwelling-place in God. The heading of the Psalm is, "A Prayer of Moses, the man of God". We do not have many of his prayers. How sweet this is! He says, "*Thou* hast been our dwelling-place in all generations". What times passed over Moses' head. In those forty years, as he saw one generation passing away under the government of God, he says, "*Thou* hast been our dwelling-place". Have you, my friend, a dwelling-place? Have you a place that you have for yourself that you can retire into - the presence of God? How sweet it is! The psalmist speaks of it time and time again. David, when persecuted by Saul, says, you "come out to seek a single flea, as when they hunt a partridge on the mountains", 1 Sam 26: 20. He had a dwellingplace in God. How safe it was! How secure it was! David speaks of Him as "my rock" (Ps 18: 2), a rock that he stood on; amidst all the shifting sands of men and what men did, David found a place, solid ground, on which his feet could stand. Moses had it here: "*Thou* hast been our dwelling-place". He does not change. Could I just be very simple about it? He is always glad to see you. However down to the cast you may be there is a home. That is the impression this verse leaves with you, that Moses had a home, not in the desert sand and complaints of the people but a home in God. "Lord, *thou* hast been our dwelling place"; it was where he lived. He came out to handle

the complaints of the people, to speak to the people, to deal with their questions and bear their burdens. He carried them in his bosom. What a man he was! It was because he himself had a dwelling-place in God, the unchangeable One, ever the same; "from eternity to eternity thou art God"; and He has come into time in Jesus. It says He is "the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come", Heb 13: 8. It would not be true about any other person, but here is One who is the same, God come into time, "the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come". I wonder if He is that to you and to me. Maybe He was more precious to you yesterday, the day that you saw the burden of your sins rolled away and you sang, 'O happy day that fixed my choice on Thee my Saviour and my God'. Happy day when the burden of our sins was rolled away! Perhaps He meant more to you yesterday: did He? What about today? He is the same - very blessed that! It says, When we were still without strength, Christ died for the ungodly (see Rom 5: 6). When there was no response in your heart or mine, Christ died for us. That was yesterday, you may say, in our experience. How about today? Still the same in love towards us, that same grace, not imputing, not raising questions as to us or what we have done, He is the same today, to be relied upon but perhaps not made room for the way He was yesterday. O, He would address the remnant, yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come, Jesus Christ the same. It says He became flesh and dwelt among us, the Man of the gospels, O, what grace, page after page as you go through Luke, the Man of grace - yesterday. What He was there in the days of His flesh. He would touch the leper, raise the dead, feed the five thousand: that He was yesterday. But how is He in your affections today? He is the same Person, no longer limited to the condition into which He came but the same blessed Person today in glory, His grace flowing out unhinderedly towards all who make room for Him.

Then it says, "to the ages to come"; "from eternity to eternity thou art God" - the ages to come. It is fine that through all eternity there will be a Man, the Man Christ Jesus, who will be our link with eternal conditions. He came into the conditions in which we are in

order to make His grace known, to win our affections, to meet our sins and our liabilities; but that same blessed Man will be the point of reference through all eternity. "To him who loves us" - what a song that will be! - "and has washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father", Rev 1: 5, 6. He is a Person who remains the same, in His love and in the appeal of His grace to hold us. So it says, "It is good that the heart be confirmed with grace". How many strange doctrines abound; what theories abound as to the Person of Christ, undermining His manhood and His deity. But what grace, beloved, to confirm the heart that that Person is "the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come". May He be increasingly precious to us, that our link and our knowledge of Jesus is not historical. It is not what He was but what He is, what He is today.

May He become increasingly precious to us, as the days go on, to encourage our hearts to work, to be committed. What He has begun He is going to see through, He will see it through to glory. May we, as under the Spirit's grace and hearing the Spirit's voice, go through to God's praise. For His Name's sake.

NEW YORK

21 May 1994