

MEMORIALS
OF THE
MINISTRY OF R. DUNN



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

The notes of readings in this volume have been selected from the ministry of our late beloved brother, Robert Dunn.

By general request the readings on James which have appeared in "Mutual Comfort" have been included so as permanently to preserve them.

Should this volume meet with acceptance, it is hoped to publish a companion volume.

H. F. N.

March, 1923.

THE LINES ON WHICH WE CAN COUNT ON THE LORD'S SUPPORT.

(MATT. V. 1-16; 22-24; VI. 16-18; VII. 6.)

R. D. I thought we might be able to encourage one another on the lines on which we can secure the Lord's support. All our exercises, blessings, and enlargement would depend on this; nothing is so important as to be conscious of the Lord's support. I thought the point of the kingdom of heaven is that we should get all the advantage of the power and grace of the Lord on high to maintain us here. One can see it running through Matthew's gospel; and Peter's epistle runs pretty much with Matthew. James, too, gives the same thing—that is, a line on which we may go and have the support of the kingdom in our souls, but it involves conditions on our side.

A. F. Are the conditions found in this chapter: "Blessed are the poor in spirit"?

R. D. Yes; the Lord instructs us in principles to regulate our conduct so that He can lend us His support, and at the end of this wonderful teaching on the mount He tells us what will fall and what will not fall. The

house built on the sand falls; the house on the rock does not fall. Peter expresses it in this way. "If ye do these things ye shall never fall."

A. F. And that because of the Lord's support, not because of strength in oneself.

R. D. The kingdom of God describes what is formed in our souls, but the kingdom of heaven is objective. The Lord is in the place of power for our support. Matthew v. 1-12 gives a beautiful outline of what we are to be here. Then, following on that, the Lord gives us His sayings—principles to govern us—and as we answer to these we become what the Spirit of God says we shall be, in the beginning of the chapter—that is, "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world."

J. M. This chapter assumes that the Lord was in heaven.

R. D. Yes; that He had taken His place on high. In the earlier chapters we see how He meets us in our need, but now He takes a place on high and His disciples come to Him. In order to get the advantage of this instruction we have to withdraw from the multitude, to get away from the atmosphere outside, and to listen to the Lord giving us the legislation that belongs to the kingdom of heaven. Having received relief and blessing

from Him, we own that a new legislation must come in by Him, and we come to Him to be taught what is suitable to Him and what will secure His support.

J. M. This would put one in quietness.

R. D. Yes ; we are prepared to sit and listen. The beauty of the beatitudes comes before our hearts as we listen to the Lord speaking of what it is to be blessed, and the kind of people that are blessed. It encourages us in right exercises.

J. G. These are the people who accept the conditions.

R. D. Yes, and the Lord describes them. There is a moral order in the blessings. Wonderful situation to sit down in His presence, while He opens His mouth to teach ! Our place is to listen.

A. F. He Himself would be everything here —the expression of all He teaches.

R. D. Yes. You see the beauty of it all in the Lord.

J. G. The Lord was after a generation which should be marked by these characteristics.

R. D. "For he shall save his people from their sins." It is a generation after Himself. Peter refers to a chosen generation, a people for a possession. Five times he alludes to what we are called to. It is wonderful grace that

I am called to be one of His people. It does not say in Matthew i., "to save *sinners* from their sins," but "to save *his people* from their sins."

J. M. Would all this be morally necessary before the church is introduced?

R. D. That is exactly what I was exercised about—to see the line we pursue, so that we might be free for church exercises. In Matthew the church is looked at as Christ's assembly; it is a citadel here called the assembly, it is not the eternal view. The kingdom of heaven is individual in its bearing, and applies to each of us, but it has in view the Lord's support so that we are free for our place in the assembly. The education in relation to the assembly begins in chapter xi. It is a citadel established on earth in presence of all the opposition, and against it the gates of hades cannot prevail.

A F. These chapters (v. to vii.) would answer to Romans. We are to be here for the will of God.

R. D. The Lord encourages us by presenting the blessedness of it all in the first part of chapter v., and the result is that there is a light here in the world set forth in such a people who are the salt of the earth. You get first the order in which we are put together as a people: "Blessed are the poor in

spirit." You see this in the Lord Himself. The Spirit of Christ says in the Psalms, "But I am poor and needy."

R. F. If we think of Psalm cvii. the pride of man is reduced so that as afflicted he can be set on high and families made like a flock.

R. D. Yes; it brings out a man who is wise and has experience; he *knows*.

R. F. So he can praise in the session of the elders.

J. M. He is brought to his wit's end.

R. D. Yes; but not in connection with himself, it is in relation to the ship. The first three experiences related are personal: the first is the normal experience the soul has on entering the wilderness, wherein I begin to learn the Lord's support and care; the second and third are where I find myself in a path of self-will and without His support. But now in the fourth experience I go down to the sea in a ship, referring to identification with the Lord's interests here, and the exercise is how the ship is to reach the desired haven. It is the exercise one has in relation to the testimony; and that is what produces an elder.

So the Lord is praised in the congregation, and in the assembly of the *elders*. An experience has been passed through in connection with the testimony, and one such experience puts you among the elders.

J. G. What do you mean—one such experience puts you on the line of the elders?

R. D. You can help the brethren now. It is the greatest gain to go down to the sea in this way. The Lord will always bring the ship through and enlarge you in the way He does it.

To come back to “poor in spirit,” it is the spirit that should mark us in relation to one another.

J. G. How would it work out?

R. D. In the way one would be lowly with one’s brethren.

A. F. “With all lowliness and meekness.”

J. M. You do not have exalted thoughts.

R. D. You accept the place of being poor down here and you are prepared to feel things in relation to God.

R. F. “Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished.” (Eccles. iv. 13.) A child will take admonition, but you cannot rebuke a king.

R. D. We are glad to be placed among the people of God with all their exercises. We are transparent and lowly, our wills having been broken, and can move together; we are thrown together if all in spirit are lowly. It is the way to regard one another. The Lord brings us down so that we have no high

thoughts. We come to Him full of trouble and disease as in the previous chapter, and thankful that grace has met us. Now the encouragement is, we have the kingdom of heaven. The Lord says He will dwell with those who are broken and contrite, and such have the support of the kingdom of heaven. It is the greeting He gives us as He opens His mouth to speak. On those lines, He says, you can have My support. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity . . . I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." (Isa. lvii. 15.)

R. F. Christ took the bondman's place—the Hebrew servant; none came lower than He.

R. D. You see this spirit in David, and it secured the Lord's support. The people loved him from the beginning, because he went in and out among them. The opposite was seen in Saul.

R. F. Peter stood up for himself.

R. D. Such a spirit as we are speaking of is not admired in the world. People look down on a poor-spirited person. This is not a poor-spirited person, but a person poor in spirit. Peter was high in spirit, but he it is who writes in his epistle of the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, so precious in God's sight.

R. F. Paul began (as Saul) as an "insolent and overbearing man."

R. D. His name was changed to Paul, the meaning of which is "small." Now as a consequence of being "poor in spirit" we become mourners.

J. M. What do you mourn for?

R. D. You mourn in relation to God and His rights.

R. F. Those who are poor in spirit would see the opposite kind of man in evidence in this world.

R. D. Yes, and your exercises run out in relation to the rights of Christ and of God, and you accept a path of suffering.

A. F. "Then shall they fast."

R. D. What appeals to the heart is that the Lord says *they will* do it, not that they *ought* to do it. It touches the heart greatly that the Lord has said we *shall* do it.

J. G. It is the outflow of affection.

R. F. I hardly think we become poor in spirit until we are brought through pressure. Like Job, he was by no means poor in spirit before the pressure came upon him.

R. D. The finest case I know of is Hannah. She expresses the exercises of the remnant in relation to the coming in of a Man pleasurable to God. And she could not find sympathy anywhere! She was cherishing an exercise

that the Man pleasurable to God—and the graces of that Man—should be brought in, and such an exercise in relation to bringing the Lord in makes you a mourner. Hannah calls herself “a woman of a sorrowful spirit”; the natural element only brought in false sympathy. But was not she comforted? Her desire is realised and she begins to pray, but her prayer is all a song, and widens out until it embraces the establishment of everything in the world to come.

R. F. Naturally we do not choose these things. Peter was allowed to get into a very serious position before he learned things.

R. D. And then he says “Called”—“Him that has called us.” (2 Peter i. 3.) One wants to feel the *claim* of the call, as well as the *grace* of it. It is a wonderful privilege to be amongst the people of God.

These principles are cherished among us, so that our spirits might be free practically from all that obtains in the world, and that we might grow up together with a view to church exercises. Chapter viii. gives the result of all this. There, what the Lord teaches governs us; cases of palsy and fever *will* arise amongst us, but it is good to be in such a condition that we can ask the Lord to come in and heal. We may have difficulties, but we have the Lord's support, and can ask Him

to settle things. If weakness is evident, or fever, or leprosy, the Lord will come in and meet it all.

A. F. Do you refer to among the Lord's people?

R. D. Yes; *moral* invasions by the enemy.

A. F. Like the Songs of Degrees, it is the way to go up to the house of God.

R. D. Yes; meekness shines out when we are tested. We can wait. We do not assert anything nor claim anything. We wait; we do not move to vindicate ourselves.

R. F. This instruction assumes that there is spiritual power.

R. D. If we think of Moses, he got his impressions of things at the burning bush. The grace of meekness was to mark him peculiarly, but he was not tested till he was formed to meet such a test, and this was a long while after. It was a wonderful vindication when he stood and did not answer a word. "Now the man Moses," it is recorded, "was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." (Num. xii. 3.)

R. F. Prior to that he had got into touch with God. He had said, "Shew me thy glory."

J. G. The Lord says, "I am meek."

R. D. On that line we begin to have inheritance. "Mine eyes shall be upon the

faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me." It is a great exercise to have such conditions on my side, that the saints may go on with me. It is a great heritage to have one's place among the saints, and it is entered into on the line of meekness. Nothing is of more value than to gain a brother—to "inherit him," and thus to inherit everything.

A. F. If you inherit a brother, shall you by-and-by inherit the earth?

R. D. I may have the sense that I have not got my brother, but in meekness I say I am *going* to have him, and I never stop until I get him.

A. F. Such a course might lead to loss here.

R. D. It is well worth while. Nothing is so valuable as what is spiritual; there can be no comparison. It is a great favour conferred upon us that we should be allowed to suffer *for His sake*. There is a moral order in what is here. We must suffer for righteousness' sake if we answer to these blessings—it is unavoidable—but the top-stone is to suffer for His sake; and in relation to that the Lord uses very strong language, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven."

R. F. Eternal life, we have noticed in Luke, is on the line of surrender. You forsake all—father, mother, home, etc.

R. D. The compensation is that you find eternal life enjoyed in new relationships entirely. Here you get the extent to which you may go on the line of sacrifice till you reach suffering for His sake. There can be nothing greater.

R. F. Would you open out the difference between suffering for righteousness' sake, and suffering for His sake.

R. D. The former raises the question of righteousness between one another or with men, but the latter is in relation to the reproach of the Lord Himself.

R. F. Moses was on this line: "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt."

R. D. Quite so. Then there are two results which follow. If we are placed together in this way, the light shines out to men and the restraining influence of the truth is seen in the saints—the salt. (Ver. 13.) It is the result of being what we are as answering to these beatitudes.

J. M. You mean in view of the people of God being salt and light here?

R. D. Yes; it is very encouraging to see the consequence—not exactly the aim—is that there is a light here, and it shines; while at the same time there is what acts as a preservative so that evil is restrained.

R. F. It is the moral effect of a company in which these principles are seen : they would exercise a restraining power such as was lacking when the Lord visited Sodom.

R. D. One is humbled that the restraining effect seems so feeble. One turns to these scriptures, exercised that they might govern us, as the legislation has not been withdrawn. If they *do* govern us, the light shines and evil is checked.

A. F. In principle this is what will obtain in the world to come.

R. F. It would act in the same way in a small company like ourselves.

R. D. No doubt the effect would be that people would seek after God.

R. F. One would suffer personally if one's lot were cast in a meeting where these principles were not gone on with.

R. D. Your exercise would then be to submit to this legislation yourself and immediately this exercise would be fruitful. You would be marked by being poor in spirit and a mourner, then you would begin to inherit ; and you secure support in such a way that you would no doubt inherit the meeting ! It would not remain weak.

R. F. My thought was, that as set for these principles together, we are a shield to one another.

R. D. No evil can triumph in the company if these things are cherished. A case arises, and, there being no abnormal thing to deal with, we can invite the Lord to come in and He settles it at once. The cause of powerlessness in meeting difficulties is that we are not answering individually to the principles that belong to the kingdom of heaven, and the Lord cannot support us. If we hear and keep His sayings, He likens us to a wise man who built his house on the rock, and we know no storm can shake it. The Lord covers the whole of His teaching here by this promise. Then, after unfolding what we have been looking at in the earlier part of chapter v., He brings in sayings—principles—to govern us. I should like to look for a moment at the three chapters in this way, as three different lines that the Lord takes up, enunciating certain principles which are to mark us. First, in chapter v., righteousness is secured. It is a great help to look at righteousness according to God. In the world a distinction is drawn between a righteous man and a good man; and in Romans v. Paul says, "scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." He speaks about what men understand as a righteous man and a good man, but spiritually there is a difference. It is good to see

how righteousness works. The Lord describes a line of conduct that brings out righteousness. In chapter vi. we have the effect of having secret dealings with God. In chapter vii. certain things are brought forward in regard of which I have to exercise discrimination, so what marks that chapter is spiritual discernment.

D. M. What about chapter vi.?

R. D. Each person has his own secret place, a place of seclusion with God Himself, so that one's exercises are governed by that. You have this retreat always with God; it is not a general retreat, but each soul is to have it. It is very searching; it lies behind all our movements. A husband and wife may have general exercises, they pray together, they are heirs together of the grace of life; but beyond that there is what is individual. The husband has his retreat, and the wife hers; every individual is to enjoy a secret place with God.

D. P. This is an individual experience.

R. D. It is individual piety in which we devote ourselves to all surrender.

J. G. Are we equal to sacrifice apart from this?

R. D. No; not according to God. This is a most important scripture as to our relations with God; it lies behind everything. The question is raised as to whether each has

got a retreat with God. If you have, you do not come under a wrong influence with any one else ; you have this reserve. God Himself has the first claim : you have known Him, and you say, "My God."

R. F. That cannot be maintained unless righteousness is fully answered to.

R. D. Your conduct is such with your brethren and with men that there is no question between the soul and God ; all the secrets of the heart are laid open to Him.

J. G. Those who walk with God are pleasing to Him.

R. D. Take what is said about trespass. If I go into the presence of God with a trespass between a brother and myself (or with men), I cannot have the Lord's support in seclusion. I cannot go on with God—not a step. I am of no spiritual use to God or to His people until that question is settled.

J. G. Would this be the holiest ?

R. D. The holiest brings before you the Lord Jesus as the means by which God will accomplish everything ; this might be simpler.

It suggests a little of the judgment seat. It is really piety ; one refers everything to God. It is simply one going into the presence of God and opening one's heart there—communing with Him and to His pleasure.

J. G. You enter the holiest to contemplate ; here, you turn to God as to your exercises.

R. D. It would not be a very far cry from this to the holiest. The result is that the Lord speaks about certain things that we shall do—very interesting things. In chapter vi. the question of righteousness is a settled thing and the heart is free for devotedness. There is a measure of devotedness, and it increases. It is a question of whether *we* should have arranged the chapter in this order. It commences : “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men.” We might have put that at the end. But no ! it is the *least* thing on the line of surrender—the initial thing. We are so impressed with being in the presence of God that we *must* give ; it is the effect of being in the closet.

R. F. One is reminded of Exodus xxiv., where Moses, Aaron, and the elders went into the mount and saw the God of Israel ; and what is seen there is compared to the “body of heaven in his clearness.” Prior to this the judgments are given.

R. D. These judgments and ordinances would answer to what we have been looking at. Grace brings you out of Egypt. Everything is transparent for you, but you are moving now, and it would not be right or according to piety not to be giving. You look around to

see who needs, and you do not do this in public. The spirit and manner of your giving is governed by having to do with God.

A. P. "Your Father who seeth in secret."

R. D. Yes; that secret with God supports you when you are misunderstood, and supports you to continue surrendering. You have not done anything for men to see; you could not help it. Hence you do not remind people of how faithful you have been, how you have gone on for twenty or thirty years, and so forth, you leave it all with God.

R. F. "In that he liveth, he liveth unto God."

R. D. This is how it is done practically. Then follows encouragement to prayer. This would appear to be greater than almsgiving.

R. F. Surrender was in the court.

R. D. While prayer was at the golden altar. We have here an outline of prayer to govern us. We need this; it gives adjustment in regard to our attitude in the presence of God and what is before us there. It would regulate our motives.

J. G. Two things marked the Lord. His perfection here defeated Satan, and, in addition, it gave Him morally a title to possess.

A. P. Why should we ask for things that the Father knows we have need of?

R. D. God loves to give His approval to

exercises dictated by Christ. Prayer is a service of surrender, and if we saw that we should take it up in this way.

To give is very simple; we cannot have to do with God without wanting to know how to express Him before men. It requires purpose of heart to part with something, but you take it up. Then you go a little further, you are prepared for continued exercises and you *pray*. You do not want men to see that, it is done in secret. The reward would come in that you would have spiritual power yourself, and more, you see the answer. You wait on God in secret about some exercise among the brethren, and you do not tell them. It may mean that you have to come out as a peacemaker, suffering. But you wait for the result, and when it comes you do not tell people that you had been praying for that for six months; the Lord supports you in secret in your soul.

Then fasting goes further. Prayer is in relation to Christ's interests, it supposes you have been espoused to His interests. You do not remain long on the line of giving without taking up a position in relation to His interests. You get an inheritance that you oversee. Recently a brother remarked to me that he had noted a movement in his son. He had been exercised about him, and one

day he left home earlier than usual and brought a sister to the meeting in a bath chair. It indicated the way the exercise and prayers of his father were beginning to be fruitful in regard of him. He began to "do alms," and as one commences on this line, one gets a portion among the people of God and an enlarged exercise. You would expect such an one to pray next, he has now got something to pray about. God loves to be waited on in relation to what He has here, and to have a people on the earth, so supported that the light is shining and the preservative effect felt—good triumphing in His people. What we are contemplating is what lies behind the surface, not what we see when together. If these things are followed up, then when we are together we shall have waters to swim in, and we shall be able to take up church exercises together. No evil could invade the company. If a difficulty arises in a place, we ask the Lord to meet it and He comes in and puts His hand on one and another, and we learn that *we* are the ones who have to be put right, that we are not in the good of one of these chapters.

R. F. The kingdom is a point of security, no adverse power can attack. His pavilion is there, and you are lifted above your enemies.

R. D. That involves conditions, and apart from these conditions we cannot get the Lord's support. He will not support what is not right, nor what is not of Himself. In the presence of God we are governed by what is of Himself. This issues in fasting, and fasting is what we are *not* asked to do. Your heart is purposed to do it; you see this in Daniel. You purpose in your heart to make surrender to the Lord in matters where you might legitimately establish a claim; you purpose in private. You cannot lay it on any one else. I could not suggest it to you, but I am bound to come to it. If on the line of alms-giving, and exercised in prayer, I shall give my heart to fasting on account of the abnormal conditions around us and the claims of the kingdom of heaven. The Lord is absent, and one in exercise is brought to this; one is prepared to forgo what one might claim. You prepare your heart between yourself and God. You tell no one. You deliberately anoint your head with oil; there is no depression about it. We have for our help expressly what Paul was inspired to write, shewing how much he fasted, though normally this is a secret. If you tell, you do not fast. You accept it cheerfully, you do not grumble!

There are certain things one might do on

the line of duty. Well, that is all right, though rather poor, but you cannot fast on the line of duty. A brother is ill and you feel you *ought* to go and see him, that is not fasting. The care of the Lord's interests is laid on your heart, and you accept surrender joyfully. The result is, you get a great sense of the Lord's approval. You ask the question, Is it to be parting with things all the time—giving, praying, fasting? Oh, no! Now you come to laying up treasures. The Lord says, as it were, It is your happiness, blessing and enlargement that I have before Me—the lines on which you will come into inheritance.

R. F. It is "we who live" who are delivered to death.

R. D. Yes; your money is not being heaped up—there are plenty of ways for it to go—and your time is being claimed, but what a thing to be rewarded like this! Divine thoughts are being ministered, are we valuing them as much as we might? What gain here can be compared to them? A divine idea is infinitely better than a guinea! If you give up anything as the outcome of affection for the One whose interests you have espoused you think you have done *nothing*; moreover the Lord will always thank you. He will say, "Thank you" in secret, and He will support you in power publicly, though others may blame.

No one gets enlarged like a man such as this ; he gets *everything* from the hand of God. He may receive a thought from a brother and one day it leaps into life through exercise, and he says, I see it all now. Is there any kind of earthly treasure that could be exchanged for that ? You come to a "night" and nothing could meet you then but that word He gave you, so you tell Him, " By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer " (Psa. xvii. 4), and you have reached your morning.

The result of all is seen practically in the next chapter. We are so encouraged individually that if trouble arises among the saints, we can ask the Lord to come in and He is free to do so and to deal with it.

Blairgowrie, 30/12/16.

SUMMARY OF TWO READINGS ON THE SONGS OF DEGREES.

(PSALMS CXX.—CXXVII.)

I.

OUR thought was to trace how we are led on to what is collective—the house of God. We have before us the last of these songs of degrees—standing in the house of the Lord—but by beginning at the first it will help us to that end.

They apply literally to Israel in the coming day, but they are all for our instruction.

Psalm cxix. suggests the kind of man God has found that He can put into the company, and the psalms that have been read shew the way the company is reached.

In the first three the company is reached in a place where affection and comfort are found. The following three psalms give something of the collective sorrows that are undergone in connection with the Lord's interests. We have an appreciation of the affections and comfort that belong to family relations. All this is reached on an experimental line. It begins with distress. There is a time when a soul is led into the liberty of salvation,

and he begins to speak collectively—it is then the hindrances are discovered of reaching the company ; “ When I speak, they are for war.” It is when he speaks that he has opposition.

It is important to see that everything is secured in family affections first. We have made too little of the great thing secured for God in having a family. The first thing the Lord would do for a soul after bringing him into the good of salvation is to introduce him into a family where he is loved and cared for, and where family affections are developed.

When you speak of the family, do you mean the house of God ?

Yes ; but I was thinking of how John presents it as the family of God. “ Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God.”

Would you learn the house before you learn the body ?

Yes ; Paul was brought into the family circle first.

The man in Luke x. found the atmosphere needed for him at that time.

If we are to have a multiplication of children and increase of family there must be an atmosphere amongst the saints that will nourish. It is important that more should

be made of the family circle which is for God's present pleasure. The blessed God finds pleasure in having His family together, in whom are His own features in which He finds His pleasure now. The soul just delivered begins to enjoy this amongst the saints, and there is experimental exercise and conflict to reach the spot where brethren dwell together in unity, and God is served in that company.

The contrast is the tents of Kedar. He is continuing too long there. It is not a place to find brotherly affections.

Does dwelling together fit us for the conflict? "When I speak, they are for war."

They speak with their enemies in the gate. (Psa. cxxvii. 5.) Instead of having to make terms with your enemies the enemies have to make terms with you.

The administration and building here are very interesting. The administration protects. The enemies can be dealt with in the gates and they have to submit to your terms.

How is that illustrated to-day?

It is most important that we should not make the mistake that we are going to secure good internal conditions by capable administration. You must have the internal conditions so that there can be no inroad of evil. You must have the bond that binds in family relations. We are inclined to start from the outside

and think that if we have everything well-ordered it will be all right inside, but we cannot do that if we are not bound together in family affections.

Would you say that everything springs from the supper?

Yes. The supper is the place where we are together in the bonds of divine love. The Psalmist says, " Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it ; except the Lord keep the city the watchman waketh but in vain." He speaks of the house being built and the city kept. That is the divine order.

We may have local troubles and start from the outside, but we want a little more real love amongst us that would forbid the idea of a breach. We can meet anything then. We can speak with the enemies in the gate.

The temple was built before the city.

In Ezra they started with the altar, and then they went on with the building of the house, and later on the walls, breaches, and gates were all repaired.

It involves the principle of sacrifice. You have to sacrifice yourself in the exercise of love and you feel the moral necessity of it. There are many troubles which would never gain a footing if we sacrificed ourselves in the interest of love. The supper sustains

your affections and holds you in that way ; that is not the chief end of the supper, but that is what it does.

If any one come and speak to me against my brother I revolt against it, and even if I know it may be true, it is the last thing I believe, because family affections are strong.

We have not dwelt enough upon the greatness of the family of God being here at the present moment for the pleasure of God. That is the idea of John's teaching, to bring us to that. We have spoken freely of the thought of children in regard of the Father's care, but this care on the part of God is that we should be together and that there should be the affections and the moral features that are His own, that He has begotten, so that He can come to His own family and find a resting-place for His love. It is His own family begotten of Him, not only born but begotten, in which He can find His pleasure at the present moment. It is an immense thought.

What brings one to the distress referred to ?

The sense of family relations : " Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah and bring him unto his people." You have the voice of Judah ; he wants to be brought to his own circle. When you begin to appreciate that circle collectively you find how out of keeping

everything around you here is. You have been on individual lines, but when the collective idea develops it can only find scope in the family. You will be a useful brother when you begin to think on family lines.

The next psalm is very interesting. He begins by taking account of God's care individually: "He that keepeth thee will not slumber"; and he reaches what is collective in the next verse: "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." The Keeper of the soul keeps him in view of his having part in the company, and he discovers the care that He has for the whole company.

When you referred to Luke x. and John ix., how do the two run together?

In Luke x. the individual soul is brought into the house as the object of the Lord's care and the object of the care of the Holy Spirit; the family circle is there in Luke's gospel. In John ix. the man is taken up as an individual in view of being put in his place in the family: "God setteth the solitary in families." The Lord said that the sheep "shall go in and out and find pasture." The Lord would bless you in your going in and coming out. The thought of going in and out amongst the saints is very attractive; it is the sense of liberty that you have. It is like Ruth in the fields of Boaz. Although Ruth was an

orphan, widow, and stranger, all that in one, she was cared for, and in a very short time she was completely at home and had the very best that could be found in the circle.

In that way you get sincerity and truth marking the circle.

The effect upon each individual is that we move together in affection and transparency. We mix with one another and get acquainted with one another in holy intimacy, and the Lord blesses the movements of the saints together. Each one feels a responsibility to contribute; what he learns of the Lord he contributes to the circle.

The Psalmist says, "I was glad when *they* said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." That seems to be a fresh movement; the thought of God's pleasure comes in. You have been relieved and now the language is "*they*." The going in and out is what puts us together experimentally; then we hear one distinct voice in mutuality saying, "Let *us* go."

Family relations are not only local, but we all want to get to know one another. That is why I am here to-day, that we may become personally acquainted with each other in the bonds of divine love and interest, so that when we speak we all propose the same thing. It says, "Let us go."

What is the feature of the gates? (Psa. cxxii. 2.)

In Psalm lxxxvii. it speaks of the Lord loving the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. In that psalm there is rule and administration.

Standing within the gates suggests the protection of divine administration, so that within that protection we are able to enjoy together the privileges that are proper to the assembly. One would not wish to stand outside the gates. It helps very much to see that liberty and privilege are secured by our accepting the bounds that belong to divine administration—the Lord's precepts and ordinances limiting us in a way.

The house of the Lord is only enjoyed within the gates. Each one has to adjust himself individually in relation to what he finds at the gates. In Deuteronomy vi. the children of Israel were told that the statutes were to be on their door-posts and gates. One whose heart is in the good of the new covenant will always want to answer to that so that he can have all the privileges of the land. If ye do the Lord says in effect I will love you, bless you, and multiply you.

Is it right to link this up with 1 Corinthians? You get the moral title to ascension.

In Psalm xxiv. we read: "Who shall as-

cend into the hill of the Lord ? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart." The Corinthians tried to introduce the man who was for war into the sphere that was to be peace. In the first epistle Paul introduces the throne of judgment. In the opening of the epistle Paul says, "I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing," and in this psalm we have all speaking the same thing. We have the affections of the saints held together and the effect is that there is peace within the walls. It brings to view the thought of brethren and companions and there is a further spiritual advance. It is there we learn who our brethren are. The soul speaks individually again, *my* brethren and companions—not thinking about himself.

Does the thought of gates suggest righteousness ?

Yes ; the gates are in that way the recognition of divine principles. Righteousness bounds our privileges, and to have them we must be prepared for the bounds. In regard to Psalm lxxxvii. it is the divine side : "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion," but we have to reach it experimentally. In Psalm cxviii., we read, "This is the day which the Lord hath made ; we will rejoice and be glad in it." He is free to let His heart flow out.

We have righteousness and peace here; not life exactly, though when a man speaks about his brethren and companions he must know something of life.

The peculiar feature of the present moment is that the saints are compacted together, and the tribes ascend to give thanks to the Lord. The way the people of God are coming together at the present time is an evidence of this. There never was a day when the saints loved to be together so much. We must take it as the Lord's favour; we do not want to boast in it. We have had the humbling side and the encouragement.

Everything is adjusted in the gates and you are brought together in a place where there is peace.

The walls are for the sake of protection; the palaces and gates have to do with administration. He goes on to say, "Because of the house of the Lord." God will have a world filled like that presently, but He takes pleasure in having saints like that now. Think of God having a family in the good of all that now!

Psalm cxxiii. introduces collective sorrows: "*Our* soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease." There is a very testing waiting time; the question is can we wait? We may say there is so much that troubles us. Questions have arisen and there

are those who do not care, and we begin to feel the sorrows of the church. Can we wait on the Lord constantly? If we have been at the gates we can. We have to face the spirit of the thing practically in our own local settings. There is a testing time—a time of waiting when you feel that everything is against the answer to the prayer of the previous psalm. You say, This is what I have been praying for, but just look at the condition of things. We have to continue to look at the Lord. We have the illustration of the maid whose eyes are looking unto her mistress. The Psalmist here says, I am going to wait upon the Lord. The time of release will come, but the waiting time is the test. Those who have any care for the Lord's interests know something of this.

Everything is established in mercy; it is what the Lord does. One of the most affecting things we have felt recently is that things have not turned out as badly as we thought. We have been rebuked time and again. We forget that we have a very good Master who acts in mercy and not arbitrarily. Think of the state of things in the church; but we are to be "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eternal life." How one is encouraged in the present exercises of the saints.

In Luke x. we have the principle, "Go and

do thou likewise." Your actions are governed by God's great principle. The Mount Zion God loves is the Mount Zion you love. So-and-so did that, and such a thing is sure to come, and you almost wish it would come. Jonah went about saying "Forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." He had the message to give, but one wonders how he gave it. The LORD teaches Jonah that he is not the kind of God he thought ; He is full of mercy. It does not alter the solemnity of the government of God, but it is good to take account of the line on which He is working. It is all mercy.

We do well to take account of things in the light of the imminence of the return of the Lord: There is no good thing that the Lord will not do for His people, for He is the One who went into death for us.

There is no sorrow like exercises in relation to the assembly. They are of a different character to individual exercises, but there is no joy like the joy belonging to those who accept the sufferings of the Christ—a little bit of good news, what a joy it is. The Lord has been working lately in the way of recovery.

It is well to take account of all these things in the language of the next psalm : " If it had not been the Lord who was on our side." Philadelphia would speak in this way of a

little strength, but trusting in the Lord. In verse 7 an open door has been given.

Verse 8 brings in the thought of Matthew xi: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Experimentally we reach the Father as the Lord of heaven and earth as the result of these exercises.

There is great gain in having the snare broken. The truth has had that effect; it exposes things in such a way that one comes into the gain of the truth.

"Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." Heaven and earth take us back to the original thought: heaven and earth joined, so that you are prepared for what is heavenly. Heaven and earth are going to be put in unison for the glory of God, and they should be so with us now. It is brought to pass in the family of God.

Mount Zion in Psalm cxxv. is introduced because of its stability. Everything is stable on the principle of sovereign mercy. If we have come to Mount Zion the effect is stability. You have in Hebrews xii.: "We receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved." The feature of this psalm is stability, and it is a very great thing for the soul to become

anchored in that. You are able to take account of all the changes that take place.

In Psalm cxxiv. the Psalmist has learnt the Lord's perfect competency to deal with every element.

You have a system before you and you are adjusted in relation to that system. It has a great effect on the soul. You have God's universe before you.

The Apostle Paul endeavoured to establish Timothy so that he would not be moved. He said, "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession." It is in the light of that we stand to-day.

When Elisha's servant looked on the host of the enemy he was dismayed, but Elisha prayed to the Lord that the servant's eyes might be opened; then he saw everything in the light of the Lord.

If you have the light of God in your soul, the one thing before you is the expression of God here. You do good—you do good habitually; it is your nature to do it. In the parable in Matthew they said, "When saw we thee an hungred?" they could not remember it. It should be our habit to do good. It is the general habit of the saints; it belongs to the affections of the family.

The Lord Himself was the perfect expression of it here, He went about doing good.

We have been too much occupied with deliverance from evil without what is positive. There should be an expression of God down here: "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son." We cannot tell the world what we know and enjoy together, that God is love; that is a family secret, but we can tell the world that "the Father sent the Son the Saviour of the world." We should come out here world wide.

The man in Romans vii. says, "the good that I would." He wants to do good; God has given him the desire to do good. The apostle says in writing to the Romans that they are "full of goodness."

The young man who came to the Lord said, "Good Master," and the Lord immediately says, "There is none good but one, that is, God."

It is interesting that the first impression that a soul gets of God is His goodness.

The Lord says in the parable, "Is thine evil because I am good?"

What a company we should be, going about and doing good; taking every opportunity of doing good because it is just an outlet for our affections.

Gaius was a brother addicted to doing good, and John's desire was that he should be given all the material that he wanted for the expression of his large heart.

Lewisham, 25/9/20.

THE SONGS OF DEGREES.

II.

(PSALMS CXXVIII.-CXXXIII.)

THE thought of children is important in connection with God's dealings. It would test as to whether God's blessing is with the saints that there should be increase—fruitfulness. There ought to be exercise if there is no energy on the part of the Spirit to bring in increase. It raises the question as to whether there are suitable conditions with us. The Lord would direct souls into conditions where they will prosper. In the beginning of the Acts we are told that the Lord added daily. It is important to notice that it says, "Except the Lord build the house." The point is whatever engages us has to be under the direction of the Lord by way of headship and lordship. There is building and keeping. We should be engaged in mutuality with what comes from the Head.

Building is connected with headship, and keeping with lordship. What comes by way of headship has to be shared; it is derived from the Head and we share it.

It is an immense thing to be used to build something into the souls of the saints.

We were referring to Boaz this afternoon. The workers and reapers are with Boaz not as official servants; they interpret Boaz's mind; they take account of the stranger when he is absent; they know his mind and heart so that they are not severely tested when a stranger comes along; they do just what he would have done.

We get the thought in Psalm cxxvi. of sowing and reaping. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

We were referring to Corinthians this afternoon. We have the exercises of the apostle suggested in these two psalms. He speaks in the first epistle of the great concern he had for them, and in the second epistle we see Him coming again with rejoicing.

Olive plants suggest the thought of the oil. What we begin with we go on with. In Luke x. the oil and wine are poured in, and in connection with that "Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands." We do not waste our efforts, but eat of the labour of our hands. What you have espoused is fruitful.

In Psalm cxxvii. the way of blessing is opened out: "It is vain for you to rise up

early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows." We have first of all to be exercised to wait upon the Lord, that we should be in acknowledgment of headship and having the Lord before our souls, otherwise all our efforts will only break our hearts and be unfruitful. We can all have the exercises, but with our hearts at rest.

These psalms are very encouraging with regard to spiritual exercises for the recovery of the saints. He goes forth bearing precious seed and comes again bringing his sheaves with him. There is the line of building and the line of keeping, and there are builders and watchmen.

How it would help us in our reading meetings if there were this acknowledging of the Lord—that the Lord should have the supreme place, and how quietly things would move with regard to our spirits. What rest we should have, for "He giveth his beloved sleep." You have your exercises but you come to a spot where the Lord assures you that it is all right. We may have a great deal of exercise without being overwhelmed with pressure. Mr. Darby said he had never been in despair, but he had had many exercises. What an amount of waste of time, thought, and wearing of spirit we have through not reaching this: "He giveth his beloved sleep."

We may think if we do not do a certain thing, a certain result will follow. But what about the Lord? "Except the Lord build." Things could not have been more overwhelming than they were in Matthew xi., but see the Lord's spirit there. He had this rest and He can invite us to have it—rest of soul. He speaks of a yoke, but it is His yoke, not yours. He lays that yoke on you because you desire it. One of Mr. Darby's poems says:

"Who serve Him with a quiet mind,
Find in that service rest."

It is the privilege of all of us so that the work should be of God. But we like to bring in some of our own wisdom—we try to have make-shifts—but there is only one way of settling things, that is the divine way. Nothing else is effectual. There is often a waiting time until we get a word from the Lord that has to govern the situation, and it may come through the simplest brother. Normally we should all be watchmen, but we are glad to get a suggestion from the Lord as to what to do.

Children are an inheritance from the Lord. The Lord gives this multiplication: fresh souls to look after. It is very exhilarating to take account of a new face—a young soul, and to think of the possibilities—what a comfort

that one may be to the Lord, what a comfort to his brethren, and what a blessing to men. That was the spirit with the parents of Moses. The edict of Pharaoh was that the children should die. Moses was just a little child, but in the end he became the greatest man in the Old Testament. In the reception of any one we should look that they might bring into the circle some fresh feature of Christ. I was much exercised and helped by the remark a brother made before the Lord took him. Some one said, "We shall miss you." "Yes," he replied, "What I am no one else is." The fact is we cannot do without one another, and we cannot do without the feeblest one that is moving for the pleasure of God. In Ephesians iv. we have the thought: "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth." A fresh soul would be welcomed into the very bosom of the assembly in that way as an inheritance from the Lord. The Lord confirms the exercises of the saints by additions in numbers, and by increase in spiritual wealth; you have to recognise both. One would not think only of numbers, but do not let us say that numbers do not count, because they do; there are more possibilities. We ought to be exercised as to whether the Lord is recovering us to early conditions.

We should have the adding daily—fresh cases coming along.

I have been very seriously exercised about evangelisation lately. People think it is not a day for open-air preaching; they say it is not a day for many things. It is a day to be under the hand of the Lord and to take the door that opens whatever it may be. The Lord would wake us up with regard to the testimony of the glad tidings to men. The testimony has a double bearing; it has a bearing towards the Lord's people and towards men. You go forth with regard to serving and you return. The home circle is the centre from which you go forth, but you come back with the sheaves. There should be a more true going out in divine energy, but you must have somewhere where souls will be nourished. We carry the tidings to the land of Moab that the Lord has visited His people in giving them bread. The Psalmist says, "The Lord hath done great things for us." If we know the good of that the other will follow. The Lord is raising the question in a very gracious way as to whether we are looking for open doors. Not only in preaching, but in our occupations, in our businesses, we have great opportunities in the region of our responsibilities. God will work; He is going to have His house full, the wedding is

to be furnished with guests. One is humbled as to how little inquiry there is because souls do not detect anything different in us from other people. We could not come out from a scene of wealth without having inquiries. How cheering it is to see people coming to inquire. But how can the unconverted get to know unless they see the recognition of the Lord, the owning of the Lord in the deportment of the saints. It is very beautiful in the Song of Solomon to see after the bride has given a description of her beloved the daughters of Jerusalem answer, "Whither is thy beloved gone . . . that we may seek him with thee?" The outgoing of her heart produced the desire in them to seek her beloved.

I believe there are possibilities very near our doors, and the Lord would use an occasion like this to call our attention to it. It is quite evident that at the close, according to the end of Revelation, there will be the outgoing of the invitation, "Whosoever will let him take the water of life freely."

It is important to begin at the right end. We have been speaking about things being right inside. We get in Song of Solomon i., "Draw me, we will run after thee." We get everything objectively in the Lord Himself.

We have to speak of things that men can hear; we cannot tell them everything.

We need to be exercised to have something to meet the awful delusions such as socialism. We should have something positive that will affect people and make them inquire. There was a time when God said to Noah, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." Noah was occupied with what was positive and by doing that there was testimony rendered. It is important that we should go on building. Noah did not adopt the attitude that it was not a day for building. This is the day of grace. We are commanded to preach the gospel to every creature. The lepers in 2 Kings vii. first of all looked after themselves, but they said, "We do not well, this is a day of good tidings and we hold our peace." Psalm cxvi. says, "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I believed, therefore have I spoken." The whole basis is Christ in resurrection. "I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, All men are liars." We pass through the experience of being greatly afflicted and come to the conclusion that all men are liars.

Do you not think we ought to be exercised on the lines of Luke xv. ? We have to watch for the work of the Spirit of God taking effect in the soul and beginning to work, and we should be ready to go out to that soul. We ought to see him a long way off, and we should

be ready to hear the father say, "Bring forth." We should be in sympathy with what is going on in the house.

Yes. We ought to begin with the shepherd. The shepherd went after the sheep, and I think we should have the spirit of Jesus which went out after the lost sheep—we too should be looking for the lost sheep in the distance. We discover them by some evidence of the work of the Spirit.

The saints are brought into sympathy with God's outgoings to men. There is wealth inside and it expresses itself outside. We may have great intelligence but we must not assume that knowledge is stature.

In 1 John we have the family—"God is love." But that is not the end. The end is "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

Every bit of knowledge that becomes stature must express itself according to God. There is knowledge that vanishes away. There is bound to be the fruit of our labours—"Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord. . . . Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands."

It is a good thing to reach "Peace upon Israel." (Ver. 6.)

Everything prospered with Joseph—everything turned to good results. It was so with the Lord in a perfect way. Although on the

one hand He said, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought," yet on the other hand how fruitful He was; everything He did yielded response. I often think of Paul. He had a few hours to wait at Athens. He might have said, There is nothing at Athens, but his heart was moved at the condition of things about him, and he acted in faith, and we see the result of that short visit to Athens. Whatever he did seemed to prosper because he walked in the ways of the Lord. The Lord's authority should be recognised in the exercise of gifts, which are derived from the Head. What an encouragement little services carried out in the spirit of Christ may be to a brother or sister to move forward; what possibilities there are—you can eat the fruit of your labours.

The apostle speaks of the Thessalonians and the Corinthians as his children. He had mothered and fathered them so to speak. He instructed them as a father. We see in 2 Corinthians how they had grown. The letter is written with the touch of a mother and the care of a father.

What you find in Thessalonians is an atmosphere that makes for growth. A brother pointed out to me that the last man recorded as companion to Paul was a Thessalonian. (Acts xxvii. 2.)

In Psalm cxxix. the point is affliction in regard to what was dear to David's heart. What was dear to his heart comes out in Psalm cxxxii. It is very near the gospel. Christ is the vessel of blessing to you. At a very early date David had the ark of the covenant before his heart—"Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah"—that made him a man after God's own heart. Divine discipline comes in in that way. In the first psalm that we started with he cries to the Lord; he is in the depths.

The bringing of the ark into its place will involve the discovery of what is unsuitable. Michal does not come out in her true light until the ark gets into its place. In regard of David himself all had been set aside; he had been in the depths. It was a serious thing for David to discover a disposition in Michal that poured contempt on what was due to God. It meant barrenness for ever—that principle is not to be productive.

In Psalm cxxxii. the ark gets into its place and you have conditions that are pleasurable to God. The ark must get into its place in our affections. We have to adjust ourselves. The bringing in of the ark will necessitate soul adjustment. The greatest thought is that of God's rest. The final resting-place of the ark is in the temple in Kings.

How many afflictions have we in our inmost heart with regard to Christ? The time came when David found the ark in the fields of the wood. The ark was cared for by priestly affections all through Saul's reign, but in a hidden way. Publicly it was never mentioned. The Lord is not mentioned publicly now. It must have been something to David that there was priestly affection caring for the ark, but he wanted the ark to be in its proper place. It was welcomed there and cherished, and that is the point of recovery. There should be movement with all of us that what has been sown should be pursued. It is individual exercise, and the day comes when the soul has the supreme joy of seeing the ark in its proper place.

Lewisham, 25/9/20.

THE RAPTURE, THE APPEARING AND THE SUPPER.

(1 THESS. IV. 13-18; V.)

WE are in a very critical moment, when the Lord is about to translate the saints. Chapter iv. of this epistle gives us the translation ; chapter v. the appearing. All that has been cherished in the hearts of the saints right down through the line of testimony is about to emerge in display, and I do not think there has ever been such an important moment as the present, so that we should be found encouraging one another.

The rapture is for our hearts. Some of the Thessalonians may have been martyred ; they were, however, passing through very severe persecution. It is remarkable what wonderful brotherly love existed among them ; how concerned they were as to the place those who had died would have in the kingdom. Well, the apostle reassures them with the hope that the Lord is coming, and they will be raised and taken up by "the Lord himself." But what affection marked them !

I should much like that we should be impressed with the thought that the Lord is about to translate us. Think of what a really blessed thing it is that we are going to see the

Lord Jesus directly; that we are really going to see the glory of the Lord very soon: "the Lord himself." Before Elijah was translated, the writer says that the moment had come "when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven." He had reached that moment, he was ready—prepared. I think that might be said of the saints to-day.

I thought it was put in a very interesting way with regard to Elijah: "the Lord would take up Elijah." The moment was imminent. It ought to lie upon our affections as a very precious thought at the present moment. The crisis in the history of our souls is as to whether we are going to be heavenly or earthly. No one can fail to see at the present moment a very distinct and gracious move amongst the saints. But what one also sees with great sorrow is that here and there is one who has fallen out. You feel how sad it is just at the last moment. I thought Elisha's following Elijah was very suggestive in that way. At Bethel there were the sons of the prophets and again at Jericho, but he walks right on to the Jordan bed. There was a definite number of prophets there too, but Elisha follows Elijah right over. The expression used is very similar to Ruth, "I will not leave thee." Elijah constantly tests him in his affections, but he is equal to the test.

You get the thought in Revelation too: "They which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." That company walked in purity apart from everything down here. Elisha says, "I know it"; but Elijah had such a place in his heart that he follows him right over. The spiritual thought is that you follow Christ over to where He has gone with the thought that you are going there too. When the two get over, the question is put as to what Elisha would like. The Lord will not ask this question until He knows what answer we shall give: "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." "If thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee." I think it is most important that we should have seen the Lord go up. If our minds are to be set on things above, our hearts must have gone there first.

Seeing Him go up is what would set our hearts looking for the moment when He will take us up. That is what meets the heart, I think. As those who are expecting to go up we have the Spirit in plenitude here. We are in the good of reconciliation in order that we may come out in the good of heaven. It is what is pleasurable to God that goes up to heaven. The church comes in as being linked up with Christ.

The last few verses of Luke are extremely

instructive. The Lord is just about to ascend, and His beloved ones stand around Him. They watch Him. Then He was received up into heaven: they beheld Him go up. We can think of them standing there for a moment. How beautiful! I think that was an immense moment. They were on earth, a reconciled company in principle. You feel as you read it all their hearts had gone up to heaven, "they did homage to him." Then they went back to Jerusalem. I think it is a great thing for our hearts when we have seen Him go up: our hearts seem to go up, too, to where He has gone. We are here in His interests, but we are going up: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

In connection with the beginning of the Acts, Luke takes care that his gospel and the Acts are dovetailed into one another. In Acts i. 9, 10 we read "Having said these things he was taken up, they beholding him. . . . And as they were gazing into heaven as he was going, behold, also two men stood by them in white clothing," I thought that as conscious of the fact that we, too, will be taken up the Lord would have us preparing our hearts that there should be nothing tying us here. We want to be careful as to our links, so that what is opened out in the previous part of chapter iv. is sanctification of the vessel, and develop-

ment of brotherly affections. All the links that we are forming now between one another as brethren are for eternity. They will not be broken when the Lord comes ; they will all go up too.

As to walking so as to be pleasing to God, Enoch had the testimony that he pleased God. From the prophetic part of the New Testament we can gather that it is the mind of the Spirit that there should be here on **earth** that which shall be pleasurable to God, and it would lead us to believe that just before the rapture there is to be a very distinct answer to the heart of Christ from the saints.

The rapture is, I suppose, for the heart of Christ and for the pleasure of God, but no one who loves the Lord would be satisfied with the rapture only. You want to see Him vindicated ; you want to see God glorified in the scene where Christ suffered, and where God's glory has been thrown in the dust, and that moment will be for our hearts an immense reward, just to see the thing that we have had our share in suffering for come out in all its glory.

I would connect the rapture with the supper : "until he come." There are two thoughts in the supper : one is that we announce His death until He come, the other is, He is coming to

get the answer to all His sufferings. The glory of God is going to have its answer. The immediate thing before the Lord in death was to secure the glory of God. He had to bring to pass the glory of God, but the first thing was to secure His glory. I would distinguish the two in this way perhaps. The pleasure of God was what was in His heart eternally : the question of the glory of God was raised on account of failure and sin. When the Lord came here that was what met Him. He came to glorify God, and His thought was also that He might have what would be for the pleasure of God, that He might present us to God. "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good pleasure in men." Reconciliation was in view, but the glory of God must be secured first. David went into the valley of Elah : he was promised great riches, honour, and a bride, but in figure he first met the question of the glory of God. "Is there not a cause?" "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness, therefore God, thy God," etc. (Psa. xlv.)

The Lord Jesus will come out in the world to come as bearing the glory, because He went into death to secure it. "They shall hang upon him all the glory." He bore the whole burden of settling the question of good and evil. At the supper this is always very

refreshing to our hearts. We are preserved by the supper as loving His appearing. But it is a lover's meeting, and we really come to the supper because we would meet the Lord. Whatever one is engaged in—probably there is a good deal of oppression, and the kind of thing that crushes the spirit—we want to look right through that, and see the Lord either coming for us, or that we shall next Lord's day meet Him in the breaking of bread. That would have an immense influence over us. "And so shall we ever be with the Lord."

REM. I thought the supper had the thought of the appearing more.

I thought that the great idea of the Lord was that we should meet Him privately. I think it is the last touch of one's exercises, that one should have been in conflict for the truth perhaps all the week, but that the moment comes when I gather to Him and think of Him. One would not disconnect the thought of the appearing from the supper, but I did not think it was prominent. All that I may have been carrying as a care among the saints all the week, visiting, perhaps, and all that sort of thing, that is connected with the appearing. But I am going to sit down now and rest in His presence. It is a lovers' meeting. The Lord has given us this supper for the calling of

Himself into presence. I think we should be very honest about it, whether we have or have not met the Lord. If we have not recognised the Lord's real and blessed presence, we have missed the occasion. You may be sure that the Lord will have it raised with us as to whether we love Him or not.

The point of recognising the Lord's presence is the important one of the supper. The breaking of bread is the incidental announcing of the rights of Christ. It is the Lord's supper. The apostle complains to the Corinthians that "this is not to eat the Lord's supper." I understand that the thought of the host who gives a supper is that he is known and enjoyed as present. We take the supper in view of calling Him into presence. It would not meet His heart or ours if there were not the moment of recognition, so that He has met us. I say that advisedly. I have the Song of Solomon in view.

You would be greatly disappointed if you went forth to meet a loved one, and you knew that that one had gone forth to meet you and you had missed him. "I sleep, but my heart waketh." He knocked. I do not think that is the normal idea of the supper. I think all the Lord's care over us during the week, if we are observant, is the knocking. He is endearing Himself to our hearts during

the week and we are made conscious of His absence. It is the sense of His absence coming upon our affections that causes us to value His presence.

I suppose we have His presence in the breaking of bread just as we shall have it eternally. Think of all His service towards us during the week. I find myself up against something. He just gently supplies all the grace that is needed and you go through it with Him. What is He doing this for? Why is it? Have we often experienced a sleepless night, or perhaps we awake in the early morning. What is that for? Why the Lord would speak to us, give us some thoughts of His love when all is quiet. He cannot perhaps get at us during the day in the turmoil of life. He would endear Himself to our hearts in all this, and what an interest He has in us! We belong to Him. We belong to the sons who shall be His eternal companions. This moment then is what His own heart has desired in order that He might have us with Him. The bread and the wine speak to us of none but Christ.

QUES. Had you any thought of preparation in connection with Elisha journeying to Jordan from Gilgal?

That is very suggestive. Elisha's exercises enabled him to take the whole journey to the

other side. The effect is we go through our exercises here as having been to heaven. Seeing the Lord go up means that you have followed Him in your soul. If He go up there, that is the only place for me. There is not another. If it were put to me, Would you rather go to heaven now or remain among the saints, I would rather not say. That is what Paul says. The sense of his place as connected with Christ and with the saints was such that he could not decide. It is far better to be out of this body, but I could not decide.

At the end of Luke it says, "He led them out as far as to Bethany." It is a question as to how far we are willing to follow the Lord. It is the spot where we are led under the priestly care of the Lord; the Lord always found a place there. Bethany is very near to heaven. That is the other side. I want to know my place with Him up there. If I see Him go up, I am not satisfied with Bethany. The supper seems to bring the two together; there is our side and His. We come with affections that would give Him a place, but we pass over to His side, that is Mount Olivet. The Lord just brings us from our side to His.

Bethany is the normal place in which the affections of the saints are maintained, so that there is always a place for Christ. Bring

a few saints together who are in that state of soul, and they are ready for the Lord's presence at once. He brings all the heavenly surroundings with Him. Bethany is connected with family affections, brotherly love—a circle into which the Lord can always come. Mary anointed His departing feet at Bethany. "Against the day of my burying hath she kept this," the Lord says. If we do that, where He has gone is very precious to us.

I think that in the thought of our meeting the Lord and His meeting us there is a distinct connection. You find them together in 2 Thessalonians ii. : "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him." His coming is public ; our gathering together is private. The latter meets His heart. No longer then gathering in His name ; it is gathering to *Him*, and it is all the saints.

QUES. I suppose that in the supper there is the side that you recognise that the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof ?

Yes ; I think you are made to feel that every time. The glory that He died to secure is to be displayed. It is interesting to notice the expression in the psalms : "The heaven, even the heavens are the Lord's ; but the earth hath he given to the children of men." There is a company, however, to whom He has opened

heaven. "The heavens are the Lord's," but you could not have read into that scripture that there was going to be a heavenly family. The New Testament gives us that. So that now, with the immediate prospect of translation, our hearts should be supported with the thought that we are just about to see the Lord.

Now it raises the question, Where are our hearts? I think all the recent dangers that surround us would tend to turn our hearts aside, so that they should be diverted from heaven. What the Lord says to Philadelphia is, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee out of the hour of trial which is about to come upon the whole habitable world to try them that dwell upon the earth." It is not so much a question of the world system, as of "earth." That, too, would raise the question of Colossians: "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." It is legitimate things that have an undue place with us; things that are of the earth. We are not having the usual comforts now; far from it, but we are looking forward perhaps to a better time to come, when we shall settle down, and possibly we have made up our minds to have a holiday when we are discharged. We have had a good deal of trial

and hardship, and when that is over the tendency will be to relax ourselves. Now the sense that we are going to meet the Lord would keep our hearts from that. The next moment is the critical one. "Upon whom the ends of the world are come." The Lord is appealing to our hearts. He will see us through.

Scripture provides for things being very distinctly for Christ at the close: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." That does not refer, I need hardly say, to London or Glasgow. It refers to the gradually developed response in the hearts of the saints and is quite general. Philadelphia is general. It is a poor thing to be taken up with what is happening in Europe, it is far more important to be taking account of what is taking place in the hearts of the saints. "Behold the fig tree . . . shoot forth . . . and know that summer is nigh at hand." Just watch the fig tree, not so much the newspapers, but take note of what is going on in the saints. If you are looking at things as people of the world are, who say, We shall have to legislate and do this and that, you will be wide of the mark. There is on the earth at this moment what was before the mind of the Lord Jesus when He spoke to Philadelphia. "I . . . will keep thee out of the hour of trial." That is, He is going

to preserve the saints from all the moral elements that obtain at the present moment. He puts His wings around them, around that which is precious to Him. The point is, do I cherish the Lord's appreciation of this? It is open for me to be there in the place where He can keep me with my affections set on heaven. The Lord is just about to take that up to heaven. What a terrible thing to miss the last five minutes, as it were.

I think the saints coming together on Lord's day morning presents the conditions. The simpler we are the better. If there are the affections that greet and welcome the Lord, He is there; He cannot keep away. The Spirit is preparing for the moment when there will be our gathering together unto Him. That is an immense thing. I believe the affections of the saints will be moved at that time. How sweet are the words: "The Lord himself shall descend." Why do we gather together in His name? It is because we love Him. There will be a moment when all the saints will gather together to Him.

It is a great thing for saints to have Him as we do at the supper, there to enter without let into the intimacy of His love. He is waiting for all the saints. It is a poor thing if I do not feel we are only a few here; there are myriads more. Ezra took account of some of the people.

Our gathering together will be all the saints—immense to think of—and He distinguishes that moment by coming Himself. Even the archangel could not perform that part. The Lord Himself comes “with archangel’s voice.” It is an occasion for the heart of Christ; He would not have an archangel there.

There are three things: (1) the assembling shout, (2) the archangel’s voice, (3) the trump of God. The first would be heard; the second would probably refer to the Lord in His power on behalf of the saints providentially meeting the powers that are holding them; the third is for the whole company to move, as we read of Israel.

QUES. Is the first referred to in John v.?

I think there it is the voice of the Son of God—a rather different thought. It will be heard by the saints and the effect will be that the whole host will be together. “Our gathering together unto him” covers the whole company. He moves immediately there is that which meets His heart. The very fact that the Lord Himself descends is to touch our heart’s affections. He not only assembles us, but puts us in movement. He takes up the leadership of the company, then the trump of God, and we are gone: “So shall we ever be with the Lord.” I suppose the apostle uses terms well known to Romans; the arch-

angel's voice of command ; everything is in the Leader, and the trump to set the army forward. The word that is to comfort our hearts is that we shall ever be with the Lord. You are going to be separated for a little, if the Lord tarry, but you are going to "live together with him" eternally. That is not connected with display but with home relationships. "Whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." It is not living *together with Him*, but *living together* with Him.

The point in chapter v., I suppose, is that all the distresses that had come upon them raised the question in their minds as to whether the day of the Lord had not then come. We were seeing in chapter iv. that there had been bereavement among them, and the question presented itself, Would the departed ones miss the appearing ? So he brings in the rapture—that they were going to have the Lord Himself. Now He is going to have all that company in the appearing. God will bring with Him all that company, because there is there what is really pleasurable to Him, and it is coming out in display. What about this persecution, troubles, etc. ? That is just what the prophets speak of as characterising the "day of the Lord." Now the great difference between the "day of the Lord" and "the day" is that the first is a day of judg-

ment and the second is a day of blessing—"the day of Christ." The day of the Lord for those who oppress us now will burn as an oven, but we have no need to dread the day of the Lord.

I think the moment is very near when they shall say, "Peace and safety." Legislation is on foot, as you know, that will bring us to the point when wars will be considered a thing of the past. But will it be so? All that we have been asking for all these years—fair wages, reasonable hours, republics, the bringing down of thrones—we are arranging everything now as we wish it, so "peace and safety." Do not let us trouble about times and seasons, for just when they say that, sudden destruction comes. We do not belong to that company. The Lord is calling the attention of our hearts to these things that we should be simple in His presence. Satan would use every means to get the saints to be earth-dwellers. Who would even secretly link oneself with anything that is to meet such an end? Having regard to the coming of the Lord, none of us should have any link or association with earth at all. We should have everything ready to go; no difficulties with any of our associations; no links that would have to be snapped; no interests in that which is coming in for the wrath of

God. If I have, then morally I am amongst the "they" that say "peace and safety." The only path is to trust God simply. He will be able to see every saint through without difficulty.

The day of the Lord has to do with asserting His rights. It begins with the moment when He appears, and ends with the great white throne. The world to come is the day of Christ characteristically. We are of "the day," and love the "day of the Lord"; we wait for it. My sense of righteousness gives me to recognise that He must be vindicated; He says to us, "Be patient . . . brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." To those who oppress us the apostle says, "Ye have . . . killed the just; and he doth not resist you." You are not going to stay here. He puts His hand on your head, and says, Just you go on; do not resist; be patient until the coming of the Lord. He will see things righted, for nothing of evil shall stand before Him. What is to govern us is that we belong to the day, so that we are sober, sons of the light and sons of day. I do not think there is much difference morally between these, only I suppose "sons of light" is that you have been brought into the light and "sons of day" that you have your portion—you belong to the world to come.

"Putting on the breastplate of faith and love." Faith is that you have simple confidence in God. In Ephesians it is the breastplate of righteousness; nothing about you to disqualify you from holding heavenly territory. Your actions in your business and in all relations of your daily life would be absolutely above board. It is the practical side that the Lord is raising with us. The dart cannot pierce a breastplate like that. We need the breastplate of faith and love; our confidence strengthened and affections preserved.

"For an helmet the hope of salvation." I suppose that is simply the knowledge that we are going to get through. If there was yet another thousand years, God would see us through. And we shall get through according to God. That ought to be the point with us, surrendering nothing. I suggest that what is going to mark our experience is that we are going to have a distinct sense that God has opened the way for us. They will tell you that if you do not join this and that federation, you will not get a job. But God will open the door in face of everything here. We shall be asked to surrender all that we have stood for. But these things are to be maintained until the day break. The principles that we have stood for are going to be severely tested, but He is going to stand

by us, and He will surely open the door, and no man will be able to shut it.

If we go on to the positive thing for a moment, the apostle says, "Because God has not set us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." We want to take account of that. "Wherefore . . . build up each one the other." "Patient towards all." These are the kind of elements we are going to have to deal with. There will be the necessity for government amongst ourselves. Who would be disorderly amongst the saints in a day like this? But there must be power to admonish the disorderly. Then there will be, inevitably, the faint-hearted and the weak. We shall feel that. But we cannot go on without one another. So here again is a very blessed service in view of the breaking of the day. One becomes a little disorderly, but we cannot do without that brother. I do not think it is entirely by correction, but by bringing in the ministry that will benefit that person. We have to "be patient towards all." If we are going to gather together to Him, it is just as well that we keep together now.

"Do not lightly esteem prophecies." There are conditions existing in which the Lord will give us light, special light; not like J. N. D. used to give us, but what the Lord would

give us for the present moment. We should follow that. The Lord will be good enough to give us ministry for present exercises. It might be a word of warning. There will be those whose part is to shepherd, and care for the flock. We must not lightly esteem prophecies. We may have to have our souls tested. "Quench not the Spirit" is not an individual thing. If we do not give room for the Spirit, if we lightly esteem prophecies, He is quenched.

"The very God of peace sanctify you wholly," spirit, soul, and body. Some of us go wrong in spirit, some in body, some in soul. In view of the rapture and the appearing, we should be exercised, I think, that we might be preserved blameless in all these connections, wholly in sanctification. I think a man's spirit is immensely important. I need never have anything on my spirit. My spirit should always be under the influence of God. He is the Father of spirits. We may have a good deal of exercise, but it is important to take care it does not chafe our spirits. In the meeting or in the world nothing should embitter my spirit. It is preserved by feeding upon the flesh and blood of Christ. I have been into brothers' houses—one in particular—he has been going through terribly trying circumstances, but his spirit is so

right. He is fit in his spirit. Our spirits, our thoughts, and our affections all need preserving, they should all be set on Christ.

Then there are our bodies. We should take account of our bodies for our souls. It is a body of humiliation, and it is good that it is so. It is an immense thing for us that we are in a body of humiliation. God intends that we should be broken and humble. He has taken us up in this way in order to perfect our spirits. We are learning wonderful lessons in these bodies, we are made to feel things. Then, too, we have to be exercised as regards how we dress, feed, where we go, and how we take care of the body. In short, our bodies should be held for the will of God, and I feel myself that we should be wonderfully supported by the Spirit of God if we were on that line, so that we might be pleasurable to God in spirit, soul and body. He will be magnified in our glorified bodies, but what about our mortal bodies? Do we use our bodies to perform good works, to visit the weak saints? The apostle says, "These hands have ministered unto my necessities," "I have shewed you . . . ye ought to support the weak." If we could think of all this in relation to and in the light of the rapture, it would have an immense effect upon our lives.

“ THY HOLY HABITATION.”

(Exo. xv.)

WHAT I had especially before me was that we might find in some of the thoughts in this chapter a suitable beginning with regard to our meetings if we started with the thought of what God has in view, the good and blessed end God has before Him in bringing us out of Egypt. The song speaks of salvation, but also of the whole mind of God for His people,

QUES. How far does salvation go?

I think salvation in its widest sense is salvation from earth. Here, God had brought them out of Egypt, and through the Red Sea, and the salvation they sing of is from Egypt; they sang of deliverance from Egypt. He has delivered us from this evil world. It is a great thing when souls have a right objective before them. We want to have God's thoughts for us in definite shape in our souls, and so be prepared to move in the direction God would have us.

The pleasure of God is presented to us here at the very start. It is brought in in a song,

and presented in very definite form that the people might have a definite impression in their hearts. Look at a man like Caleb. What a definite impression he must have received! Now we may not have moved very far, but I think, as set forth in Miriam in the end of the chapter the soul takes a very definite move in view of what was in the mind of God. I think God would have us come to a very distinct and definite committal, and He provides what is attractive to the heart. Here we have a song, and there is a refrain. I do not know if every one here is able to sing that refrain. I am sure Caleb could. Miriam's song is the beginning of the heart's answer to God. It is a start for God, and God thinks a good deal of a *start*.

REM. Moses' song is a proposal, and Miriam sings the refrain. It is a woman who leads the answer in this case. There is simple subjective work in the soul, and a definite answer. Would it be something like what is referred to in "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness"?

That is it. When the Lord became so attractive to their hearts that there was a definite response to His love, He never forgot it.

QUES. Why is the song so full, and the refrain so simple?

It is the objective that is in view in the song. There is that presented there that ought to attract the heart. We must have as a definite objective before us that which God has as *His object*. If we have not God's thoughts before us, we shall make an aimless journey—we shall be wanderers.

I think in this song we get God's habitation brought before us in three distinct ways. That is what I want to dwell particularly on. First, in verse 13, it is, "Thy holy habitation." That is the abode of God's holiness, the dwelling-place of God. Then in verse 2 we have, "I will prepare him an habitation." That is the habitation *we* prepare. Then I thought there was the habitation God prepares for Himself. That is verse 17, "The place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established."

I thought it would be good if we get some definite thought as to these things, an objective towards which the soul journeys. All God's ways with us are in view of our partaking in all three things. It is not a case of our entering in when we get to heaven; then it will be a case of our being put there. This song is a teaching song, as it were. It presents to our hearts the thoughts of God, and they are not difficult. There may be things hard

to understand, as Peter says, but after all, the presentation of these things to the soul and our appreciation of them are exceedingly simple. Divine things are very simple. God would have our hearts engrossed with them.

In what an attractive way God's thoughts are presented to us here in a song. Think of the Lord Jesus Christ singing these things to our hearts. Well, then, it is important that all should have a definite start. If so, it is a good way on the journey. We begin to get the light of the song—here a little, there a little—we hide these things in our hearts, and so are prepared to sing with Miriam.

God appreciates early affection. He appreciates virgin affection, and He appreciates first love, and first love comes out of early affection. "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance." (Ver. 17.) Caleb found Hebron at the start, and it attracted him. He did not know anything about it here in chapter xv. At the age of forty God allowed him to go up and look at it, and he chose the spot he liked best. Forty-five years later that spot was given to him for an inheritance. God allows us to choose a spot. But you will never get mine, and I will never get yours.

QUES. You mean that we have some appreciation in our souls of the purpose of God?

Yes; and you get your part of the inheri-

tance, and so we have no reason to be jealous of one another. The inheritance is immense. You will never get mine, and I will never get yours ; but you need mine, and I need yours.

Let us look at these thoughts a moment. It is now that we are brought in wondrous grace into the abode of God's holiness ; we find our place in the christian circle. It is the abode of God ; it is the abode of His holiness. “ Thy holy habitation.” “ Thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.” (Ver. 13.)

The way we are brought in is in grace ; we are linked up by the Spirit with the abode of God's holiness. I am brought in in all simplicity, and placed in relation to the brethren, in the sphere where God's holy love is. The first impressions I have are that I have been delivered from an unholy scene, and brought into one where everything is for God. Consequently it is well suited to be God's dwelling-place.

I have found my home, and am welcomed in the affections of those who are in the light of the revelation of God. It is a circle where His love is, and where His love is shed abroad upon all. I have thought that this is the first start for a young soul. Young people begin to get an impression of the holiness and goodness of God, coming under the influence of the Lord,

and owning His rights. One feels one would be glad to help them to feel there is a home for their hearts. I believe the Holy Spirit produces a sense of rest in the heart, and says, Now you are here, grow. And I believe we do grow there.

One hears a lot of talk about being simple to the young. I believe the young are capable of appreciating more than we give them credit for. The young breathe freely in holy surroundings. What is the thought of holiness? It is an attribute of God, something that shrinks from anything unholy. It is a positive thing, and connected with the love of God. I think having light as to the purpose of God gives saints an intelligent objective—one should be among one's own people. We pass from the passover and the Red Sea to a place where the deep longings of the heart have the sense of being at home. The impression given is that everything of an unholy nature is at variance with such a place, and should be dealt with.

The second thought is, "I will prepare him an habitation." It is like that which took place in the preparation of the tabernacle. The Lord has brought us to Himself, and made us at home in the circle of the saints; He has given us all that is in His heart of love for us. This blessed God thus becomes the

Object of my heart eternally ; I surrender all that He may be exalted ; He is the Object of my heart and I am here now for one thing, that the glory of God may be pursued. Now the preparation of His habitation has got to do with bringing in the glory of God publicly. I love to think of it—the glory of God in the hearts of the saints and in the world to come. I come under the influence of grace and of the new covenant. All the moral qualities that came out in Christ are to be reproduced in the saints now, so that God may have His dwelling-place here now.

Think of all our hearts prompting us to bring in materials for His habitation, for His glory ! And how does it take form ?

I think it is very simple. Have you got any blue ? any badger's skin ? any gold or silver ? It is the appreciation of God as come out in Christ and treasured up in our hearts. His marvellous goodness has so wrought in us that we can reproduce those qualities that came out in Him and use them for the setting forth of the glory of God. Then surely one feels that one must say, " I will prepare him an habitation." It becomes our business here. Think of all the material required for the tabernacle, and yet there was nothing lacking ; and it was all found in the tents of the people. It took it all to make the

tabernacle complete. It all went to form an habitation for God. Before Saul was converted he had been a terror to the saints, and how would they receive him? Ananias says, "Brother Saul." He was brought in by way of the brethren to the abode of God's holiness, where souls thrive in an atmosphere of love and grace, and where the glory of God can be appreciated. The gospel presents it to our hearts: "we rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

"I will prepare him an habitation." Think of the greatness of that thought when it gets hold of our hearts!

It brings in responsibility, does it not? I would rather say it brings in *response*. I desire that we should get a little impression of the materials that have been given us, that under the promptings of a desire to respond we may bring them out for His habitation. Am I withholding anything? Do I appreciate all the materials that have been given us? Am I keeping them to myself? Every little bit is to be held in relation to all. The material is something that has reached us by the death of Christ and appreciated in our hearts. Every one has got something; it may only be a tiny bit of blue, or of brass; but has the blessed Lord such a place in my heart that I feel I must be a contributor to His glory? Oh,

if you have got only a little, bring it along. If all bring their little, look at the aggregate.

And then all I have is to be regulated and held in relation to the company; it is to adjust oneself, not the company. I am not to hold it independently, keep it to myself, as it were, but it is to be controlled by the light of the truth of the body. When one begins to learn a little of the goodness of Christ, we must see it is not used independently. It is for the good of the body. We learn it individually in the kingdom. I might have a sense from the Lord of a little ability and grace to visit any sick saint—we sometimes get a definite sense from the Lord about it—nobody else has my sense, and nobody else has yours. You become conscious that it is given you to be used in relation to the body and for the glory of God. Your body is a living sacrifice. You love His glory. You perhaps wish that you could get round and cheer some of His saints. The best thing, after being adjusted soberly in the Lord's presence, is just to go and in all simplicity try it.

But it humbles one to feel one has something. After all, Christianity is reality; you know if you have it. You think soberly so as to be wise, then you just slip soberly away on the Lord's service. It might be that a brother who is much used publicly is very

busy, too busy, perhaps, to refresh his own soul—many think he does not need their help. You just slip in with a little bit of God-given material, and years after, that brother remembers that when he was in the greatest need you succoured him.

Then the third point I wished to emphasise refers to the assembly in its proper sphere, His dwelling-place that He makes for Himself. It is the assembly in its Ephesian aspect, and one should take account of this. I belong to a company seated in the heavenlies in Christ, in association with Him in whom we live for the present pleasure of God. It is the assembly as presented in the Book of Deuteronomy. From the assembly as presented in that way God gets worship, baskets of firstfruits; we live in the land, and enjoy the fruits.

So we find our home and rest in the abode of God's holiness. But the glory of God is before us, and ever leads us to take up the present pleasure of God. The end of the chapter gives us the definite form a soul takes in beginning to move in the direction of God's pleasure. The refrain is a token of affection. It is simply affection's answer that gives the Lord His proper place. Then they move on; with such an object in view they can face Marah. There we come definitely under the

influence of the death of Christ. In the New Testament we get it in Romans vi., “ Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine.” I wish we would all read the Epistle to the Romans in the spirit of “ I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness.” (Jer. ii. 2.) So we come to Marah. It is bitterness—we accept it in view of the purpose of God. The Lord shewed him a tree; it was a particular tree. It is the death of Christ brought to bear upon the trial, and sweetness results. You on your part distinctly espouse yourself to the Lord. The inner abode of His holiness takes its place in your soul and this means a clean cut from everything that diverts your soul from Christ. But His love is abundant recompense. That is the other side, the sense of the cloudless love of Jesus.

Psalm cvii., “ They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way . . . hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.” That refers to the three days. Then they came to Elim, to the twelve wells and the palm trees, and there they begin to realise the sweetness of His love. The abode of His holiness is not a terrible place; there were refreshment and rest there. How wonderful the thought that all this loving care and provision is to enable us to

be here to the glory of God. God's glory is the display of His character, and it is a moral necessity for His glory that there should shine forth here on earth where His character has been dishonoured, the true character of that blessed God.

Melbourne, 18/11/21.

READING ON COLOSSIANS II.

QUES. What is the gain to us of the truth of this epistle?

I think it is that by a response to its ministry you would be established in the christian circle. If we were all in the gain of holding the Head, there would be a ministry to God of all that is for His pleasure now in the body. The body as presented in Colossians is for the present pleasure of God, "that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." One feels it would be well if all were interested in this, that it is for the present pleasure of God; it is His mind that there should be a ministry for His pleasure from the body. He had from His beloved Son an unceasing ministry for His pleasure, and this is to be continued in the body. The truth of this is presented that we might come into the circle of experience as members who have their hearts exercised that God should have His pleasure now.

This epistle is written that the Colossians might be confirmed in the truth of being risen with Christ and that they might increase with the increase of God. They were moving in that direction, and this is to confirm them. We

could not enter into the purpose of God unless we are first in Colossian condition. The type is instructive. In Colossians we get them pressing through Jordan to the other side. There is no break between the crossing over Jordan, and relations formed on the other side by the Spirit. We get into that circle where these relations are regulated by Christ as Head. Then the going up to the land is Ephesian. Unless we are in the Colossian condition as well as position, we do not enter into the gain of the land. We reach Ephesians through Colossians.

Colossians brings us to Gilgal. We are not actually in the land till past Gilgal. We should go on to the heavenly position and enjoy it, and enjoy the heavenly atmosphere proper to it. Colossians then is a presentation of Christ to the heart in order that He should have the supreme place in our affections. In the type Joshua is presented in all his excellence and magnified as leader before them. So Paul presents the Lord in all His greatness and perfection, in order that we should accord Him the first place in our hearts, and so follow the ark across Jordan.

None of us will move unless attached in heart to Christ, it is important that we should have Christ altogether as the Object of our hearts; so Paul presents the Lord here as the

ark of the covenant. He is the One who was for the pleasure of God. The apostle has got certain things in his mind as to the prosperity of the saints at Colosse, and so he had great conflict for them. It is important to listen, for we are confronted with this, that if we are to come into the good of the Colossian position there must be deep exercise on our part; it was so deep on the apostle's part that he calls it conflict. Neither are we going to enter in lightly. And we are not to be satisfied with light; light is not stature. There is wonderful light in this chapter, but the apostle becomes the instrument in building them up in the truths he unfolded, in such a way as to draw out hearts to a risen Christ.

In the beginning of Joshua, when the people were to cross Jordan, they had to make provision: "Prepare you victuals." It involves very deep exercise if we are moving in the gain of association with Christ; it requires deep exercise. We may speak lightly of the great truth of being risen with Christ, but it is Herculean exercise. They had to prepare victuals and come down to the bed of Jordan three days. The three days bring in a very important time; it involves Jordan with all its force. Jordan was overflowing all its banks. It is there we get a revelation of Christ

to the heart. We leave the plains of Moab with all its allurements and accord to Christ the supreme place in our hearts.

Moab stands for the place where my own interests occupy me legitimately. I am set up in the power of the Spirit, come out of Moab, esteeming the things of Christ and His circle as my supreme interest here. They had to go down into Jordan, but they had food. They needed strong meat for Jordan. I understand the truths in Colossians to be very good victuals. If we feed upon them, Christ and His love, and what is dear to His heart become very dear to our hearts. "Jesus . . . knowing all things . . . , went forth"; over the brook Cedron the ark of the covenant moves.

It is a wonderful thing for our hearts to contemplate the movements of that One who was the true Ark as He faced Jordan knowing what was before Him. He said to the disciples, "None of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?" Why was that? Well, I think it is this way, we do not like to speak of a subject that is very unpleasant. The Lord had said He was going away; He counted upon their affection. They did not care to speak of it, for sorrow had filled their hearts. Jordan was overflowing all its banks. In John xviii. and xix. we get Jordan overflowing all its banks.

As regards Paul, part of his conflict was that he knew the particular danger that confronted them at Colosse. He had intimate intercourse with Epaphras, and had heard him praying for Colosse. The apostle writes with a very intimate knowledge of the saints. He knew the dangers they were in. There were those who were bringing wild gourds to shred into the pot. The apostle is bringing meal to nullify that. That is chapter ii.

The ark presents the Lord in Joshua in four ways: (1) as the ark of the covenant, (2) the ark of testimony, (3) the ark of the Lord of the whole earth, (4) and the ark of God.

It brings before us the way the Lord is presented in the gospels. Matthew presents Him as the ark of the covenant, Mark as the ark of the testimony, Luke as the ark of God, John as the ark of the Lord of the whole earth. Think of an appreciation of Christ like that given in our hearts. What a place He should have as Leader of our affections! Joshua comes in as a type of Christ; he is magnified before all. He looks for hearts to be throwing out tendrils for new territory. Because of those feelings they are led on. So I want to raise the question as to whether we are satisfied with light? Is the light as to Christ risen enticing us on to new terri-

tory? Would we all like to come into the gain of risen life with Christ in the christian circle? The purpose of Colossians is to bring us into the gain of that.

“That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love.” (Ver. 2.) It is first that their hearts might be comforted. We shall never have moral power unless the singers are in the first rank. “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance”—we cannot come into the good of the Colossian position without it.

Does it not engage our hearts to know that God in His grace and goodness has given us light as to these things? If we come under the influence of Christ as Head, we know what the effect would be; *abiding* in Christ would give us a very deep impression of comfort. Paul engages them with moral thoughts.

“That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love.” If we are going to take in these moral thoughts we need the ministry of the Apostle John. Paul desires that the hearts of the saints might be comforted. Although we might move on and study these things with a measure of light, it will not have much effect on us unless we are under the influence of John. If the saints are together in love, living under His in-

fluence, so that their hearts are warmed up with love, will they not be happy together? That would be a perfect meeting. The apostle aims at having the saints comforted, being knit together in love. We should not desire anything less, though we are often content with much less.

If we "give thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance," if we really accept this as wonderful light to the soul, what less can be before our hearts than to come into all the good of our inheritance? We hide it in our hearts that the Father has made us meet for the inheritance—meet to live on the other side of Jordan. May the Lord exercise our hearts that we may all come into the good of it. The apostle would have us knit together in love by spiritual links, acknowledging Christ as Head for the pleasure of God.

The verse goes on, "and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God." We come into the gain of the mystery, come into the risen life of Christ and remain there. Our hearts are comforted; not only that, but knit together in love. It is very necessary that we should see the importance of our hearts being knit together in love; I think in this knitting together we learn to live with one another

spiritually; in touching one another those bonds are being formed. Do you think I could come to a meeting for twenty years and only know twelve people intimately? With all the rest I may be merely on hand-shaking terms. That is not being knit together. With whom do you walk home from the meeting? What do you talk about? On whom have you called during the week? Are they always the same saints? That is not being knit together.

The apostle prays that the light and faith they had might be consolidated. That would follow naturally if their hearts were bound together in love. I am very much afraid of cliques. Is there any one I cannot get near to? Sometimes we find sickness brings us quickly in touch with one another spiritually.

Perhaps we have not had any knitting together at all, and one sickness may do it. Do we follow it up then? Love begets love. I should be able to break through any reserve between myself and a brother or sister. A grand time for that is between the meeting and the house. Have we walked home fifty-two times a year from a prayer meeting with the same person? Or do we get away by ourselves, which is worse. How many opportunities we lose.

As the Lord becomes the supreme Object

of my heart, and I follow Him across Jordan, are His interests to be supreme to me? What are the exercises of Paul as to it? He says, "Ye know what great conflict I have for you." I can understand the Colossians saying, If Paul has conflict like that for us, we cannot be unmoved by it.

How blessed to think that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are available to us through grace. What is the mystery? I think it includes all the will of God for us in Christ, but what Paul had before Him is the body.

What is Gilgal? Gilgal is the point where having come to the light of the position as risen with Christ, we now realise it experimentally. I see it very much now, that position hinders saints from getting near one another. At Gilgal I am prepared to deal with the very best I have got. The apostle speaks of all he was naturally, and he does not touch the bad side. An Hebrew of the Hebrews, of the tribe of Benjamin, touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless, a Pharisee of the Pharisees. We might say, What a fine brother he would make if only we could get him!

That is taking account of a man naturally. Holding the Head would help as to that. Only in relation to Christ as Head do we touch

the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I am shut up to Christ for all that is going to fill the universe; all is found in Christ in whom all the fulness of God dwells.

The apostle takes up three things to be refused: (1) philosophy or vain deceit, (2) an order of things in which ritual has a part, (3) the world of sentiment, the human mind, etc. These things they were in danger of, and he warns them. First he presents what is positive in Christ; everything of value derives from Christ, not from any of those three sources in verse 8. So, to use the type, we are not to go to other fields to glean; if we do we shall get wild gourds. Boaz said to Ruth, "Go not to glean in another field." Naomi said, "not in any other field." There she comes in touch with the mighty man of wealth. It is Christ, and the supply would more than meet all her desires. So Paul would have them go to no other field to glean, but he first introduces them to the mighty Man of wealth, Christ. That is chapter i.

QUES. What is meant by philosophy and vain deceit?

We are in danger of having human wisdom. The use of a proverb, for example, sometimes introduces a worldly principle, a wrong element. The bases of philosophy were established in Greece. It is the introduction of

human ethics, the establishment of an order of things to bring in certain ends. We need to turn our minds from that kind of wisdom. It is brought in with the idea of regulation and order to a certain end. It is a system of ethics to secure a certain end. The apostle says in effect, Do not touch it.

Secondly, he warns them to refuse what had been set up as to holy days, feasts, etc., things that had their place in a previous dispensation, but now set aside. They have no place in the christian circle. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances." They were part of the Jewish system, divinely established, whereas philosophy is human. That is the second point.

The third point is very important at the present moment. It is the tendency of the mind of man, human sentiment, to intrude into unknown regions. They profess to get into touch with unseen beings. But in the mystery are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; we have everything in Christ. If the Lord Jesus Christ is held as Head in our affections in this way, we turn to Him for direction under the impulse of affection.

QUES. Is that individual?

Each individual does it, but as each individual is part of a circle, it becomes true of the company. We come under His influence,

our affections are kept alive, and all treasures of wisdom and knowledge are available for us in Him.

QUES. How do we get them?

By holding the Head. It is a very simple expression. John says, "abiding in him." "Keep thy heart more than anything that is guarded; for out of it are the issues of life." We give Him not only faith but affection. Holding the Head is the normal experience of every member of the body; abiding in Christ is John's way of putting it.

But the next thing is, are you going to come into the good of it all, so that being knit together in love, maintaining unity together, holding the Head, the whole body becomes prosperous? The affections are moved; you appreciate a thing and enjoy it. That is not state yet, anon you receive it with joy. The conscience is reached, and there is a feeling of disparity. If we feel that, the Lord will help us.

Then there is result for the pleasure of God. It is a living, present thing, holding the Head; there need be no interruption. On your part the exercise is, you know the sun is shining brightly, and you remain in the sunshine; that is, all that makes for blessing and growth will come down to you.

We see that Paul gives us a ministry of

divine thoughts, while John gives us a ministry of affection. Paul's ministry will have no effect unless John's ministry comes in to cement us in affection. "If ye then be risen with Christ . . . set your mind on things above." If your affections have followed the ark of the covenant, you can go on to experience risen life with Christ. But He says, "Have your mind upon those things." We are not going to be established unless we are set upon these things. God has perfection before Him. He is going to put you there, but it will be through exercise, and the further you go, the deeper the exercise. May the Lord give us all to go in for these things, that we may know more of the reality of risen life with Christ, having Him as the supreme Object of our lives.

Prahran, 23/11/21.

FOUR READINGS ON THE EPISTLE OF JAMES.

(CHAPTER I., II.)

I.

R. D. I simply suggested this scripture because I think James gives us a good start on spiritual lines practically, and I think it is important to have a good beginning and to maintain it.

S. F. In that way you do not consider it everything merely having a start?

R. D. Oh, no.

J. S. The Galatians had a start.

R. D. Yes; but they were stopped. I think if we get a start according to James, it would save us an immense amount of trouble for the rest of our lives.

J. S. In what way?

R. D. James puts you on the lines in which you can have the Lord's support, and if there is one thing desirable, it is to have the support of the Lord. James tells you where the Lord will support you, and he also tells you where He cannot. He writes in view of the kingdom of heaven being presented, and the idea of the kingdom of heaven is that there is support from where Christ is for those who

answer to the principles that are proper to the kingdom; and so he prepares you for what is entirely spiritual. There is one very interesting thing in connection with James; he himself had known what it was to get on to entirely spiritual lines; I refer to the probability of his having been the Lord's brother according to the flesh. At all events he had known Christ after the flesh.

J. S. There is no recognition of nature whatever?

R. D. There is no recognition of the flesh at all, and moving on that line there is unlimited support from the Lord. One would be anxious to always have the support of the Lord, but He only supports what is of Himself, and He does not support what is not. The proposal that James has at the outset of the epistle is that we should be "perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." That is a very good proposal, is it not?

W. H. U. Yes; I suppose there would be another principle that would come before that—the Lord would only support the one He subdues?

R. D. Yes; but what James has in view is that the saints should be "perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." It is important that we should start right down at the rock

bottom with James. Rightly taken up this leads to the full enjoyment of the Ephesian position. James takes a soul up and immediately tells him what his conduct should be, the conduct that secures support from the Lord, that leads you into standing perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. God begat us that we should be a certain firstfruits of His creatures; and that is a very great place to have. James was in the church, and appreciated the immense favour of it. What a great thought the church was; and the only way to reach the participation of being firstfruits now for God is by way of the kingdom of heaven.

S. F. Would you say James followed on the lines of Matthew v.?

R. D. Yes; he really supports the line of things presented in Matthew's gospel. The view he takes of the saints is the condition in which what is stated in the parable of the wheat and tares in Matthew xiii. would take place, and that is, the tares and the wheat grow up together. James takes account of the tares and speaks sternly to such, and he takes account of the wheat and speaks instruction and comfort to them.

S. F. That is very good.

R. D. It is good if you are wheat; very serious if you are not. It has a very definite

moral application to us in the presence of Christendom to-day, and in the presence of all the profession. James speaks to us to encourage us. When he addresses the wheat he always says, "My beloved brethren"; he commits himself to the wheat.

S. J. B. C. James has been spoken of as viewing things in a transitional state; would you go with that?

R. D. Well, if you take account of the present state as a transitional state it would be so.

J. B. That is, he looked right on to the coming of the Lord?

R. D. Yes; he takes account of the mixed conditions, for those conditions would continue. This is the ministry—very needed ministry—to start us and encourage us as to our conduct in that condition of things. Perhaps no other writer puts it to us in just that way.

J. B. He never supposes the condition of things getting better?

R. D. No. James is the Ecclesiastes of the New Testament. He speaks to the wheat and the tares, and what you feel is that he is not winking at the unreality that there is in the profession, while you are cheered on spiritual lines to count upon the Lord's present support, and to have in

view the end of it all, which will be the coming of the Lord. There is only one thing that you are really to be anxious about, and that is the glory of the Lord whom you love. James himself came in a peculiar way into the good of this.

J. R. Why does he address the twelve tribes?

R. D. Because he is having in view the whole position. There are those professing to have to do with God, but they are unreal; and there were brethren there who loved the Lord of glory. It is no doubt intended that there should be instruction for us in the presence of Christendom to-day.

J. B. There is a similarity in our position and the twelve tribes?

R. D. Yes; quite so.

J. B. Two things are called for—faith and endurance.

R. D. He delineates to you the conditions you can be in, in which you can have the Lord's support, and if you have the Lord's support, what else do you want? If we all here in Auckland were set on the lines definitely on which we can count upon the Lord's support in all our doings, we should be blessed in our doings. James is very practical, but who of the scripture writers is not practical? It is *we* who are not practical.

J. S. You suggest profession in the twelve tribes?

R. D. In that case it was the twelve tribes scattered abroad, but in our case we are in the presence of the same practical difficulty. We find that there is a path of separation which 2 Timothy enjoins upon us, but there is the public part in relation to the whole of the profession to-day, and in the presence of which we are placed as wheat amongst tares; that goes on until the end of the age, and we are in it now, so there is conduct here enjoined upon us, the result of which will set us free for the answering to 2 Timothy ii. If any person listened to James, he would be ready for the path indicated in 2 Timothy ii.

J. S. Having the support of the Lord, you would rightly act in the midst of the mixed conditions.

R. D. We have got to live in these conditions every day, and you cannot escape from the profession, but you can escape from participation in iniquity by way of 2 Timothy ii.

J. S. That is why faith and endurance are necessary?

R. D. Yes; because it means you are going to grow up with the tares and the wheat until the coming of the Lord. How necessary to be set for that which brings

glory to the Lord of glory ! You honour Him publicly in the profession, but if you are to bring glory, everything depends upon your conduct.

S. J. B. C. Do you think that the twelve tribes involve the thought of general profession ?

R. D. It did at that time, and now there is an analogous position in Christendom. We do not have to think about the twelve tribes to-day. We look upon all that claims the name of the Lord and we have no escape ; we cannot go into seclusion from it like the monks and nuns. The Lord says, “Let both grow *together*.”

S. F. If we are on spiritual lines, that would mean life and vitality.

R. D. The first thing called for is the right motive, and not a double motive ; I believe many of us have spent our lives having a double motive. The idol in your heart will come out no matter how much you may screen it from view. One may be very humble and lowly outwardly, and yet hold an idol in one's heart. Look at Gideon. Who would have suspected that at last he would have set up the ephod in self-glorification ? How graciously he spoke of his littleness at the outset, how humbly and wisely he answered the jealousy of the men of Ephraim, and when

later on they sought to make him king he refused that honour, and yet at the end he set up the ephod. He was just a simple brotherly man among his brethren until the hidden thought of his heart betrayed him. If we permit the word in this chapter to search us, we should be cleared of every idol. With Gideon the idol was the very thing he was so careful about in his language, and we may know how in our conversation to deprecate any self-seeking in our service, but if we cherish this as an ambition it will come out at last. James says, I want you to get clear of it *first*.

S. J. B. C. You may knock it on the head and it will come up again.

R. D. If you come into the presence of God He is so good He will give you a judgment about it; if you knock it on the head it only shews you that it is there; come into the presence of the law of liberty and you will hate the thing and judge it root and branch. There is another side to it, and that is you cannot deal with the thing merely by judging it; you may put it into a corner of your heart and repress it, but it will come out. For instance, whatever indulgence, hobby, or pleasure I go in for it must be displaced by Christ or I shall return to it again. You see a brother who came into fellowship ten years after you getting on a little better than

yourself, and you feel that the Lord is supporting him ; do you not feel a little bit on edge ? He is displacing you ; you feel that, and yet you say you have judged it, but you still have the idol in your heart. You are not established in the perfect law of liberty.

You think these things develop at the close of a person's career ; I do not. A brother may be in the meeting for twenty-five years and serving the saints ; and at the finish he may say, After serving you for twenty-five years you have let me down. What does that disclose ? That the idol was in his heart all the time. When Gideon should have shone in moral greatness, the very thing that was in his heart all the time now shewed its face. The Lord is good, and He raises the question with us at the very doorstep of our spiritual career, and your wisdom and mine is to have things out with the Lord. To go and sit down under the apple tree is what we really want, and if we get there, all desire for idols will be chased out of our souls for ever. It is in this spirit we pass through certain exercises, and endurance leads us to the perfect issue.

W. H. U. What you are impressing us with is that we should not only judge *it* but ourselves.

R. D. With our hearts moved under the

influence of the new covenant, looking into the perfect law of liberty, I act the man that I am, not the man that I was.

J. R. What you would suggest is to be what we are?

R. D. But then, you want to know what you are, and you must have a good look into the mirror. We do not look enough into the mirror. The mirror is the man that I am. Supposing I have a desire to preach on Sunday night; I want to preach, but when asked I say, "Oh, well, I would rather you could find somebody else." That is not a transparent man; that is not the man I am. If I have a look in the mirror, the perfect law of liberty reflects what I am spiritually. I say, "I would be delighted to preach; I would like to tell people how good God is; but if there is another brother who is free, then I would like to listen to him." That is the man I *am*—the man in liberty; not bound up in envy because there is an idol in his heart. We all know what it means, we have all been there. The question is raised in simplicity with God as to whether you are a double-minded man or not. Now here is the start—the spiritual start—and it indicates how you can come into the presence of God with *only one thought*, the Lord of glory. The truth of Matthew's gospel has got into your heart. It simply

is, there is nobody you love like Christ, and you have been brought into the kingdom of heaven, you want to see the Lord exalted in the presence of the saints, and you want to see Him exalted in the presence of the world—you are not a double-minded man if you have that before you. The kingdom of heaven is this: God has found in His beloved Son One who can administer everything to the glory of God and secure everything God had in view; and if God has sent out to the highways and hedges for two worthless beings like you and me, you know it is that we should be here for the glory of His own Son.

James speaks of Him as “The Lord of glory”—how sweet it is to hear it coming from his lips! Just as with Jude—the Lord’s brother in the flesh—he speaks of “our Lord Jesus Christ.” James had passed entirely from the natural line to the spiritual. What must it have cost him to write an epistle like this, in which he does not refer to any natural relationship to the Lord at all! There is no doubt James had come into the good of this himself, so that he had no double motive, “without partiality and without hypocrisy.” I am quite sure James and Peter are two most important epistles to give us a good start; both are on the line of Matthew’s ministry, to prepare us for 2 Timothy ii. It is James’ transparent

man who calls upon the Lord out of a pure heart.

J. R. A man with a pure heart is not double minded.

R. D. Some of us have lost weeks, months, and sometimes years in our spiritual career because we had two kinds of motives. We say, We want to get on spiritually, but we have certain reserves for getting on. Now that kind of person, though perhaps double minded in only one respect, is "unstable in *all* his ways."

We may have to admit, as we look at this, that this is just our portrait, but let us take courage, we have got the rest of our days. Let them be good days! Jacob at the commencement of his spiritual career was called upon by the Lord to consider what the perfect law of liberty was, and he awakened after a very pleasant vision, and said, Lord, it is very beautiful, I would like to be in it, but I have got some personal arrangements for myself; and for twenty years he went a zigzag course. He discovered a good deal in spite of all his crooked ways; God was still as good as He ever was, and so at length He brought Jacob face to face with the question as to whether there was an idol in his heart, and then he made a good spiritual start. I think some of us would be able to shake hands with Jacob

and say, We know all the milestones up to that point. Do you not feel that Jacob could well understand our exercises? There may be some things in which the Lord will support us so far as He can, but do not let that mislead us; do not let us deceive ourselves by this. After Penuel, *Jacob limped home*. There is no doubt Jacob was one of the most blessed men in the Old Testament.

REM. The last thing the Lord would do is to make our folly public.

R. D. He will give you many a chance; He will call attention to our idol time and again, but the best opportunity of having it out is at the start. The best opportunity is now, so that we may be cleared for the rest of our days. Look at God's way with Balaam! Balaam wanted money; he pretended a great many things, but Balaam wanted money. God was angry with him and told him not to go, but he went. He set out on his ass, and the angel of the Lord stood in his way, and Balaam's foot was crushed against the wall; but he persisted, and then the dumb ass spoke to him. Now do you think the Lord would do all that for a man like Balaam, and leave us without many a warning? If He has been searching your heart through your conscience, and disclosing your idols to you, such as pride, love of position, or jealousy,

and you argue back that you can control your own thoughts, and repress your selfish ambitions, you will deceive your heart, and you will destroy your sensibilities. Lust conceives a thought of evil—that is the time to deal with it; otherwise it will come out in words or deeds. The Lord says, “Hearken to me.” It is so blessed to turn to the Lord, and say, Here is my heart! I am prepared to hearken. He will disclose to us what is in our own hearts, and bring us to the point where we gain a deep sense of mercy, and then we are humbled and lowly.

Nothing will put us right like a sense of mercy, it subdues us; it is the way the Lord approaches us at the very bottom; He gives us the start we were talking about. Owning mercy is the line upon which I am supported. If you give me a man with a great sense of mercy, I will give you a man who will not give the people of God any trouble. A soul with a deep sense of mercy delights to see anybody go to the top and will be willing to go to the wall himself. As taking this up in its reality, I am able to move in amongst my brethren, having had my heart examined and every idol cleared out of my heart, one Person alone supreme there—the Lord of glory; He is enthroned there. Now if the Lord of glory be enthroned there, I shall love my brethren all

the better. You can only call a thing that displaces Him an idol. He is supreme in your heart. Even if you should be entrusted with much of this world's goods, it is not any trouble to you if you have Christ enthroned; and what a delight just to get amongst your brethren who have obtained like mercy!

W. H. U. What is meant by "Perfect and complete, lacking in nothing"?

R. D. He is set up in all the fulness of Christianity, and James has really the great end in view that we should enjoy Christianity to the very full. Whatever circumstances a man may be placed in in the providence of God, if the Lord Jesus has the supremacy and has displaced every idol, he moves in amongst his brethren in a sense of mercy, and he will do nobody any harm, just like the little child in Matthew's gospel.

J. S. "Let the brother of low degree glory in his elevation and the rich in his humiliation."

R. D. If a rich man were brought low by this sense of mercy and he were to come into the company of God's people, he would be a very simple man; he would be very sorry if anybody went and got a footstool for him. The brother of low degree has not got anything in the world, but what he has is a part amongst those in the christian circle. This

would displace the very idea of socialism. It is a spiritually established order of things cherished together in hearts, each one of which has crowned the Lord of glory. It is not autocracy, neither is it democracy ; what you have got is a theocracy. All are happy subjects of Christ because they love Him, and a company would be a happy one where these conditions obtain. I believe a great deal of our trouble is because we have not started at the very bottom. We do not come into the train at the first station and we do not know the route.

James starts you with a clearance from all idols, and John leading you into the joy of things says, as it were, Do not forget to maintain what James gave you—"Children, keep yourselves from idols"; let nothing come in between your affections and the blessed God. In Philippians iii. you have a man—not a double-minded man—"perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." How did Paul come into that? He had to come in by the way of James; you know the start he got; the Lord of glory spoke to him. The sun *has risen*, not is going to rise. In Philippians iii. the sun has risen, and the sun has withered up every flower in the garden; and Paul had some lovely flowers in his garden: a Benjaminite, Hebrew of the Hebrews, blameless,

etc. The light of Christ's love, and the love of God expressed in the new covenant left him without an idol in his heart. Things have to be worked out practically. Paul's conversion was a very distinct one. The Lord of glory could speak down to him from the exaltation where He was ; in the power of the kingdom of heaven everything was withered up for him ; he was glad to let somebody take him by the hand. Paul came to the proportions of a little child at the moment of his conversion. I like that ; I think that is the way to come amongst the brethren. The idol has not only been chased from his heart, but it has not got a vacancy to which it can come back again.

J. S. You can take account of a moment of weakness in a brother, and that not be a characteristic feature of him. What about Paul's defection in going to Jerusalem ? (Acts xxi.)

R. D. We want to refer very gently to that occasion. Remember the visit the Lord paid to him in prison, and what He said to him as He stood by him : " Be of good cheer, Paul ; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." If that is all the Lord said about it, we had better be quiet. That blessed Person speaking into that dark cell to cheer His servant is

my Lord, and He is a very good Lord, and it is the kind of way He is going to treat me ; that is the Lord of glory.

QUES. Was Paul sitting under the apple tree during the three years in Arabia ?

R. D. I think he was ; he was looking into the perfect law of liberty. At the end of Paul's career when in prison he refers to himself as the chief of sinners. He does not say that he was the chief of sinners long ago. No, he says, I am the chief ; I have never lost the deep sense of mercy to me ; and that was the secret of Paul's excellent spirit. Such ministry as James' reproves us as to every mean thing and all that is not transparent about us in relation to our brethren. If we look into the perfect law of liberty, we shall not be stoical ; we cannot help letting ourselves go out in delight and spiritual emotions to God in praise and to others in blessing. I love to express what I enjoy of the blessed God. I am bound to find an outlet ; so he says : " Pure religion and undefiled "—is there some sick sister or brother who needs comfort, some orphan who needs care, some distressed heart ? You look out for an object for this love bubbling up in your heart, upon whom you can pour it out ; and at the same time, keep unspotted garments. We sing about when we get home to heaven :

"With Thee in garments white,
Lord Jesus, we shall walk."

But the proposal in James is that we should walk in garments of white *now*. As looking into the perfect law of liberty, we see the kind of man we are; we are here for the expression of love, and we shall then have neither time nor disposition for self-seeking or criticism, but will grow fat in soul.

So this chapter closes with the word: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

Auckland, N.Z., 31/1/22.

II.

(CHAPTER I. 16 TO END; II. 14 TO END.)

J. S. Had you in your mind that what we have in verse 17 links with the new covenant?

R. D. Yes. We were speaking of the sun having risen and withered up everything, but it is important also to see we have the sun for the formation of something: "the Father of lights, with whom is no variation nor shadow of turning"; God dispensing everything that is good for the prosperity of our souls, so that our souls are imbued with a sense of blessing.

E. P. Is the "perfect law of liberty" connected with our being set in relation to the "Father of lights."

R. D. I think it is the influence that comes down from the Father of lights, a beneficent influence that speaks of life and blessing.

REM. We are only in this liberty as we are under the influence of the Lord Jesus?

R. D. Yes; as we are under the influence of the law of liberty, which is really dispensed from the "Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

J. C. It is a peculiar word: "Father of lights."

R. D. Yes ; it refers to the sun as father of lights. It is a figure expressing how things come to us from the very heart of God, but dispensed by the Lord Jesus.

J. B. Would there be the thought of source in "Father of lights" ?

R. D. Yes ; source of blessing and influence. You think of the sun ; it is giving light, warmth, and prosperity to the earth, so that there should be an answer in fruitfulness.

J. R. The sun is the "father" of the solar system in that way.

R. D. Yes ; it is an illustration drawn from the solar system. That we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures is an agricultural idea ; it is for the development of firstfruits for God's present glory and pleasure.

E. B. I thought it might have reference to Psalm xix. : "There is nothing hid from the heat thereof" ; its influence goes throughout the whole earth.

R. D. It is under the influence of the sun that the implanted word is developed. As I said, it is an agricultural figure, and the important thing from our side is that there should be conditions so that the seed fructifies for the praise of God.

S. F. It has a very blessed application for the present moment.

R. D. It has ; it shews how spiritual growth takes place in our souls. "We should be a kind of firstfruits," but if that is to be the case, there must be an answer in spiritual stature on our side. Psalm xix. speaks of the influence of the sun in the heavens as being like the law of the Lord : "a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it ; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof" ; and it suggests that the influence of the law of the Lord is just like that. It has a wonderful effect upon its object. I think James thus refers to the blessed God as source of all blessing, but His goodness and beneficence shine out in Christ, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

QUES. Does it give us the thought of the effectual character of the shining ?

R. D. Yes, it does ; but the main thought is the unchangeableness of God as the Blesser, so that if there is not an answer, it is our fault. The sun is always shining ; the conditions that make for growth from God's side are always present—all centred and shining forth in the Lord Jesus in view of growth on our

side, for He cannot be anything else than what He is. He cannot deny Himself.

J. S. The promotion of what is of God in us depends upon the condition with us.

R. D. I think that is a very interesting word : "the implanted word." (Ver. 21.) The seed has been planted, but if that seed is to develop and produce fruit, it calls for certain conditions.

REM. In Matthew vi. it says, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature ? "

R. D. That is the sun's side of it, to use our figure here—what God does. But our side of it is to maintain suitable conditions for the seed to fructify under the sun's influence.

J. S. I suppose that is why we have verse 16 : "Do not err, my beloved brethren."

R. D. There is intended to be an answer for God to the word implanted, an answer in soul stature on our side, otherwise there is no fruit ; you have got the word implanted, but it has not developed.

C. C. Is that how this ministry works out ?

R. D. Yes. He says, I want to see the thing worked out ; I want to see the truth expressed. You do not express a thing in the seed, you express it in what has grown from the seed ; but you begin with this, that everything comes down from the Father of lights.

Paul may plant, Apollos may water, but God gives the increase.

QUES. How does the rain come in here?

R. D. The rain comes in from God's side; all comes through the heat of the sun; everything comes from the sun.

J. R. It is the way you receive it.

R. D. It needs meekness to receive it when you come to discover that what you heard is going to cost you something. The Sower has sown the word and He has sown it by the way of ministry. You have had a word implanted through the ministry of a brother, it may be perhaps in a meeting, but it comes from the Sower; and you have approved of it, so it has a lodging-place in your soul, but it has not grown yet, and the time comes when you are called upon to put into use the seed you received—then you will need meekness. The word must search the conscience, and it will mean displacement—in every case it does—but when we come to put it into practice we are tested as to whether we are prepared for the displacement. Suppose now I get a fresh thought: I need to retire into the company of Christ and see it in its perfection in Him, and then also I see it in its proper place in relation to the system of blessing, so that I now intelligently delight in it and love it. You see it in Christ

as He trod this scene and put into perfect practice all that the new covenant suggests. We have to look into the perfect law of liberty, because the full import of anything implanted in our souls can only be received with meekness and expressed in practice as we delight in it; so we express it in the movements of love which are produced by coming under the influence of the new covenant. It is a very important thing because we are inclined to think that when the seed is implanted we have got it in formation, whereas we have only got the seed.

G. C. We have to put it in practice in that way.

R. D. You cannot express anything until it is formed in you.

REM. It is formed in view of testing.

R. D. Yes; but in the presence of the testing I feel the need of being under the influence of the blessed shining of the Father of lights, the law of liberty, so that the seed may be developed in my affections, and so I am enabled to receive it with meekness. It is thus proved in the presence of the testing, and as it finds expression there is new fruit for God.

S. F. Do we see it at all in Abraham and Isaac going to the mountain?

R. D. Well, Abraham had a certain com-

munication, and it immediately tests him right to his very vitals. He receives it with meekness ; he does not give way ; he is supported to carry out what is in his heart. I do not think we get anything that is of moral gain to us that has not very deep surrender connected with it. Ministry comes by way of the conscience. It may be that you are brought to judge an association with which you are linked which does not honour the Lord.

J. S. We were noticing in connection with Paul, how he could say : " Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." He had received light and was not disobedient to that.

R. D. Every fresh bit of light we receive calls upon us to see that certain conditions are provided, so that we get all the benefit of Christ as the Father of lights. If the ministry does not affect our conscience, it has no result.

S. J. B. C. There must be the displacement first before there can be the reception.

R. D. Well, there has been the implanting, and now we need meekness to accept the displacement and express the word practically. God in His goodness takes care in regard to the circumstances into which we are brought, that they will be the necessary and suitable circumstances for the seed that has just been planted. To bring the seed out, God

brings us into the very circumstances—it may be in discipline—which will serve His ends. The last bit of ministry we get is the next thing we need, and it will make demands upon us. There is the question as to what we are prepared to part with in view of that thing being made fruit in the soul. The word is implanted in the soul with perfect precision and wisdom by the Sower: I have to face that to-morrow if I enjoy it at the meeting to-day. The question then arises, Am I going to brush it away from me, or am I going to face all the circumstances with meekness so that room should be made for the development of this fresh seed?

REM. Ministry puts you in more direct contact with God.

R. D. You appreciate the seed planted, you look into the perfect law of liberty, and then you say, I love to do it! I know it will cost me much, the breaking, perhaps, of links with which I have been associated for years—it may mean a moral revolution—but now I love to do it as I look into the perfect law of liberty. I need the objective, so that the subjective might be wrought in my soul.

J. S. You suggest the objective in the way of ministry?

R. D. I suggest that the ministry calls attention to the next thing you need in your soul;

but the objective is seen in Christ, and I am looking into the perfect law of liberty in Christ. We need the objective lest we become occupied with the subjective in ourselves. You see it all perfectly expressed in Christ ; you come under the influence of the new covenant—all the love of God expressed in Christ.

S. J. B. C. How do you see your face in it ? by seeing what you are in Him ?

R. D. That is it—the kind of man I am. "Of his own will begat he us." What you have just had your attention called to should have its subjective effect in you. You have got the objective, you look into the perfect law of liberty, and you love to see it. Looking into the perfect law of liberty, I love to express what is according to God.

QUES. Is that sitting under the apple tree ?

R. D. That is the apple tree.

QUES. When you speak of the objective, would the transfiguration scene come in in that way in the case of the disciples ?

R. D. Well, they saw the perfection of everything in the transfiguration. The effect of looking at the thing in relation to Christ is this : that your heart approves it, loves it, and loves to express it. Take a very simple thought : Suppose I feel that I am harsh and I desire to be more gentle ; then a

word is sown in my soul that exercises me as to gentleness. I find I cannot express gentleness. If I read a book on culture, I might learn about gentlemanly ways here in this world. But I turn to Christ, and I see gentleness expressed in Him, and the next opportunity I have I express that feature with great delight. I have enjoyed it in Christ, looking into the perfect law of liberty. Meekness shone out in its fullest expression in Christ, and all ministry is in view of development.

S. F. As Christ went through His daily life here, the perfect law of liberty shone out in perfect expression, did it not?

R. D. Yes, indeed. And so everything that is ministered to us is as a seed being implanted in our souls, and is the next thing we need, for the Sower sows with method. James encourages us to "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations," it is our opportunity for development. We shall not fall into divers temptations in heaven; *now* is the time for growing; and if we are tried and tested in our circumstances—in our body, or in our business, or in the meeting—or wherever it is, "count it all joy"—it is an opportunity for development, because God uses these things in view of the implanted word.

Now I am a little afraid that we sometimes see a thing clearly in ministry, and we think we have got it, and at the first opportunity we can talk about it, and be as clear as possible in our terms, but we have not got it ; all we have got is the seed ; it has to grow. We talk a great deal of "subjective" and "objective," but let us be clear about this, the thing will never fructify in our souls unless it is formed there through sitting at the feet of Jesus. You may say, I can see it, but God does not merely want you to see a thing. James says, "the devils also believe, and tremble." God does not want you merely to see things clearly ; He wants you to be formed in these things, because He is not after light in your soul, He is after firstfruits. James judges according to the spirit in which we do things, not according to the letter and the light we have got. If, on the other hand, we are occupied with the subjective side alone we shall be continually taking the thing up by the roots to see how it is progressing, and we shall find it is not getting on at all. We need to take the precepts home to our own hearts and turn to Christ until the spirit of the thing as expressed in Him becomes formed in the soul and we learn to love it. If I say, Yes, I know what meekness is ; I know what brotherly love is too, James says, Do you ?

let me see some of it. Let me see your grace amongst the brethren. James says, I do not want the letter, I want to see the thing in you.

REM. A little bit of a test often proves if we have got it or not.

R. D. Yes; and we have to turn, after attempting it, and say to the Lord, Lord, shew it to me in its expression. And I see it expressed in the perfect law of liberty. James is not telling us to attempt it, but to *do* it.

J. S. You mean the thing becomes part of yourself?

R. D. Yes; and you love it. What deep spiritual impressions James had gained in those three and a half years that he walked with the Lord!

C. C. The Lord Himself suggests that line: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

R. D. Note the continuation: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." The Lord presents two most attractive virtues to draw us to Himself. If I want to be educated, I want to come to One who is perfectly meek and lowly in heart, because the span of all graces is between these two; lowliness is the lowest and meekness is the highest. I would like to go and get my education from that Person

who could span the distance between meekness and lowliness. Lowliness would take you to the wall, and meekness would take you to the front. I think we have in the thought of meekness moral courage and grace to face the circumstances, bearing all that might affect one personally so that good might triumph. There may be an association you are linked with that is not of God; to break with it may mean your bread and butter, and if you are a meek man you say, I will face it for the spiritual gain that is there; so be it, if it sweep the deck of all I count dear; it means the shining of the face of Christ upon me.

Lowliness means I am prepared to be trodden on so long as nothing vital regarding the glory of Christ is at stake. Meekness will never give way. A man who has meekness will not give way in anything relating to what is of God, though he may give way in what is personal. Moses got his impressions of the forbearance and compassions of God at the bush (Exo. iii.)—such impressions of God as affected his spirit so that he became meek in character towards God's people, and at the close of his career God allowed him to be tested upon the effect of the impressions which he received at the burning bush, and Moses in his lowliness went to the wall on that oc-

casion, for it was what was *personal* that was at stake. He stood, and never answered a word, and his lowness shone out. But the Spirit of God remarks that the man Moses was the meekest in all the earth. When it was personal he could be silent, but when God's glory was involved, Moses stood firm.

J. B. It gave God a wonderful opportunity to come in.

G. A. You connect meekness with courage, then ?

R. D. I do.

J. S. You have the idea that "receive with meekness" is you receive it with triumph ?

R. D. Yes. You allow it to take form under the influence of the blessed objective before your heart, and as you do, it saves your soul. Supposing I am accustomed to be harsh with my brethren, and the Lord just drops a word into my soul, and I become conscious that I am severe and harsh with them. I weigh it over, and I say, I am harsh with my brethren ; and I recall these ten, fifteen, or twenty years in which I have been riding rough shod over their sensibilities. It means coming into the presence of the Lord in a lowly way and saying to Him, I want to be educated in gentleness and grace amongst my brethren. And as I look into the perfect law of liberty, in the glory that shines in the

face of the Lord Jesus, I see His lowliness, gentleness and patience—I see them most beautifully in the gospels. The seed is there, it begins to grow. I come in amongst my brethren. Now somebody tests me. I say, This is my opportunity to express this gentleness and meekness of Christ ; and as I do it, I enjoy it. I have enjoyed the opportunity of expressing the lowliness and gentleness that is new-born in my soul. It is the kind of thing that will put us together and keep us together without respect of persons and on spiritual lines. It is really the way the features of the new man are formed in us for expression now, so that God gets in us an answer to the shining of light. There will never be a bit of growth in your soul unless you study the objective—Christ. It is bound to produce the effect. One great lesson which Jacob learnt when he was twenty years away in Laban's country was that the subjective was formed by the objective.

E. P. Meekness is always courageous, but is expressed in a lowly spirit.

R. D. Always. One is prepared to surrender so far as one's own rights and personal things are concerned ; but such a person will stand at the front in order that all that is of God may be maintained, holding on to it, although everything else go.

J. R. There is no thought of any boasting.

R. D. Indeed, it would prove you had not gone through your education if you boasted at the end of it; it would only show that there had not been displacement.

J. S. In Matthew xi. the Lord says, "for I am meek and lowly *in heart*."

R. D. Yes. So all we have been pressing is the value of spiritual conditions, as the scripture says: "Keep thy heart more than anything that is guarded, for out of it are the issues of life." (New Trans.) The Lord could say, "Let these sayings sink down into your ears."

J. S. You think the heart is reached through the conscience?

R. D. I think one of the most serious things in regard to ministry is to take it up apart from its having reached the conscience, and tell it over again just as I got it. Now if I receive ministry, I value the light that is a seed in my soul, but that would be a very different thing from the fruit God wants. I am taking the agricultural figure: you put a little seed in the ground, and given the needful conditions, you have the result in the plant which emerges. It is the same in kind, although the thing itself is greatly enlarged. It is received as seed in the soul and has grown to a beautiful plant—what a difference

between a seed and what it produces ! It grew up under the influence of the Father of lights, and on my part there is the maintenance of conditions ; and thus it becomes *my own*, part of myself. It is not a repetition of what you have heard ; and what is formed in you in this way is different from what is formed in me.

REM. Hence the value of one another.

R. D. Yes ; and it is all put together for God. We should receive one another on these spiritual lines, not as having respect of persons, but on spiritual lines. I want your fruit, and I want my fruit to be there too ; what I have before me now is that we should be a kind of firstfruits—what you are and what I am, and what all the brethren are, beautifully put together in spiritual order. It is important to see we are not merely a group of individuals. We should be formed under the influence of the sun, each one individually, so that we should be put together spiritually and move *together*, all the fruit being available in the company.

QUES. Do you think that is the thought of the assembly ?

R. D. I do. We should move and touch one another on spiritual lines, and if we are to do that, we must be severed from natural links, and be linked up together spiritually and

practically—a very important thing if God is to get His firstfruits in His people. There is such a tendency to cliques and parties which always indicate a double motive. James says, That must not be; indeed, he says it is sin.

“ My brethren, do not have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, Lord of glory, with respect of persons.” If I have faith in my soul, the faith of the Lord of glory, it shuts out everything that would make anything of man naturally. There is no trace whatever in the epistle that James was the Lord’s brother after the flesh; he does not in any way claim the natural relationship. Think of what it must have been to him who had known Him in connection with the household at Nazareth with all the family relations that there would be! How completely he had travelled the way he suggests we should travel. It is a very blessed lesson for our souls to be able to take account of one another in spiritual ties, and to appreciate these spiritual ties, so that one is able to look upon all the brethren with the same affection and delight. If I am looking into the perfect law of liberty, I love all the brethren. I am not thinking of masters and servants, handmaidens and mistresses, but of *all* the brethren; and James here mentions a brother, and a sister, so to

speak, and what a disparity naturally between Abraham and Rahab ! But they are together morally.

QUES. What about using other people's thoughts ?

R. D. The Lord will not support you if you put forward the seed that is sown in your soul as if it were your own ; it is simply the implanted word yet. We do damage to our souls if we use a thing in its embryo, because we hinder it from growing. You cannot give it out fully and profitably, because it is not formed in you, and you could not give proper expression to it. The Lord will not support you, and it falls flat.

James links us up together practically. He says, " What is the profit, my brethren, if any one say he have faith, but have not works ? " So he says, Here is a brother or a sister, and they are in necessity. The law of liberty, the ministry of the new covenant has surely got a subjective and practical side, for the effect of coming under the influence of the love of God is to set our affections in movement with delight. Now, here is a brother or a sister *in necessity* ; you do not pat them on the back and say, Be warmed and fed. Love does not do that. Love says, This is my opportunity for expressing the reality of divine affections thus formed. Thus

fresh bonds are formed between you and that brother or sister. I am sure we do not know one another in brotherly love until we meet one another in needy circumstances. A brotherly spirit is a liberal spirit, developed in the presence of necessity, and God takes good care He gives us plenty of occasions for expressing it.

James speaks of the smallest thing—the material thing, which is the smallest thing—love will look after that. If I am not moved by a brother's necessities, I shall not be able to help him much spiritually. It is the way in which spiritual ties are developed amongst us, so that we are brought *together*. Thus God is getting His firstfruits; and whilst you are expressing the love you have not gone out from the influence of the Father of lights, for that is what gives it life and impulse. God looks down and sees this with deep joy, and it is not type and shadow now, but reality. The Lord Jesus has risen, it is the sun in the heavens, and there is present moral answer in our hearts, and God is getting a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. To me it is a wonderful thing. One loves to remember that this is not type and shadow now, it is Christ in the hearts of the saints, and the present answer to God in the way of firstfruits. There is a real, risen Christ, and in the people of God

there is a living answer in moral concert to the shining of the Father of lights ; but this is how it is reached.

J. S. We have a figure of Christ set forth in the sun ?

R. D. Yes ; and, if you like, God expressed in the Lord Jesus. Now what is in the ministry of the new covenant is this : not exactly Christ written in the affections, but Christ writing in the affections by the Spirit of the living God, and thus God is expressed in the saints.

J. S. In the beginning of 2 Corinthians iii. we are said to be "Christ's epistle."

R. D. It is a most beautiful conception : "Ye are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read of all men, being manifested to be Christ's epistle ministered by us, written, not with ink, but the Spirit of the living God ; not on stone tables, but on fleshy tables of the heart." It is Christ's letter—what Christ is writing by the Spirit is God in our affections.

S. F. In that way God has gained His own end.

R. D. Yes ; God gains His own end !

III.

(CHAPTER III. 8 TO END ; IV. 11 TO END.)

R. D. In these two chapters we have the conditions that make for peace and for the promoting of the glory of the name of the blessed Person whose name is called upon us, so that they are two very important chapters. But we might just refer back to the end of chapter ii. for a moment, to see the way in which we are put together spiritually. Abraham and Rahab are quoted to bring before us those whose works in that way brought them together, the result of their faith.

S. J. B. C. You would think that Rahab and Abraham would be the last that would be quoted, as Abraham in the eyes of the world was a murderer—he had murder in his heart in the eyes of the world when he lifted up the knife to slay his son—and Rahab was a harlot and a betrayer of her country.

R. D. They are two extreme cases, and the bond between them was not according to flesh. If we are to be together as brethren, there should be no recognition of links after the flesh.

S. F. They are of a spiritual order.

R. D. Yes; our relations as brethren are

entirely spiritual. Status in the flesh has no part in the christian circle.

J. S. That would help us to move about taking account of ourselves and others definitely as those who are begotten by the will of God ?

R. D. Yes, to be "a kind of firstfruits." The only links we have spiritually are in relation to Christ risen. As we have said, James had passed through this experience in a very real way as parting with Christ after the flesh, as the other disciples had also. In regard to James bringing forward Abraham as an instance, even Isaac after the flesh had to go, and Abraham in that way was tested in regard to the word sown in his heart. His faith was tried by that test, so that he was prepared to part with Isaac as he knew him naturally, and receive him back from the dead in figure, so that he has him now on entirely spiritual ground.

REM. Everything was wrapped up in Isaac.

R. D. It was. For the Jews, to whom James was particularly writing, it was a very necessary thing that they moved in that direction ; that they should be set together in the liberty of grace ; that is what Rahab has reference to. We must accept the death of Christ as setting aside all that might be used to give us status in the christian circle.

Abraham's faith is proved by his works, and James' word to us is, Prove your faith by your works! Whatever I may have after the flesh—reputation, status, family lineage—all has to be parted with, and I have to recognise my links with Christ risen in a new and spiritual order. I might even be hindered by my religious connections, supposing my father was in fellowship before me, and possibly my grandfather also. It is only what is spiritual that has any place here.

S. F. It must be wrought out in your own soul.

R. D. It must; it was in Abraham's own soul. The point is, he offered up Isaac, and he counted that God was able to raise the dead; so that Abraham passed through that experience in his soul and all now was to be on the resurrection platform. Here the point is, he gave him up, and when I am prepared to give up natural advantages, I am ready to be a simple brother amongst my brethren.

S. F. You mean his hand followed his heart.

R. D. Yes; and it is a very real test to part with something that might give us a place in the eyes of our brethren. If we pass through this in reality at the beginning, we shall never want a place of prominence, nor shall we ever fight for it; we shall have parted with the idea entirely. Abraham

could get on with a "sister" like Rahab, because she comes in on the line of pure grace, and possessing moral qualifications.

S. F. James stands out in a way like Solomon: "Vanity of vanities," he says, upon all that is not of Christ.

R. D. And like Rahab we can say God has thrown open the whole circle of blessing to us in pure grace, and we could not regard ourselves thus without looking into the perfect law of liberty. It shuts out entirely what gives us status, but gives us liberty in spiritual affections.

REM. It is a wonderful thing to be called "brother" by James.

R. D. Yes, it is; you are being addressed by a very spiritual man. One would love to see brethren more at liberty in the christian circle, like Rahab. She was one who claimed her portion in grace as in the liberty of love, and it will never be taken from such, for we read in Joshua that her portion is among the people of God "to this day."

S. F. Rahab married into the tribe of Judah.

R. D. When James is quoting Rahab, he puts it the other way to Hebrews xi., where it speaks of her *receiving* the spies; James speaks about her *sending them forth*. When the spies got to her house, there were stalks of flax on her roof, indicating, I suppose,

the beginning of exercise as to righteousness, but they were not spun and woven. (Flax suggests the elementary idea of linen, which is the righteousnesses of saints.) She felt, however, the great possibilities that the occasion afforded for her, and her faith counted upon God's mercy even to her. Her exercises found her prepared to commit herself to sending them forth, and in sending them forth she used the scarlet cord and let them down; that is to say, she committed herself to identification with God and His people. She entirely surrenders any place in Jericho and definitely commits herself with the people of God. She received the messengers, and she "put them forth by *another way*"—the emphasis is on "another way." It was very much like what Lydia did with the two "spies" that came to Philippi. She received Paul and Silas into her house and they departed from her house, for she, so to speak, sent them forth in peace, and thus had a scarlet cord she had used to bind upon her window. Thus Rahab acts with the two spies, and they said, Now you bind the cord that you used to let us down. The question is whether we have all got a scarlet cord *that we have used*. She opened her house to the brethren under the influence of the perfect law of liberty, wholeheartedly, with no regrets, and sent them forth another

way. Her heart was closed to Jericho; she was never more to walk in the streets of Jericho, for the door of her house into the street was to be closed, but her window open to committal to the interests of Christ.

QUES. What is the scarlet cord?

R. D. The scarlet cord is your act of committal to the testimony. If you have not used it, you have not got it. If you were to ask Lydia, Have you got a scarlet cord? Yes, she says; I opened my house to Paul and Silas; finding my inheritance amongst the people of God, my house is marked by that. Some of us have the light of this, but have we got a scarlet cord? They came in and they went out and came back, and the last place they went to before leaving Philippi was Lydia's house.

J. S. Paul in that way identified Lydia with the vessel of the testimony.

R. D. She found her place amongst the people of God, and she has got it to this day. I begin in Egypt by having the blood on the lintel, and that is for shelter from judgment, so that I can leave Egypt, but having a scarlet cord in my window I become identified with God's people in conflict, and come in this way into my portion amongst them in the land.

S. J. B. C. Would not the cord shelter her from judgment?

R. D. The cord represents the rights of Christ, and she and the people of God are bound together in owning the supremacy and the glory of the name, "that worthy name," by which we are called. You say you are in fellowship, but the question James is asking is, Have you got a scarlet cord that you have used? "Bind *this* line of scarlet thread in the window."

QUES. Is there any thought of shelter from judgment in the scarlet cord?

R. D. No, I hardly think it is a question of that. Shelter from judgment is the blood upon the lintel. If I want to speak of shelter, I speak of the blood on the lintel; but committal to the Lord's interests among His people I think is seen beautifully in the scarlet cord she uses. If people do not commit themselves they are not in a very safe position; stability is very much connected with committal. It shews how faith expresses itself in this way *practically*. She committed herself to the position at that time, refusing Jericho, the city to which she previously belonged, and all the principles of Jericho, to find herself among the people of God in the liberty of love. It is open to each one of us to verify our committal practically; many of us have held ourselves back.

Rahab saw that God had delivered His

people from Egypt by way of the Red Sea, and had given them power to overthrow their enemies at the brooks of Arnon, and a test has come to her now as to whether her faith can act in seeking divine favour and grace to throw in her lot with Israel. Her action means, The whole position has been put to me, and in view of that I am making a practical committal. The reason many of us do not find a place amongst the saints is because we hold ourselves back practically. I say the word "practically" advisedly. Lydia said: "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house"; and they not only came into her house, but they abode there, and they left Philippi from her house. That worthy, "excellent" name is called upon us, and if we love His interests, having come under the influence of the love of God, we cannot help committing ourselves wholeheartedly to the present position. By looking into the perfect law of liberty you come to delight in opening your heart and house to the testimony, and in doing so, you get a scarlet cord. When we have done it, there is a scarlet cord in our window, and not till then, although we may have been breaking bread for twenty years. With the spies' assurance Rahab could say, I gladly offer myself in the sense of this wondrous grace that

gives me a share in it all; so that although a native of Jericho, having a slur upon my name, I can take my place with Israel in a sense of grace, and can be as much in it as Abraham; and Abraham would have been delighted to own her as a sister.

J. S. The people of Jericho may not have understood what the scarlet cord was, but the people of God understood it.

R. D. Yes; but it was not quite for the people of Jericho to see, but what the Israelites could take notice of. You get a similar thought when Paul was let down in a basket; also in Ruth, when she says, "Thy people shall be my people." She came in like that. Rahab announced her committal to the people of God by displaying the scarlet cord in her window. She said, as it were, By this I am bound to them. In Paul's case the disciples identified themselves with God's elect vessel in circumstances of difficulty and disgrace. The cord means the practical taking up and putting your hands to the thing. It means death as far as Jericho goes, but life as far as the land goes; and remember, it is death *practically* and life *practically*.

The supper is more the thought of a company of people who have all got scarlet cords, and they come together and are glad to commit themselves to the death of Christ, the One

who has the royal right to all. In Acts you get many named who have scarlet cords, but one of the best cases in the New Testament is Gaius. We may say Gaius had his window bound with many scarlet cords. He was always receiving the brethren and sending them forth in peace. If I am indifferent to these things, I may outwardly claim the position, but I am not enjoying the *liberty* of the christian circle; one would like to see all the saints enjoying this liberty, and how freely and happily we would then take up our relationships! If we do answer to what James sets before us, it means a definite break with all that is here, but there is a wonderful avenue of grace given us among the brethren. We would feel at home together, for there are no back seats. Why is it many of us hold back and do not enjoy this liberty? Would you not welcome Lydia to your home without having any other introduction than her committal to Christ's interests? How much of this spiritual, holy liberty has been lost amongst us on account of a status being held to!

J. C. Coming back to Rahab and Abraham: we are brought in by the grace of God, and it would be disastrous for them to look upon each other in nature's way.

R. D. It would. If Rahab had looked at

Abraham according to status, she would say, Well, that shuts me out ; and if Abraham had looked at Rahab, he would say, I could not walk with her. James has all that in view, and before mentioning it he says, Look into the perfect law of liberty. And as we look into the perfect law of liberty, there is the forming of affections that will bind us together. But some of us, it may be, are not in the good of this ; we talk about fellowship, and yet we need introductions to one another ; and why is it ? Abraham and Rahab would have sat down together and held fellowship, although centuries lay between them, and they would have spoken about the same theme —the true Isaac and His glory.

John writes about speaking “mouth to mouth” (3 John 14, New Trans.), and this is a family idea. Clericalism is “mouth to ear,” and is destructive of true christian enjoyment. Thus James quotes a brother and a sister—a family idea. He suggests that our holy affections find liberty in that blessed circle, the sphere of the Spirit. There we would be bound to converse together ; and if we were in the freshness and power of these things, we would not be able to withhold ourselves. We would not stand off, as alas ! we sometimes do.

We are nourished under the apple tree :

“I sat down under his shadow with great delight” (Canticles ii. 3). This is a reference to where we are nourished and brought up under the influence of love. Our hearts go out to Christ and all who love Him. How free and at home Mary of Luke x. would have been with all the brethren! She sat, so to speak, under the apple tree, and what wonderful results there were! It resulted in her anointing His feet with ointment, and the whole house being filled with the odour of it.

You are not looking for somebody to love you, but you are looking for some one to love. Your thought would be, I wonder if there are any orphans and widows? I would like to go and expend on them some of this love springing up in my heart, born and matured under the perfect law of liberty. This, of course, is just the beginning of Christianity. It is not very far on. If we were all like this there would not be distance of any kind between us, we should all be together.

Now chapter iii. says, If the brethren are together like this in love, do not disturb that. If Satan is after one thing amongst the brethren, it is the destruction of unity. I would just like to remind you, James says, do not be many teachers. In many things we have all failed; and if that is the case, I am going to get down from the chair, I am not going to

be a critic in the midst of my brethren, but will be a brother amongst them. That would put us all in the same position, even in regard to weaknesses, and that sort of thing. It is not something I am going to say out of pure mock modesty : " We all often offend." It is perfectly true about me, I often offend, and the brother who says, This is not true, differs from James, who speaks by the Spirit. If we really came to that, how gracious and considerate we should be to one another, even in our words !

And now " confess your faults one to another." It will do you good. Our affections are let loose in an atmosphere of confidence. Instead of a brother being shut up in his house so that he tells the Lord about it but he cannot open his heart to his brethren, he can throw himself upon the Lord and upon the brethren. Let us live in the open ! The sad truth is that conditions amongst us sometimes only indicate that we do not love one another practically, and as a result, that holy confidence is destroyed. We hold back from one another and so hamper one another. Let us throw ourselves upon the Lord and upon the brethren ! Is there any one in the christian circle who does not love us ? James says, Let us have a look at it : faith without works is dead. There is not one in the circle

who does not love us, and so you move in the enjoyment of this love that sets you free. Like Rahab who says, I was a poor harlot belonging to Jericho, with not a thing about me that could claim anything at all, and the brethren have thrown open the gates to me, and I have a home there; you come in now in the power of grace, and the one thing before your soul is blessing. The result would be brethren dwelling together in unity. (Psa. cxxxiii.)

Now you are going to disturb that if you are many teachers. James gets at the root of the matter when he says, Watch your tongue. You cannot stop a thing after you have given vent to it by the tongue. You can think a thing. He says, I am anxious that nothing may slip from your heart to the tongue. Ten minutes after you regret it, but there is no post swift enough to overtake it. You can judge the thought in its conception, but beware of giving expression to it. Just a little bit of the new covenant will thoroughly kill that which invades this precious circle. There is nothing so infectious amongst us as a little bit of love. But remember we have to be taught to love. We cannot love simply because it is enjoined upon us. We want our hearts warmed under the influence of the new covenant and then see what will come out: "Love never

fails." Love will kill the official and the critical alike.

Let us not be on the line of a critical spirit, but on the line of blessing. We have only got one tongue, and it is not right that we should be both cursing and blessing with it. It is a perfect blight on a gathering if we begin to criticise our brethren. If you are using your tongue like that, then it is a double life. It is all open before God, and we cannot deceive one another long, for we cannot buy spiritual power. As soon as I am not on spiritual lines, those of positive blessing, the Lord simply withdraws His support from me. If the Lord withdraw His support from me, my wisdom is to turn to Him and say, Why have you withdrawn your support from me? Because you have been sowing a lack of confidence among the brethren. You may say, I am not telling the brethren wrong things. But *you* were wrong, *you* were critical in your spirit, and there is only one Lord for the people of God, and I am that Lord. There is nothing so testing as to have the Lord withdraw His support from one. One would like to have the sympathy and confidence of all our brethren. Peter, who is much on this line, says, If you do these things you will never fall, the Lord will never let you down.

When the Lord withdraws His support, I do

not think He makes it evident at once publicly. He is so good that He does not do that, but He makes me feel in my affections and in my conscience that I have been maintaining critical lines in a meeting, or in conversation with a brother, or in my home; one's departure may start in a very small way, and the Lord gives me the feeling that I was ruffled in my spirit. He throws an unhappiness over my spirit, and I know it, and my wisdom is to humble myself before the Lord about it. If you do that you will never have to do it publicly. But if you do not hearken to the Lord there must come an exposure.

S. J. B. C. Malachi says, "Take heed to your spirit."

R. D. To watch over our spirits is a most important thing. "The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." If I study Him who is meek and lowly, how patient and gracious I shall be! and I shall be a peacemaker. What a fine occupation it is to be amongst your brethren as a peacemaker, but what a fine occupation for *all* the brethren to be it! If I am a peacemaker I shall ask the Lord for power and grace to curb my tongue. "The tongue can no man tame"—so I need not try, but I can turn to the Lord to tame me and give me grace to bridle my tongue. I feel James really discloses the Spirit of Christ

with remarkable wisdom in the way he touches this question of the tongue. One little remark about a brother or a sister made indiscreetly may set afame the whole course of nature—just a little remark. In the Book of Hebrews it says, “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.” It is not a “*tree* of bitterness,” it is the *root*, the thing in its inception, and it comes from beneath. The thing was there unjudged in your heart. If I have a thing arising in my heart, I am sowing a thought; nobody knows that but the Lord and myself; I can deal with it then, it has not done anybody any damage. I can judge it in the presence of the Lord, and then I can meet you and shake hands with you and look into your face and invite you to look into my heart. But if you nurse it, the next thing is, you mention it; now it has gone its course, and it affects the glorious name that is named upon us.

But how good to think that we can use the tongue in view of blessing! Then if you meet me in the street, or if you visit my home, or if we come together in the meeting, you will ever be on the lines of blessing and establishing peace. Thus there is an answer to God in the “kind of firstfruits” as a result

of coming under the influence of the Father of lights.

“ The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace.” You are on the line of blessing and enlargement all the time. It is good to remember, and to admit it, “ the tongue can no man tame.” There is only one blessed Person can tame the tongue, and He gives me the Holy Spirit that I might be completely under control.

Auckland, 2/2/22

IV.

(JAMES III. 12 TO END ; IV. 11 TO END ; V. 7 TO END.)

R. D. We have been noticing previously that the character of the present time is one of blessing, and that we are brought to confession of God by our tongues, as it is said : “ Therewith bless we the Lord and Father,” so that we are committed to blessing. We were dwelling a little on what meekness is, and so I thought we might begin at verse 12. In the close of chapter iii. it speaks of the features —meekness and wisdom—that secure peace amongst ourselves and fruitfulness for God. It is a great point with James that there might be fruit ; he speaks repeatedly of the “ precious fruit.” Then he speaks of the wisdom which does not come down from above, and shews what its effect is : “ This is not the wisdom which comes down from above, but earthly, natural, devilish. For where emulation and strife are, there is disorder and every evil thing.” He sets over against that the wisdom that comes down from the Lord Jesus in heaven, and a very beautiful thing it is.

W. H. U. Do we get any thought of headship underlying this scripture?

R. D. I have no doubt it is underlying it. In the christian circle we get the benefit of every feature of Christ; in every way the Lord Jesus is available for us; we may not be able to state here in terms what it is, but I have no doubt it is headship.

We may test ourselves and our conversation by the features that he gives us here.

J. B. Was it found in the Person of Christ here upon the earth?

R. D. It was, and now He gives us His own Spirit that His own features might come out in us. We appreciate the beautiful graces in Him, and they become formed in us so that we can express them.

When anything arises that calls for a little consideration, we are so apt to begin to act forthwith, instead of waiting that we might drink in of the Spirit of Christ, and that we might move in the direction of peace. We might have a right thing in view, but James is anxious that we might not only have a right thing in view, but that we might move towards it in the Spirit of Christ, having His support in every step. It would be an expression of Himself, it would be "first pure." Now we generally apply that to the person we are judging. We say, We are looking for

this in you ; but I think the way it works out is it exposes the motives in my own heart. There should be no ulterior motive. I might be affected by what is natural, and my judgment be blurred in that way, but if I have the wisdom which is from above I shall be pure, because I shall be characterised by that wisdom which acts for God's will, and has as an object the honour of the Lord of glory.

This works out from one's heart, and if we are pursuing the line of blessing, we want to see reproduced amongst the brethren the fruits God is looking for to-day. He is looking for firstfruits for all His mercy and grace expended, and it is our privilege to promote this together. A person on this line has got power, and the Lord will support him. I think it is a great thing to have the desire for spiritual power. James says, I do not want your talk ; I want fruit, I want you to be " swift to hear, slow to speak." He means, Let what you hear reach your soul as the implanted word and become fruit under the perfect law of liberty. Let there be a good while between the hearing and the speaking.

J. S. Speaking is a thing James seeks to prevent there being too much of—" Be not many teachers."

R. D. " Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wis-

dom"; "conversation" means "manner of life." He wants you to be like Asher whose shoes were iron and brass. He had a firm tread, and was one who surrendered nothing that was of God; but he moved in grace amongst his brethren, for though firmfooted his feet were dipped in oil. He walked in the grace of Christ, and such a one would have sons, for there is multiplication on this line: "Let Asher be blessed with children." James belonged to that tribe morally.

God would have us formed by the wisdom from above. It is a desirable thing to have one's heart adjusted by Christ so that God can look into it with approval, and you can invite the Lord Jesus and the brethren to look into it. Peter did. He said, I used to keep some of the keys of my heart from you. Now in John xxi. with a whole heart open to the Lord's eye, Peter confesses the Lord knows all things—all the motives and purposes of the heart, and he can say: "Thou knowest that I love thee." And if we are thus cleared as to every wrong motive, we can move like Asher in gracious activity amongst our brethren for peace and prosperity, and also rest like Asher: "And thy rest as thy days." Some of us do not know how to rest in regard to divine things. We are busy doing this and doing that, writing letters, and so.

forth—far better to go and rest awhile, and let the Lord look after things. “He giveth his beloved sleep.” It is a gift. He says, You can leave things in My hand and I will look after them. That is the force of that scripture: “And thy rest as thy days.” We need not sit up late and rise early to eat the bread of sorrows—it is vain to do this!

QUES. Do we see the effect of it in the Lord asleep in the storm?

R. D. Yes; we want to turn to the Lord to see everything divinely perfect. I look at that blessed Person sleeping there, and I would like to be able to do what the disciples did not do—I would like to let Him sleep, and to be at rest myself too! If He is at rest, why should we be disturbed?

QUES. Does confidence give rest or sleep?

R. D. If you have got confidence, it is not to be in yourself; if it is, it will give disturbance not only to yourself but also to your brethren.

QUES. Is it casting your care upon Him?

R. D. Not only casting your own care upon Him, but casting the interests of God’s house upon Him as One who does have an interest in them. One would not interfere with the thought of taking one’s part in the sufferings of the glad tidings, but let me have confidence in the Lord. Paul never lost this confidence although he spoke of fightings without, and fears within.

In the path of the Lord's will I can rest. Let me pursue my path expressing the features of Christ.

The order is "first pure," then you are to be "peaceable" and "gentle"—beautiful qualities that are not appreciated enough by us. These would not bring in disorder, they would bring in peace. If there has been disorder among the saints, behind this have been envyings and strife. In Matthew xx. there was a threatened rift with the disciples; two of them have been proposed by their mother to the Lord, one for His right hand, the other for His left in the kingdom. She sued for a place of prominence—a very poor sort of thing. See how gently Jesus reproves this, and then when the ten heard about it they became indignant, and would quarrel with them, so that the peace of the whole company is jeopardised; but see again how gently Jesus calls them all together and instructs them, rebuking every disturbing thought in their hearts toward each other, maintaining an unbroken company instead of ten and two. His meekness and gentleness accomplish this.

J. C. But I cannot afford to be gentle.

R. D. You can afford to be anything in this chapter. This chapter gives you your bank, an unlimited bank, its capital is such

that we can afford to do anything. You may draw freely on these reserves. I would no doubt find it impossible to be gentle until I went to the bank. You may say, I have been drawing on that for about ten years and am nearly bankrupt now. The bank is not bankrupt, and "*He gives more grace.*" Grace is the capital or substance that enables you to pay out. In 3 John there is a special word to Gaius. What a resource of grace he must have needed in his very trying situation; and John sees Gaius needs a word to encourage him not to give way; he was probably feeling that the conduct of Diotrephes toward the brethren was now intolerable and must be resisted; feeling, too, perhaps, that it was time to act, and patience was exhausted, but John says, "Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. . . . I trust I shall shortly see thee and we shall speak face to face."

This is just the beginning of Christianity; we are at the rock bottom, and every one of us needs to have our spirits bathed in it. It is no good soaring up to Ephesians if we are not set as James sets us here; he would set us free for the enjoyment of sonship. Sonship is a great gift, but this is the way to come into the enjoyment of it; we shall not taste the blessedness of sonship if we are not dealing gently with our brethren.

Then this wisdom is "yielding." You may feel you have been rather unyielding in regard to others; well, there is wisdom you can draw upon, and it will enable you to yield all the way, and to do it gracefully, because it is in the power of grace. The Lord supports a man that takes the low place. I heard a brother say recently, "I have done this thing wrong, the other thing wrong—I feel I have done everything wrong," and I felt the Lord was supporting him in every word he said. The Lord never lets a man down who is prepared to go to the wall.

S. J. B. C. "He giveth grace to the humble."

R. D. Yes, He does. There is a seat not too much occupied; it is the bottom one. There is never any competition for it, but it is from that seat that the Lord begins His promoting. If you take the low place, the Lord will promote you: "*Friend, go up higher,*" He said.

J. S. That is what we were noticing in connection with the kingdom.

R. D. It is the first principle of the kingdom. You could not make a man jealous who is conscious of mercy. He has been picked up from the dunghill and has been put amongst princes, and had every blessing given him, and he says, What more could I have? what

more could I want? You could not make a man like that jealous.

Now we come to "full of mercy and good fruits." It is expending itself in blessing. Then it is "unquestioning, unfeigned." In verse 18 you see what is to be the result if you travel on these lines. God says, I will give the fruit of righteousness for these. You begin to feel the fruits of righteousness are sown in the affections. A meeting may have gone on unhappily for ten years, and this touch will bring in an atmosphere of blessing. The condition of the Corinthians was corrected by Paul's first epistle, by the Lord being made supreme in their affections (practically, the kingdom line of things being presented), and thus conditions were prepared for the ministries of the new covenant, reconciliation, and the "man in Christ" being introduced in the second epistle. What comes from man's heart is "earthly, natural, devilish." If I act apart from the Lord and His wisdom I must do damage.

The prayer of Jabez is one well worth remembering. His name indicates sorrow. His mother gave him his name, no doubt she was a spiritual woman. He had brought pain and travail even in his coming into the world. He took it to God and he prays: "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might

be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!" And the Lord "brought about" his request. There is a man who says, as it were, I do not want to break any one's heart, but may I be one who brings in blessing; and the Lord brought about his request.

Now to go on to our next scripture. It is worth while listening when James addresses his brethren. "Brethren," he says—those whom he can commit himself to he calls his brethren—"Speak not against one another."

J. S. Is that not speaking against the Lord?

R. D. If we speak against our brethren, we are opposing the Lord. I am not moving in love if I speak against the brethren, and the government of God will overtake me. It is a very serious word this. We rather lightly speak against our brethren sometimes. James pulls you up. If I have an exercise about a thing, I will move in the wisdom from above which is "first pure," and go to God first and then to my brother gently. There is a course wisdom will take, it will be "first pure," and the end of it will be "good fruits," not disturbance and lack of confidence in the meeting. Let us get on to positive lines! The time to be careful is after the meeting. Do not let us leave the hall doors speaking

in such a way that what may have been before us in the meeting is thrown aside in our souls by unguarded and critical remarks so that we lose the gain of it ; but see that our conversations may be for edification. If we have been to God first and then come along on the lines of "first pure," "full of mercy and good fruits," and we have a little suggestion to make on the line of admonition given in love, the brother says, Here is a brother who loves me, and he wants to see me prosper, and to see saints prosper, and now he is wisely putting me on my guard as to a possible mistake or hurtful tendency in me. I am glad of his care and criticism, and thankful to pray about it. He has told no one else, and so matters are adjusted.

"One is the lawgiver and judge." That is to say, I recognise the place the Lord has, and I desire only to be where He can give His support. As we were saying the other night, the Lord comes in and He says, I am Lord ; and there is nothing He is more jealous about amongst the saints than this. Whenever I seek to come in between the Lord and the brethren and to dictate to them, as sure as I do it, the Lord will have to say to me. He will allow me to be the doormat, He will allow me to shepherd them, but He will not allow me to lord over them. I like

the way James puts it ; Christ is over you, do not lord over the brethren ; there never has been any one who did it and prospered.

S. J. B. C. It is a solemn thing to stand between a servant and his Lord.

R. D. I am not so concerned about the servant as the brother. The servant can go to his Lord, but this is a brother. A servant's place is to serve in humility, as Paul says in *1 Corinthians* iii. 21-23 : "All things are yours . . . and ye are Christ's ; and Christ is God's." The Lord may move but slowly to preserve His lordship, but move He will.

He goes on to speak of how the Lord will support us in regard to seeking His guidance : " Go to now, ye who say, To day or to tomorrow." This is the cause of a great deal of confusion amongst us at times. Supposing the Lord has placed me in A—— and the ordering of God is that I should be at A—— ; I say, I would like to go and live in D—— ; there is a nice meeting there ; things are a little bit troublesome in A——. I pack up and go off to D——, and I find myself in trouble there. Do not do that. Let it be, " If the Lord should so will and we should live." This is a very important consideration if we are to be kept in our right places for God's glory. " If the Lord will " and " if we should live, " which practically means " if God will " — I read it

in the light of both, and it takes in both home circle and business as well as the Lord's interests. Mr. Stoney used to say I should discover what my earthly calling is and then what my mission is. God is connected with the former and the Lord with the latter. I ought to say, "If the Lord will"—that is, I look to the Lord and I say, Here is a fresh exercise; I am out of a situation here in A—, and I just want to be where I can have your support, and I am not sure about moving to D—. Well, I just wait. Then there is an opening in D— which is God's ordering, and I am set free in my spirit by the Lord, and so all becomes simple. In referring to this matter in D—, a situation opens; it may be five pounds a week more, or it may be five pounds less. I ask my brethren about it and they cannot tell me; they can pray for me and tell me what their exercises are, but after all, only God can settle it.

In Acts xxi. the brethren expressed their earnest exercises as to Paul's movements, but they found him determined to go to Jerusalem against their feelings; so they simply left him to God and desired that the will of the Lord should be done. And the sequel shews that though Paul in measure lost the Lord's support for a time, their prayers were answered and the Lord's will was done.

God cares for me in my circumstances, and the Lord directs me in my spiritual path ; I need thus to have God's care and guidance as to my temporal needs, and the guidance of the Lord in relation to His interests. I am thinking of the expression, " if the Lord will." If I have a move in view, I should like to ask the Lord, Is this right ? The Lord may indicate that He has put me where I am now, and that I should remain there. Well, if I move, I shall certainly lose His support, and if I remain I can count on Him being with me. Paul could speak of it quite simply ; I have come through supported by the Lord ; I have kept the faith ; I have fought the fight ; I have come to the end, and He is going to take me home. We shall live as long as the Lord has a use for us, on these lines, that is God's care ; and God does love to care for us, so that in simple dependence we should live and serve His beloved Son.

QUES. Is every saint a servant ?

R. D. It is the privilege of every saint to be a servant. There should be a motive before them that they should serve God, and this is called a "labour of love." So that every one of us should be going on in that service while it is our privilege. We have a positive thing to do, and if we do not carry it out, to us it is sin. It is a great gain to have our

paths laid out for us in this simple way. So long as it pleases God to leave us down here on this earth, we can be in the right place, doing the right thing, and in right conditions. If the Lord come now, I am living in the house God put me in, in the circumstances He put me in, and doing the thing the Lord supports me in ; and if He come, I shall just go, nothing to fear at all. These are the spiritual conditions in which we take things up.

Now to come to chapter v. There are many exercises we are called to pass through which are very prolonged, so he says : "Have patience, therefore, brethren, till the coming of the Lord." God is working wonderful things amongst us, developing spiritual fruits in the affections of the saints, and so he brings in this illustration of the labourer. He "awaits the precious fruit of the earth, having patience for it until it receive the early and the latter rain." I think many of us let go an exercise before we come to the "latter rain." Think of going through the spring and the summer and seeing the corn in the ear, and then something turns you aside and you give up ; you lose the whole crop. So here is a word to carry us through, not only the "early rain," but the "latter rain." He gives us a word as to Job being sustained until he comes through at last, and he recalls his patience, and the

tender pity of the Lord in all Job's testings, until he is in the full enjoyment of all God's thoughts for him.

Now he says, "Complain not one against another. . . . Behold, the judge stands before the door." Why not leave things with the Lord without fretting and complaining? the judge is just at the door. Do not allow your spirit to become soured, for this will interfere with the good yield. If you are engaged with what concerns the Lord, He is near and you will get His approval; there is no need to justify oneself. There should be such prosperity in our hearts that there is no room for disappointment.

There is no complaining in the streets of the city where the Lord is supreme amongst the saints. "Ye have heard of the endurance of Job." The Lord bore with and patiently dealt with him, and what is the end? He gets spiritual wealth, and three daughters; and you remember how the second time he could name his daughters. The first, Jemima, refers to the reaching of a resurrection morning. "At last," he says, "the morning has broken." And then the next daughter, Kezia, suggests the fragrance that fills the scene, and the third daughter, Keren-happuch, is so named as expressing Job's appreciation of the moral beauty of Christ. The morning has come,

filled with the fragrance and beauty of Christ. So the end of the Lord is to bring a man into the light of the resurrection morning, and to flood his heart with blessing, so that he has substance for his soul. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and seen the end of the Lord with Job. James enjoins that endurance is to have its perfect work. Job got the latter rain, and the latter rain was what ripened all the fruits. Even if it is such a simple exercise as to being a little more gracious and yielding, you will not be brought to that before the early and the latter rain have done their work. If you ask the Lord to make you a little more yielding, do not be surprised if you are very much tested in that the next day ; it will mean going towards the wall many yards more than you had expected to do. The early rain will cause the seed to swell, thus requiring more room in my affections and testing me in this way. But he would encourage me to look at the fruit and its perfect expression in Christ.

Then "before all things, my brethren, swear not." We are so apt to push things on, but the Lord cannot support that. If the iron be blunt, I need more force to push and support my cause. Wait on the Lord, and let it be "yea" and "nay." If I am presenting the truth I do not need to press it in human

zeal. I only need to simply and meekly present what the truth is, and the Lord will support it. Even Christ committed Himself to One who judges righteously. It may be I am not prepared to join some association. The association may say they will make it impossible for me to live. They cannot hinder me praying, and if they can defeat the Almighty God, it is not the God I know. "Does any one among you suffer evil? let him pray," and if I do anything else I shall not have the Lord with me.

He says, "Is any happy? let him sing psalms." It is a normal thing for us to be happy; let us sing psalms; trace your happiness up to God. "Is any sick?" You count on the interest and affections of the brethren when you are sick, and this puts you in beautiful touch with each other. If I get sick, I find the doorstep begins to wear, that is because the brethren love me; and how much nearer we do get to each other in our sorrows!

QUES. Does this refer to natural or spiritual sickness?

R. D. Oh, it is bodily sickness, but spiritual sickness behind it.

QUES. Would you call in the doctor?

R. D. You may call in the doctor or not, but what James is concerned about is that you should call the brethren in, they are the

people who really care for your soul, and you recognise that you belong to a circle where your soul is cared for. "Let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."

REM. That is at the request of the sick one?

R. D. Yes; He takes this simple course. He recognises he is not like an ordinary man in the world; he has got to do with God, and also God's government, and the people of God. And he goes on to say, "and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he be one who has committed sins, it shall be forgiven him." It may be that he discovers that he has been laid upon his back in regard to certain things he has done; perhaps he has been a Free-mason and has not told his brethren. He recognises he has not been true to the fellowship, and that the Lord has laid him on his back because He loves him, and He has it out with him.

S. F. And the thing is forgiven him governmentally.

R. D. It is in order to shew us how gracious the provisions are, how easy it is to get right, and how very difficult to get wrong. I have to jump over gates to get wrong, but I find all the gates open when I want to get right. James is a man who goes in for short reckonings. I may be laid in bed with

sickness and I call in the doctor and do the best I can, but if God is speaking to me as to my course, the doctor cannot do much. The Lord is giving me an opportunity and I know it, and suppose I do not pay attention to it, God may even allow me to get on my feet again. I may be laid aside again, the Lord speaks louder, until I am brought to face it, until I get clear of the thing that has been the block to my spiritual progress so long. Let us go in for short accounts. If you have taken a course of wrong associations, the Lord sees it and it has to come out. You cannot shut yourself up to ignore that you belong to the Lord and to the fellowship, and so James calls you to face it. If we have cities of refuge and use them, there will be recovery.

Now there is a word of exhortation : "Confess your faults one to another." Let us be open one to another. Some time ago I was asked with others to go and see a brother who felt the Lord had afflicted him, and that he had been careless about divine things, giving too much time to business matters, and so on. He said, "I just wanted you to pray for me." We felt we could take up his exercise. This is in connection with a brother's exercises, and connected with governmental sickness. Of course, you may be sick tomorrow, and be able to discover no other

reason than that the Lord wants you to live a little nearer to Him, so we need discernment as to just what the Lord intends. Here is Elias; Elias says, It is necessary for the good of Israel that there should be no rain. It is the prayer of a spiritual man. And when he saw that there were conditions to receive rain, he prayed again, and the rain came; and not only did the rain come, but the earth caused its fruit to spring forth. That was what Elijah was after, he wanted to see *fruit* in the hearts of the Lord's people.

“ My brethren, if any one among you err from the truth, and one bring him back, let him know that he that brings back a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and shall cover a multitude of sins.” Now we should be on that priestly line. If a brother is losing interest, and it becomes evident that he is getting into the world, we should go after him and save him. Now do not think this is a little thing. Look at the possibilities in it for that brother! And very sweet it is if the Lord has used you to care for any one like this, to see him once more sitting in the meeting with a shining face.

James, as it were, leaves us there—saving one another. That is also where Jude leaves us, having compassion on some, “ making a

difference." What about the others? Jude says: Go after them and save them, "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." We are not nearly aggressive enough in our activities towards our poor erring brethren, and towards men generally. James says to any one who may see an opportunity for recovering a brother: "Let him know that he that brings back a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and shall cover a multitude of sins." That is no small spiritual achievement, and may we covet to do it.

Auckland, 7/2/22.

RECOVERY AS SEEN IN THE REIGN OF ASA.

(2 CHRON. XIV. 1 TO END ; XV. 1-15 ; XVI. 1-3 ; 13 TO END.)

I THOUGHT we might follow up, by way of illustration in the type, what we have been considering regarding conditions which make for the Lord's support. He will support whatever He can. Asa presented to Him spiritual conditions of which He could take account, and so blessing comes in. The Lord never ignores conditions. So long as Asa owned the Lord, He was with him, giving peace and blessing ; but latterly when he ignored the Lord and acted for himself, it was announced to him that from henceforth he should have wars.

In chapter xiv. we see him removing what was inconsistent with the Lord, regarding what was necessary for spiritual conditions. The Lord thus gave peace in his reign. Right spiritual conditions always bring in peace and blessing. Asa's reign teaches this, and we see him first clearing out all that was offensive and then pursuing the line of construction. Room had thus to be made for what was positive by a clearance of all that was offensive to God. The Spirit's comment is : " Asa

did that which was good and right in the sight of Jehovah his God." The exhortation to Timothy is: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God." Verses 2 and 3 shew what Asa removed—the altars of the strange gods, Ashtaroth, etc.—and verse 4 gives his exhortation for the practising of the law and commandment, and thus there was quiet for ten years, and he built fortified cities. I am assured the Lord has given us a revival in the last few years, and there has been a clearing away of unholy associations—idolatry and the like—so that He might bring in peace, and that we might be enriched in blessing and be able to serve and minister to God.

Suitable conditions must be brought about by means of "house cleaning," so to speak, in view of what is to be introduced. A good deal of rubbish and idolatry may be exposed, but these things must go. The Lord has a desire that there should be a bright answer to all the ministry that has come to us, and He is raising questions regarding our associations and links with the world and with the earth. As we read in James, the wisdom, *not* from above is "earthly, natural, devilish." The Lord would free us from what is in us that is earthly, merely natural, or even characteristically devilish. We must be clear of all this to get the wisdom that is from above. It is "first

pure"—this involves our getting rid of all idols. Idolatry might take the form of having as our object earthly possessions or pleasures, things right enough in their place, but allowed to take the place of God, and to come between our affections and God. Luke xiv. is an example of idolatry in those who preferred oxen and land to God's supper. Clearance in this instance begins when there is a man on the throne acting as considering for God. Asa sought for conditions in which he could call upon God; hence there arose a need of clearing out many things discovered by God in view of introducing blessing.

Recent ministry has brought to light among the saints much that is earthly and natural. The clearing away appears to be attributed to Asa himself, but what is positive to Judah, for Asa sought to have Judah with him in bringing in blessing. He was a king, but he was also a brother: "Let *us* build," he says, "while the land is yet before *us*." He is not on individual lines, but acts collectively. The Lord will disclose to each of us what is idolatry to ourselves. It may be a very small thing, but the Lord will disclose it. Asa suggests a subjective exercise on the part of God's people. Joshua at the end of his book says in a prophetic utterance, "Put away the strange gods which are among you"; no one

questioned their existence ; the utterance disclosed what was being allowed in secret.

John, too, in the last chapter of his first epistle, says : " Children, keep yourselves from idols." Whatever comes into our hearts between God and His interests, whether earthly, natural, or what is gross or devilish, constitutes an idol. The Lord may exercise me to-day about an idol hitherto undisclosed ; something I was not conscious of till now when He intends to promote me. The more spiritual one's walk, the more limited it becomes as to things here, but there is greater scope in what is of God, and so one would be glad to part with still more on account of the precious compensations the Lord delights to bestow. The proof of an idol is that I prefer something to God's interests ; I may assent to ministry, but may allow my business or my family to gain ascendancy. Piety will welcome all this, but piety is never paraded ; it is intensely private and you can only discern its presence in any one by the evidence of spiritual power. The support of the Lord is evidenced by the power displayed by a brother. " The mystery of piety is great." Piety involves the soul walking in the light of Christianity, and leads me to jealously cherish direct personal access to God. I will now allow a brother, or a meeting, or anything

earthly, or natural, to come between my soul and God. I deal directly with God about everything. One who walks in piety lives in the mystery of piety. Psalm xvi. suggests a man who sets the Lord always before him, and who comes into the enjoyment of fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. The Lord can support such.

Asa is conscious of the Lord's support, and gets on to mutual lines with the brethren. He says, "Let *us*," and he does not want to move without the brethren. Piety is bringing God into my earthly circumstances, and indeed, every detail of our life comes under the eye of God. Christian piety lies at the basis of the spiritual condition of my soul, and is the effect of the revelation. I hold private communion with God, and it is this that lies at the bottom of all spiritual blessing. The Lord has been calling special attention to what belongs to the church and should be expressed by her in these last days.

Asa presents not only clearing out, but *building*; and one would look for an increasing answer in moral features in God's people to all the precious ministry and favour we have received in these last days. Piety introduces us to all the mind of God for the present time, and having to do with God leaves the heart free to do the will of God.

and to judge and eschew what is unsuitable to it. The closer you come to God and His thoughts, the more you feel the need of parting with the hindrances, and the effect is to bring us to great simplicity as to present things. When Jacob was called to Bethel, he found it meant a reduction in his household goods, but it was much better for him and he had less to carry and care for. In piety we arrive thus at the stranger and pilgrim character here.

Asa introduced divine order and rule, and the effect of this is peace in the kingdom, but now this being accomplished, he takes steps to insure a maintenance of it ; so fenced cities are built, and *the land had rest*. Thus Asa sets up administration. If we are to have rest we must recognise the "set thrones" of Psalm cxxii., and fenced cities where we enjoy divine administration and its results instead of doing that which is right in our own eyes. The lack of this in the times of the Judges was the cause of all the confusion of that period. The only way administration is possible in view of a secure peace and rest among us is by the recognition of divine principles, statutes, and ordinances. The preservation of peace is in view of life, that under divine control and rule we might enjoy the blessings of life together.

Divine principles must be taken up and employed in the Spirit of Christ to be effectual in establishing quietude and rest. No nation legislates and administrates for the sake of administration, but for the security and prosperity of its people. In the early chapters of Acts we see the saints kept by Christ's administration through the apostles, so that the attacks of the enemy are frustrated time and again, and the integrity of the company preserved. There is power to deal with Ananias and Sapphira, with the murmuring which arose as to the neglect of the widows, etc., and the saints were able to meet the attacks from without. The power of holiness, too, drove out intruders: "Of the rest durst no man join." So here they built cities, gates, walls, and bars. Much must be done in time of peace to establish administration in view of the enemy attacking us as he is sure to do. We may learn here the value of divine principles and statutes in view of what is defensive as well as administrative. The Ethiopian attack came at an opportune time, because the people were well prepared to resist it, and even to go out aggressively and attack the enemy. The walls here may represent the protective exclusive conditions which we must ever maintain, and the gates the legitimate means of our being in touch with

men, but there are bars on them, for we may be attacked suddenly. We should use the gates for blessing and should be more concerned to be in touch with men. I am sure we are not courageous enough in our warfaring in the testimony. The gates are open for all that is good, but ready to be shut and barred to evil. There are towers, too—suggestive of the watchfulness and strength for resistance if there should be an assault. The people are thus maintained by the strength of the Lord in the exclusive position. Of the city in Revelation it is said: “And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth.”

Here the name of the Lord covers the whole position—we all cherish the power of that name. At Philippi that power had to be asserted because of two sisters having a difference: “I exhort Euodias, and exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind *in the Lord.*” (Phil. iv. 2.) The whole position was being assailed—evidently the towers had been neglected, because here are these two in divergence, and an opening is given to the enemy. If there are divergencies between the brethren in any place, they need to own that they have neglected their towers; they have not been watchful enough, and the elements of disturbance have had admission through the gates. We need to keep the walls intact—

the preserving of divine statutes—for if we fail as to this, wrong principles receive a footing, and this destroys peace together. The authority of Christ owned in our hearts settles every question.

It is a very gracious way the Lord's authority is brought to bear upon the situation in the breach threatened at Philippi between Euodias and Syntyche. The will of the Lord is not arbitrary. If I name the name of the Lord, and you do so, too, there should be no difference or difficulty. The tower is where I watch to see that the name of the Lord may be supreme, and I am prepared to watch all round the city to see that that supremacy is not assailed, looking diligently and recognising the supremacy of Christ. He will deal with all disturbances; let me be concerned to see that He does not have to deal with me. If any fail of the grace of God he loses the Lord's support. The "invasion" in Hebrews xii. begins in a root of bitterness. In our chapter we are reminded to care not only for walls, but for gates and bars as well.

The sheep gate in Nehemiah had no bars; it was a gate of liberty; but there were bars on the prison gate, on the fish gate and on each of the other gates. There the sheep gate comes first, for if we cannot have the sheep cared for so that they are in full liberty—no bars—

we cannot have much understanding of the fish gate. The bars and bolts of the fish gate raise the question not only as to whom we let through, but what we exclude, and implies doorkeeping. We should be ready to shut out whatever would bring in disturbance. In Acts ix. when Saul of Tarsus is presented for admittance, so to speak, Ananias was ready with the bolts and bars ; he was justified in this, because Saul had been persecuting the saints previously. So there would be watchmen in the tower keeping watch for what is coming along ; if a sheep come along, we let it in ; if a fish, we discern whether it is good or bad. (Matt. xiii. 47, 48.) If an enemy is attacking, he is seen in the distance and warning is given. If there is found a disturbing element among us, it is because we have not been keeping in repair and use the walls, towers, gates, and bars.

These conditions, brought by Asa into his realm, should be established in our souls ; these walls, gates, towers, should be morally true *in us*, and, as with Asa, we need also an army to maintain them, an army with weapons. (Chap. xiv. 8.) Not only are we to have the conditions, but we are to see, too, that no matter how peaceful things may appear, all is maintained and a reserve of power held, as with this army; to hold our position. Peace

on every side when granted to us is in view of our blessing, so that God may be served in sacrifice and praise and worship; but the position is sure to be assailed, so we have "earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." When this Ethiopian attack is threatened the king does not put his confidence in the happy and prepared conditions of the people, but still on the Lord. Asa does not say, We are fully equipped to meet this attack, although he had towers, walls, gates, and bars, and a powerful army. What he said in effect was. Here is a fresh assault, and we need to look to the Lord. This was an attack from outside, and if we have the Lord with us, we need never fear an outside enemy. The saddest thing is when we are in factions within—a nation divided against itself—for civil war is the most terrible of all wars. If we have dissensions within, if there be enmity and strife amongst us, it is a shame, for when an attack comes we cannot present a united front. Asa looks for the Lord's support. He does not depend on a majority. Here it is what the Lord will do through His people: "The Lord and his host." (Ver. 13.) We should never move individually or as a gathering without saying and feeling, Lord, we need Thy support. Asa did this, though he personally had no doubt about the issue.

Supposing the Lord has been helping us together to set up our city walls, and that He removes all divergencies, so that like Asa we have mutual relations, and peace, and are enjoying our collective privileges together: do you think we shall be long let alone by Satan? But if he attack there is a united front, and that makes for victory with the Lord's help. We have just reached this point when this black Ethiopian comes up, so to speak, to disturb our conditions of unity. There was a similar occurrence in Acts iv. and in verse 29 of that chapter the company lifted up their voice with one accord and said: "And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings, and give to thy bondmen with all boldness to speak thy word, in that thou stretchest out thy hand to heal, and that signs and wonders take place through the name of thy holy servant Jesus." There was an instant response from God.

An individual recovered to God would never surrender "company lines." He would not be on individual lines, nor would he limit his affections or his movements to "the spiritual men" among the company; he would embrace *all* in his thoughts. The word to Timothy continues: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine"—this latter phrase includes the saints. We

have an inheritance among the saints. Let us never give up collective thoughts. The truth of "the body," of the "children of God," and "sonship," would help as to that. I am never spoken of as "a child of God" in scripture, but there are "children of God" spoken of; similarly I am not spoken of as "a son," though I enjoy the gift of sonship among "the sons," which is a collective thought. I have no exercise that does not begin individually, but it must be in view of what is collective. 2 Timothy has in view that I should be adjusted to the grace that is in Christ Jesus, but that means that I shall have all the saints on my heart.

QUES. What about the scripture: "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land"?

You remember the remainder of that verse: "that they may dwell with me." That is an individual so desirous of walking with the people of God that he seeks to walk that they can walk *with him*. I reach the position through individual exercise. If a company is on collective lines I can own them and walk with them, but if they are not I could not walk with them. "With those" is not a set of individuals merely, but those who are prepared to be regulated by the whole truth and act together in the light and principles governing the assembly. I do not regard

those with whom I walk merely as a number of individuals, I regard them as having collective exercises, and that for the whole church. How could we be in fellowship if we are just a set of individuals? We have our individual altar, but the altar of God's house is collective. (See Ezra ii.)

QUES. Why do you say the "doctrine" includes the saints?

It must include the brethren, because "the assembly," "the mystery," "the new man," are all part of the doctrine. The movement in Asa is expressive of what is true of those with him; Asa found those like himself and walked with them. He said, "Let us." We are in danger of being extreme on individual lines. The loaf and the cup bring before us the church universally and Christ's love to the assembly. In John xiv. they were so together that the Lord said, "Let not *your heart* be troubled" (ver. 1)—emphasis is on "your heart" (not hearts); and if affection for our absent Lord hold us, and we are held by the truth, there would only be one heart. It is an important exercise not to drop on to individual lines.

The epistle we have been reading (James) has in view that we should be on church lines. As an individual having the Spirit, I am a part of the body. Many people appear to believe that the Spirit indwells them separately,

but the Spirit of God has been here for nearly two thousand years, and when He takes possession of the believer, he is linked with the body, and could not possibly be happy on merely individual lines. We have not the Spirit *separately*. All exhortations are taken up individually, but I must never isolate myself from the body in my thoughts. I should act in my home and business as one who is a member of the assembly.

Romans xii. takes me up as an individual recovered by the mercy and grace of God and secured for the will of God, but the carrying out of this has to be done in relation to the body. I must not be independent, for the fact is, I may talk of individual lines and mean independency. 1 Corinthians xii. teaches that I should always recognise that the *other* members are necessary to the body. If any one have the Spirit, he is linked vitally with the body. In Ephesians iv. there is one body and one Spirit. As we enter into suitable conditions we can, like Asa, say, "*Let us.*" We want to have everything strengthened so that when anything assails the "*us,*" not only is the attack repulsed, but, as in Asa's day, there is spoil secured, there are cattle, sheep and camels; there is thus such gain won out of the conflict that a great thanksgiving response accrues to God.

Now just one word more as to Asa's victory : it was a crushing defeat that he inflicted on the Ethiopians ; he went out and smote them, and secured very much spoil. When the Lord is with us we can assume an attack, and we should come out of every conflict with spoil if we met it as Asa did.

Now chapter xv. points out the lesson : "Jehovah is with you while ye be with him." Even in days of brokenness such as Asa's were and such as ours are, this stands good. Asa and his people are called upon to reflect that for a long time they had been without a teaching priest and without law (dark days, indeed !), and in those days there was no peace to those going out and coming in, but great vexations. But peace is secured. If God has given us peace in our time, let us reflect and go softly, for there is a reward for your deeds. (Chap. xv. 7.) There is great reward—the enjoyment of all our privileges together—*therefore take courage.*

And now I think it specially beautiful to see added here, "For they fell away to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that Jehovah his God was with him." I am firmly assured the Lord is going to give us great blessing, and that He will have a gracious response to all the ministry and service from Himself since He went on high ; so

let us take courage. If He get His place with us, we shall prosper and have *additions*. There is unrest all around and many of the Lord's people are distracted. Let us be on the gathering line. Asa failed at last on his strong point, turning for help elsewhere than to the Lord, and from henceforth, we are told, *he had wars*.

Auckland, 8/2/22.

“A LIVING SACRIFICE.”

(ROM. XII. 1-6; 1 COR. XIII. 12 TO END.)

IT may be well to remember that our exercise has been to follow the lines making for blessing. My reason for suggesting 2 Chronicles xiv. on a previous occasion was that we might see the necessity of recognising and maintaining conditions that make for peace, so that we may enjoy what the Lord brings before us. As conditions were secured, the Lord supported Asa, and they were prepared for the defence of the truth, even to aggressive warfare; they also prepared their altar and took up their exercises before God collectively, and there fell to them many out of Israel. God promised them the greatest blessing. I thought we might follow on the lines of blessing and see how God floods us with blessing. God loves to see His people in preparedness of heart affording Him conditions for blessing. (Mal. iii. 10.)

Romans delivers us from taking up merely individual and independent lines. That epistle recovers the individual so that he may have part in the mystery. We should order our course so that we may be free from indepen-

dency. We are placed in relation to one another in the body. Presenting my body a living sacrifice, I love to hold my body for the will of God. It is a lovely spectacle for God to see one proving in his body what is that good and acceptable will of God. I hold *my* body in relation to *the* body, and I am to be maintained in the ordering—I do not borrow my body again to do my own will. The sacrifice is living. What we have in verse 1 is individual. Having done this, I am exercised to maintain it. I do not want my body back.

QUES. Is this on the line of the meal offering?

The will of God becomes my pleasure. I am a unit in the body, and I seek to add my contribution thereto. As a unit I am *not* a nobody. In one sense I am a nobody and glad to be one; but this passage shews that I am a somebody. I have something that you have not got, and you have something that I have not got. This involves my getting into the presence of God as to what I have got. I am not a detached unit, but one of the body with a particular grace given to me that the body requires.

A sense of mercy brings one to the Lord's presence, because I see that what I have has been given to me. But I *have* it. By way of the Spirit is given to us the distinctive

impression that marks each individual. This is true of every believer who has the Spirit and is part of the body, and is a different thought from special gift. Each has his quota, and in surrendering my body that quota becomes available for the church. Unless I surrender my body, I am not prepared to contribute, because it is in my body that I express my contribution.

The question is therefore raised as to whether I have presented my body, and whether I have taken it back. As being available to God, what I am will be governed by the fact that I am part of the body, and so I shall not be independent. The Lord would have a “cheerful” (the word means wholehearted) surrender. This can only be the result of coming under the new covenant and looking into the perfect law of liberty. I thus become a vessel of the compassions of God. That God should have set me in the circle of His pleasure is a marvellous mercy. I cannot say I am a nobody. Each one fills an important place in the body.

Romans puts me right as an individual as to my place in the body, and would keep me from independency. I say, “through the grace given unto me”; “By the grace of God I am what I am.” If I have presented my body a living sacrifice, to me my

body is on the altar always, and if I want to go off on my own I must take it back—but God will hold me to it. If, for example, I say, To-day or to-morrow I will go to such a place, I must borrow my body to do it. If I maintain the sacrifice I shall be in the right place, doing the right thing. If I pass through these exercises, the will of God is paramount and is my joy. This is the only happy life here, being occupied with what is of God ; there will then be no sense of the lack of the Lord's support, but I shall enjoy the good and acceptable will of God in it all. The apostle bore about in his body the dying of Jesus. He was happy in constantly maintaining the sacrifice.

It is a joy to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. This offering is a sacrifice that is a committal—that is, not simply voluntary, not a vow exactly, it is incumbent on all believers, though there is a voluntary side. It is the effect of being consciously in the love of God, and the sense of that love continuing in me. It is an intelligent sacrifice taken up by me as a service. The cumulative effect of the exercises brought in by chapters i.-xi. would be to lead me to make this offering. Those illuminated by the gospel and governed by God's will make this sacrifice. There is a difference between this and a vow, a purely voluntary offering.

It is open to me to be more devoted than Romans xii. enjoins, but not to be less. A vow is open to the excess of devoted affections. But offering my body is the *least* that is allowed. It is not in any way a gift, it is rather a debt owing to God as an answer to His compassions, and from our side it is done in all the joy of responsive giving, a sacrifice common to all—we delight to be here for the will of God.

Some one may ask, What have I got for the will of God? Have you presented your body as a living sacrifice? It is then open to you to find out by trying, and through exercise your particular sphere of service. There must be an available means for each one of us to carry out the will of God. We need never suppose an impossibility in divine things. We may, of course, place ourselves in a position where we cannot do the will of God, but if my body is on the altar, I am always available for that will. Perhaps a young sister may ask, What can I do? Have you presented your body? It may involve bringing an old sister to the meeting in a bath-chair. If the Lord put me in the way of a little bit of service, just let me try it. I may be a little awkward, but I will get the sweetness of the Lord's support. We should be on collective lines in this way; James suggests that we

should look into the perfect law of liberty, and then go and visit the fatherless and widows —to try it. “Pure religion” is on this line. The Lord takes care that there are plenty of poor for the exercise of love towards them.

In 1 Corinthians xii. the instructions are given not to care for ourselves, but for others. The apostle wants the meeting at Corinth flooded with blessing, so that their hearts might be open to the universal position, that they might be in touch with all the christian circle, and not be limited to congregational conditions. “So also is the Christ.” Atmosphere and channel are here provided for the influx of blessing.

Chapters xii. and xiii. must come before chapter xiv. The first tendency is that I may say of myself, You do not need me. We “have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” This refers to our enjoyment together of the cup of blessing. Our thirst has been satisfied with the love of God. This would bring in unity vitally. Each one would take a good draught of the love of God, and love would be in activity, our affections perfectly satisfied, and we would be on the line of mutual blessing for the good of the whole. If I am indifferent to one in the same meeting as I am, or if I take up an attitude towards a brother that he is unspiritual, or say that such a one is not of

much account, that he cannot tell the distinctions in the most elementary things, is not devoted, etc., etc.—I am not in the good of 1 Corinthians xii. This chapter would put us on the line of gracious attention to one another.

While I may say, So-and-so is unspiritual, Paul says, He is an eye or a hand. We may act negligently towards one another by assuming to go along with the Lord and the few.

The next danger is to say, I have no need of you. “The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee.” The teaching of Romans xii. is carried on here so that we recognise our mutual dependence. A soul may be discouraged, but I would seek to encourage such to take account soberly of his part as a member of the body, and to realise his necessity to it. This chapter in Corinthians was probably written because those who had gifts were regarding themselves and perhaps tending to ignore others. The first thing that Romans would correct is withholding my body—rather let me present it and take my part in the body. There is great encouragement to prove what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God.

But here in Corinthians it may be I have myself too much before me. If I say I am a hand, I am saying I am a necessary part of the body. Let us follow up Romans xii. in

view of being flooded with light, and hold ourselves in relation to the whole body. The point here is not that every part of the body is to be seen, any more than that is true of the human body, but that every part is to be in its proper place, and the body articulating. Coming by way of Romans xii. I am held and am available and in function, and I hold myself in relation to the body. Paul in Corinthians xii. draws an illustration from the human body, pointing out how we give attention to our weak and uncomely parts. If so, how should I care for the necessities among the saints ! I do not say of a brother, I do not get much help from him, so drop him. That is not the spirit of I Corinthians xii. The relation here is to one another, and it is to be maintained in love, remembering it is in view of blessing. Not only is it true as to the human body that if one of my hands be crushed the other will endeavour to do its work, but if I value my hand, I will not crush it—I realise each member is necessary. God has tempered the human body—if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. The members are to have the same care one for another. We should not have cliques, favourites, and so on ; nor should we say, we have no time for So-and-so.

If my locality is A——, I should see to it

that the servant girl who comes once a month and the “leading brother” would receive the same care from me. If a brother or sister be under a cloud, a little attention will make them available. Paul is concerned that he or she may be set in availability for the whole. One’s moral attitude should be to seek to admonish any whom we do admonish as a brother.

REM. We can put no one out of the body.

Every member, even the silent ones, are not only important, but necessary. “Being conspicuous” is not the thought here. If I seem to see one more conspicuous than another, I should still see that each one is necessary. Every member of the human body is absolutely necessary to the whole. The body is a living organism. God has tempered the body together. If one member suffer, all suffer with it. “Ye are Christ’s body, and members in particular.” This brings it home, so that we should be exercised to hold ourselves as available. We are not on individual lines, but collective lines. “So also is the Christ”—this is the vessel of blessing. The way it is to be filled with blessing is that all the members are to have the same care one for another. “The Christ” is the anointed vessel of blessing. When all the members are thus together blessing is seen. Luke iv. gives us Christ as

the anointed Vessel personally. Paul desires the expression in the vessel of blessing. The truth here is not so much local as general. Each is a member in detail. The truth is given so that we in this place may be exercised to work it out on practical lines, each one as a member.

Verse 18 brings before us the sovereignty of God—"As it hath pleased him." If we recognised this sovereignty, there could be no jealousy—none has any peculiar place. I do not withhold myself, and do not want any one else to do so. My gracious attention towards such is to bring them into operation. We do not do much of this; it needs exercise and grace to seek out one another and to attend to one another so that each may become useful and consciously in spiritual function in the body. The members in my body are not jealous. If any member of the body suffer, what do we lose? We lose blessing. If there are six inactive members in any meeting, there is a sixfold loss. If there are some inert, let me walk home with them rather than with those who do contribute, and I shall find that the brother who I thought could not tell the difference between the kingdom and the new covenant has an impression of Christ that one would look for in expression when,

we are together. If any one who is more useful than I has been inert and is recovered we shall all get additional blessing. The recognition of this in love would give each member his proper place.

If one gets alongside one whose voice one does not hear, one often feels he has an impression of Christ, and one would labour to see that in operation.

But not necessarily in public part in the meeting, for 1 Corinthians xii. is not the meeting, that is chapter xiv. The thing the silent brother has might well come out when the saints are together in assembly.

QUES. How do we get along with the brother for whom we have no time?

Make some time for him! "He giveth more grace." Try it!

Instead of speaking and writing so much, let us get closer to each other and bridge the distance; we should be flooded with blessing, and how we should come to the supper! The new covenant brings this about. There is no room for jealousy and our faces will shine, and God will get His portion.

The sun is shining to melt the icebergs.

The brother who in chapter xiv. gives "five words" had been through chapters xii. and xiii. to get them.

Auckland.

THE BROTHERHOOD

NOTES OF A READING.

(1 PETER II. 11-17 ; III. 8-10 ; IV. 7-11 ; V. 8-11 ; PHIL. III. 16, 17, 20, 21.)

I THOUGHT we might be able, with the help of the Lord, to pursue what we were speaking of as our relations together in the way Peter speaks of them ; he speaks of the brotherhood, and in the first scripture we read he exhorts that we should love the brotherhood. I think that is Peter's way of speaking of fellowship.

That is a word which is a good deal used now in a wrong way.

Well, you get the idea that lies behind it, that is, that there is a bond in a scene where there is opposition for the benefit of those within the brotherhood. Here it is not, Love the brethren, but first of all, love the brotherhood. I think it suggests the idea of having a bond which binds us together in a scene where everything is against us. Fellowship has in view a scene where there are contrary elements. There is only one brotherhood, it is called *the* brotherhood.

That takes in all begotten again by the word of truth.

Quite ; it is what is proper to the brethren.

Would you distinguish between the two a little ?

I was saying that it is important to see that the brotherhood suggests a bond in a scene of contrariety. If I see what this bond is, it is really the brotherhood, formed by the death of Christ, not as a local thing, but as a universal thing. I love the very idea of the brotherhood. If I love the brotherhood I shall live for it.

How do all these exhortations with regard to our conduct as to governors affect it ?

I think Peter brings the brotherhood in because you are enabled to deal with everything he mentions there. He takes account of saints in the wilderness as able to deal with every one of these cases. I have just got the brotherhood to live for ; I honour the king, whoever he may be ; I can honour all the obligations that lie outside the brotherhood. That leaves me with both hands free to serve the brotherhood.

That is pretty much on the line of John, where he speaks of laying down our lives for the brethren ; so our living interests are not in the world, and what is going on there, but in the brotherhood.

And this brotherhood is really the circle of the saints, but taken account of in a scene where everything is opposed to them.

You bring that in because you have no thought of fellowship but in a contrary scene, not in heaven.

You will not have the brotherhood in heaven, you have the brethren there. Here is an association according to God, but bound together in divine affection in the presence of all the opposition. In the last chapter it is a suffering brotherhood, so we want to see to it that we are in participation of what lies inside the brotherhood. There are the sufferings, but there are the consolations.

Does "your brotherhood which is in the world" mean believers among the Gentiles?

I think so.

It is not a Jewish brotherhood, or Gentile, but *the* brotherhood.

What are the consolations you speak of?

The affections that are referred to in chapter iii. being exchanged between those who are the members of the brotherhood. I think we should see the importance of identifying ourselves with the brotherhood.

Fellowship lays a claim on each one of us.

Would that preserve us from getting bound up in any other bond?

Yes, it would. We were speaking last night about committal; committal to what is divine brings to pass stability in us. If one is committed to the Lord in regard of the Lord's

rights and authority over one, what marks one is stability. Though I might be the weakest person possible naturally, if I recognise the Lord and cling to the Lord, what will mark me will be stability, because I have the Lord's support. We read of the weak brother that the Lord is able to make him stand. It is well for us all to discover that nothing but divine support will keep us. My will as a man naturally will not keep me. If one recognises the fellowship, and commits oneself to the fellowship, what will mark us in regard to it is stability.

Just illustrate that.

Well, just to keep to the word brotherhood ; supposing I have committed myself to the brotherhood and some one asks me to join myself to the Freemasons. I say, You are too late, I have committed myself to *the* brotherhood and that excludes every other association, so I come in for the sufferings connected with the fellowship of the brotherhood. This kind of suffering is not peculiar to a locality but is going on all over the world. Whatever sufferings the brethren are passing through in Australia I am with them in them. This is set forth incidentally in the Book of Nehemiah : they were building the walls, each one in his own place, but all linked up round the city. They built with sword and trowel in their hands, and if there was

danger at any part of the wall the trumpet sounded, and every man rallied to that part to meet the attack. If we see what the brotherhood is according to God we shall love the thing. It is worth while living for the fellowship. This bond surrounds every activity for God. We talk about the truth, and when we are asked a question about what is taking place in Canada, it is astonishing how little we know about the brotherhood.

Who are included in the brotherhood?

Oh, all the brethren; all might not have come into the gain of it, they have not subscribed to it, but if you speak of the brotherhood, it can never be less than all the saints. If I wanted them in the gain of it, I would like to shew them the advantages in the presentation of the truth. I suppose what we do is to shew the advantages of the brotherhood.

Supposing there were no such thing as this fellowship, where should we be?

The Lord would not have it that there should be the Lord's people here, suffering for His name without having a home, where they have the Lord's support, and where they can share what others have got.

It calls for mutuality.

Well, the very essence of it is mutuality—that is, we should share what we have got. The idea of this brotherhood is, it is a partner-

ship. This brotherhood is not like anything else, it is linked up in living bonds by the Spirit. If we are in the good of the brotherhood we are bound to hear about it.

If I could not go to Australia I could take it up and pray.

And give the support of all you are to it. It was a very long walk round the walls of Jerusalem, but if any point of these walls was attacked every man moved in support of that. All who were there in this work were not simply a number of brethren interested in what was opposite their own doors ; but it was the walls of Jerusalem, not the wall of one man attacked. There was that house inside which every one of them loved, so you have the idea in chapter ii. of being builded together a spiritual house, and the object of it is that God might be served and man might be blessed.

Is it not what you were referring to in your prayer that we have the new nature ?

Yes, if that is the case we shall be greatly interested in the prosperity of the brethren ; we shall be glad of every bit of tidings that comes from one place to another.

It would deliver us from individuality and from localism.

We had very much pressed upon us local responsibility till we lost sight of universal

responsibility and district responsibility. Responsibility is never less than a universal thing—"all that in every place."

If there are advantages there are obligations too.

So you are prepared to meet these obligations. You meet these obligations as one who, seeing the beauty of these things, has come to a definite purpose in regard of them.

I would like to get something definite as to committal. I like what you said as to presenting the advantages of it.

I think we have not seen in I Corinthians x. "the bread which we break," etc., is what is characteristic of it, it is what *we* do. There is a time when I put my hand out for the first time. Having done that, not only does the Lord hold me, but I hold myself to it, and that is what committal is. The Lord takes account of all His people, and fellowship is not a matter of choice.

What do you mean by you hold yourself to it?

I commit myself when I put my hand out. Many of the Lord's people are missing because they think fellowship is voluntary; now it is conscription. We are called to that fellowship and the claim is upon each one of us. I do not think the claim is pressed upon us till the Lord has served us, till the point

that we are ready for it. Many come to the point and do not answer to it, and make the excuse that they have not broken bread ; but that does not clear them from the responsibility with regard to it. In Numbers every man was to be numbered according to his tribal name, and registered according to the testimony. We want to get the divine idea. There comes a point when the love of Christ is so attractive (and nothing can be taken up rightly but under that influence) that we cannot hold back from committing ourselves to His death, and to those who will be true to His interests in the time of His absence.

So there is a moral obligation on every one of us.

Yes, when I have accepted that moral obligation I put my hand out, and say, I have to meet the conditions with regard to it ; so having subscribed to the fellowship, I am prepared to be true to these directions anywhere and at any time.

How about if I am afraid that I shall not be true to it ?

That has to be settled first of all. A very important thing with Peter on the line of obedience is that you always have divine support. That is an encouraging feature in Peter's teaching. Peter is a man instructed in the kingdom of heaven ; and the idea of

the kingdom of heaven is divine support from the Lord in being in relation to what is right.

I think that is very helpful and encouraging especially to young saints just entering on the path of fellowship. There are those who say they are afraid they will not be able to answer to the claim, but then, as you say, in the path of obedience you are assured of divine support.

It does raise the question that we should not take up things on the line of law, and one cannot answer to one's committal on the lines of law but on the lines of grace. Nothing can be answered to apart from the power of the Spirit. Now to go on in chapter iii. From verse 8 we have the spiritual relations that are to govern those who belong to the brotherhood. "Finally, be all of one mind."

What is going to bring that about?

Well, to be set for it; and if I am set for it, I am prepared at least to begin by letting my mind go. Supposing you have a meeting of five hundred, all belonging to the brotherhood, if these five hundred minds are set aside and there is only one mind, it is very simple.

Supposing it is a question of the maintenance of divine principles.

You would not expect the brotherhood to do anything less than maintain divine prin-

ciples. We have little idea how much *will* comes into things. I remember an old fisherman in his exercises landed at a point where he had to choose between three companies of brethren ; he went to a very wise old sister and he told her his difficulties, and he said, What would you say is my difficulty ? She replied, An unsubdued will. That was his difficulty. It was very simple when that was settled.

The apostle said to the Philippians, "Be of the same mind in the Lord."

We have to get rid of our own minds in order to be of the same mind in the Lord ; we have before us what the Lord has before Him.

Would the love of the brotherhood bring that about ?

It could not be done in any other way. It does not say here, Be of the same mind, but "Be ye all of one mind." You finish by being of the same mind, we are all set for one thing.

Is not the bond of the fellowship love ?

Yes, it is the love of Christ made known in His death. A Person and His love are what govern this brotherhood. It is the only brotherhood that ever existed that is governed in that way. Any other brotherhood has got in its heart "instruments of cruelty." (Gen. xl ix. 5.) Whatever may be the claims of those brother-

hoods, and the benefits proposed, what lies at the bottom is selfishness, and they are prepared to out-cut everything else for the benefit of that particular brotherhood. There are no instruments of cruelty in this brotherhood.

In regard of being of one mind, if we really gave place to one another we should be of one mind.

We are to have before us what is before the Lord, but I do think it is important to see that the bond of this brotherhood is love. You remember what Jacob said of the brotherhood in his family, "Simeon and Levi are brethren: instruments of cruelty are in their habitation." These two formed a brotherhood. You have the judgment of a man who has known what a terrible thing it is to be at the mercy of a brotherhood formed between two men. "Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" is the great contrast.

One is destructive, the other is constructive; it will never break down.

It is really formed as having its basis in the death of Christ, and its bond is divine love.

Love never fails.

See what he goes on to say: in this brotherhood we should be marked as "having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous." We were speaking the

other day of divine emotions ; here is Peter enjoining that we should allow these divine emotions and feelings to express themselves towards one another. What would bind us together as brethren is the ministry of love. We should thus enter into one another's exercises and spiritual feelings.

There would be no room for jealousy.

It would drive jealousy out, but we need this exhortation ; what is going to link us all up together is using the adversities and joys that come in as an opportunity to bind us together.

Nothing helps us more than being able to tell our exercises to one another.

It has been a practical difficulty in regard of this that we have not drawn one another out in confidence. The question may be asked, To whom can I tell my exercises ? Is there a brotherly atmosphere in which I can tell out my exercises and no advantage be taken of it ? As you meet one or two of that character, it is an exercise how this might become normal amongst the saints ; that we should speak of divine things together without any advantage being taken of it. One thing that Satan is after with regard to the saints is to bring in an atmosphere of suspicion. I might whisper to you something about another brother ; it might be half true,

but you might not be careful in regard of it to judge it, and then you find a hesitancy with regard to that brother, till we all look at one another with suspicion. It destroys the very thing we are speaking of, brotherly confidence. If we are on the line of sympathy, tender-heartedness, the effect is to bring in brotherly confidence. In chapter iii. what is established is brotherly confidence. Here it was fiery persecution that drew out the sympathies. The Lord allows circumstances to happen to draw out the sympathies of the saints.

This kind of thing can only be drawn out in a scene of adversities, and one sees the wisdom of God in leaving us here in scenes of adversity. "A brother is born for adversity." In Exodus xxiii. it tells us not to accept a false report, and "keep thee far from a false matter." There is not to be a false charge accepted. We should be careful in accepting anything about our brethren. I am entitled to receive nothing about a brother except from two or three witnesses, and then I am exhorted as to such a thing coming in among the brethren.

It says of love in 1 Corinthians xiii. that it "thinketh no evil."

And the present activity of the divine nature in your heart, if it be given place to, will raise

a challenge against any accusing, even if it be true. I was in a meeting a few months ago where there was a tremendous upset, and it all started with a rumour, and that rumour actually got round the meeting. Think of such a thing travelling till every one is defiled! One feels that the importance of what Peter is enjoining here is tremendous, that we should see to it that nothing should come in to vitiate the atmosphere in the brotherhood. Peter was used to lay the basis of things in Christianity. He occupies the first part of Acts before Paul comes in ; he was used to lay the basis of things.

Then, too, supposing one does say something evil of another, it is not to be returned, "not rendering evil for evil."

Yes, that is how it is to be met. It is very interesting how the New Testament is put together. The ministry of Peter is intended to pave the way for full Christianity. For this reason it is very important ; the object of it is that I should find my way to the living Stone, and participate in the privileges proper to the people of God during a provisional period. The spiritual house which Peter introduces, is what the Lord secures for blessing—a citadel at the present moment.

There is something set up here in this world, the object of which is that God should be

served from the holy priesthood, and that there should be the administration of blessing going out to the world. The gates of hades will not prevail against it. It is maintained in the brotherly atmosphere.

I am afraid we have not appreciated Peter as we ought to.

A remark was made to me by a brother that Peter's day was over. I am quite sure it is not, for I believe that Peter's ministry is used to lay the basis for Paul's ministry. He says, as it were, I have just been educating you for taking up the church as Paul presents it. I may as well hint to you that you will have great exercise in understanding it ; I have had.

The epistle links itself with "good days."

There is nothing so happy as this. Not long life here, but rather the quality of the thing. It is Peter's spiritual interpretation of the Old Testament scripture. It is not looking back to better times ; Solomon says, You are not to do that, " Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these ? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this." These are "good days." There are different forms of opposition outside and things growing more intense in that way, but saints are beginning to know the gain of the brotherhood, not merely as a place where one gets a good deal of support and

comfort, but where one can participate in the good the saints get all over the world. It is becoming more important that we should see the character of the brotherhood; it is the means by which we are going back to the simplicity of early days, and there are more brethren in fellowship in the brotherhood now than even in Paul's best times. I believe that in measure we have returned to that simplicity; there are many brethren to-day in the good of the brotherhood. We want to think of it as universal, and for all the saints.

It may come, too, to this, that we may have to share with one another even in temporal things.

And in that case we shall not leave so much behind when the Lord comes.

What are you going to do if you have one committed to another brotherhood?

If the Lord bring the test home it becomes a question which brotherhood he is going to continue in. There is a moment when that exercise has to be faced. The Lord is very gracious, and brings one step by step to things.

Were you not saying that the present "strike" has been an exercise to brethren as to what brotherhood they belong to?

They thought the trades' union was something brought to pass for the good of the

working man, but they have had to see really that they have instruments of cruelty; and those who have spiritual sensibilities say, How can I be attached to such a brotherhood as that?

Referring to good days, they were good days in Nehemiah's time; they had the feast of tabernacles then, and in such wise on that occasion that "Since the days of Joshua, the son of Nun, unto that day had not the children of Israel done so."

There was the enemy outside, and brethren banded together for the defence of divine principles and for the defence of the house of God. They had two days' reading meetings. The first day they had very great help and great rejoicing, and they came together the second day and discovered that the feast of tabernacles ought to be kept; so they built booths of the branches of goodly trees on the roofs of their houses, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim. Wherever the people went in Nehemiah's day the feast of tabernacles was being observed. If one went to see a brother he would say, I have put a tent up there, we shall speak about God and His things, and at the house of God the brethren are dwelling together in unity, and that is what is going on in the brotherhood.

You will make us all want to be there directly.

You have been in it, have you not? What are we doing here to-day in the presence of the house of God? Enjoying something of the feast of tabernacles together. The idea of the feast of tabernacles is living together in family relations. The feast of tabernacles in Leviticus has the world to come in view; but in Deuteronomy and Nehemiah it is how we enjoy it now. The proposal was so good, let us have it now. I think what brings it to pass is sympathy with one another, care for one another. We have here this greatest possible privilege that any one could have, to live in such a circle as that. . . . When you come to the next chapter, in verse 8 you see how things work out. "Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." So where there are certain difficulties in the way fervent love will burn up any difficulties. Love is to be fervent here, that will drive out anything that hinders the enjoyment of the brotherhood together. Love at white heat is the kind of love that will burn away any difficulty. We are not fervent enough; we do love one another, but there is room for this love to be moving towards one another in fervency.

Not simply love for what I get in return. Fervent love is not turned aside easily. 

I am glad you raised that point. There could not be this unless I have an object, and that object must be Christ and what comes out in the death of Christ. I cannot take it up, I am not going to try to do it for the sake of getting some return. If it do not come from being under the influence of the love of Christ we cannot do it; we must have an objective. If I wanted to love you fervently, and I moved from myself, I should bring in natural affection, and that would not be according to the brotherhood. We must come in under the influence of the love of Christ. You see it in John, in Paul, in Peter. We are in danger of attempting these things apart from having the true divine objective. Paul tells how he worked among the saints that he might see the saints pleasurable to God. "The love of Christ constraineth us."

If we try to go on these lines in a natural way it will end in failure.

So in chapter iv. in the acknowledgment of the brotherhood I am prepared to bring in whatever I have for the benefit of the saints. That keeps me from being a silent brother. You could not think of a brother having nothing to contribute. "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same

one to another." It is not the true idea of a partnership where there is one who keeps all the gains to himself, and charges the expenditure to the firm.

"It tendeth to poverty."

It devolves upon me as belonging to the brotherhood to bring in my contribution. Stewardship in regard of spiritual matters involves the brotherhood and the claims of the brotherhood, and if I am true to it I am bound to give them what I have got. It does not say, I have to be a preacher and a teacher; every one has got his part, and that part is to be for the support of the brotherhood.

As we minister that one to another it becomes very much enlarged to ourselves. It puts us in touch with the brotherhood. I am to get far more than I give if I bring in my contribution, because I am getting the good of what is in the brotherhood.

Is not every other contributor necessary to each?

If we do not have it so, there is serious loss. We want to take account of all the brethren as flashing jewels, gems of divine light in the meeting. What would bring it about is what secures brotherly confidence. Look at the object of it; we might say, This is going to greatly encourage the brotherhood, the ob-

ject is that "God in all things may be glorified." Less than that would not do. What you have got is a great deal more than what you gave up. You have come into very great wealth here.

So if a person is much occupied with what he has given up, it is a pretty sure sign he has not acquired much.

He has not appreciated what has come to him in the way of compensation. If he gave up one father, one mother, he has got many now.

They are found in the brotherhood.

It is what is enjoyed within, in the limits of the brotherhood.

Just to turn to the passage in Philippians; that does not give the thought of being in the wilderness and in adversity, but in the good of what we have been speaking of, able to take up heavenly things together. A commonwealth having its existence in the house. I thought it was by way of better securing Peter's conditions that we are able to rise up to what would occupy us as those not in the wilderness and in adversity, but as having been through grace enabled to take up things in that way; we can take up what lies on the other side of Jordan, what is peculiar to the church as a heavenly company. In Philippians our commonwealth has its existence there as having

gone into God's land, so our territories lie up against one another, and we are able to take up our heavenly blessings in relation to God and enjoy them together. I like to think of the saints taking up the land of purpose together as those who share and hold it in mutuality. It is the way the land is to be occupied according to Deuteronomy; you go up into the land and possess it, and hold it in relation to the divine centre. The feast of tabernacles brings us into the gain of the commonwealth.

Taking up the obligations of the fellowship as real property.

All taking up our commonwealth and enjoying everything together.

Taking up the fellowship as those who recognise the profits and losses of the fellowship, we are enabled to enter into heavenly things, we are not thinking of the fellowship then exactly, but it is the thought of the christian commonwealth, a land flowing with milk and honey—all the heavenly things of Christ and the Father's purpose enjoyed together. The fellowship abounds with many of the Lord's people, who love Him, and are waiting for Him, but they miss the gain of the commonwealth because they will not come up by the way of the brotherhood.

THE MANNA.

NOTES OF A READING.

(Exo. xvi. 12-26.)

WOULD you say a word as to the difference between unleavened bread and manna ?

I thought unleavened bread is the food we eat, so that in mind and spirit we are apart from the world, but manna is the food that enables us to walk in a wilderness scene according to God. It is food for a people who have stepped out from Egypt under the leadership of Moses, it was their sustenance for forty years until they came to Canaan. I do not think one would appreciate the manna unless the affections had been feeding on the unleavened bread—the death of Christ as bearing the judgment due to us. This latter is the basis of our spiritual exercises, it is formative, we are formed in sincerity and truth.

If you are not feeding on the unleavened bread you will be hindered in every spiritual relationship ; we are too diplomatic, we are not sufficiently real with one another.

It is those who are in the wilderness according to God who appreciate the manna. I

come into the kingdom of God, and feed on unleavened bread, and thus I tread this scene as a wilderness for the glory of God. Unless we are here to walk for the will of God we shall not appreciate manna.

The manna is very sweet food ; we become like the food we eat, and come out here in the grace of another Man.

The manna was very small and round, it was able to go anywhere ; we come out here in the grace that marked the Lord Jesus—a lowly Man on earth. We are introduced into the presence of all our spiritual food at the outset. God has opened all His store. We grow to appreciate strong meat, but all is available for us as we can partake of it.

What is the difference between the manna and the meat offering ?

The meat offering is for God—our appreciation of Christ in all His perfection down here, yielding pleasure to God from His birth on to His death ; it is all gathered up in our appreciation, and we offer it for the pleasure of God. It was only the priests who could eat the meat offering, but all the people could eat the manna. The meat offering was for the pleasure of God and went up to God, but the manna was rained down from heaven, from God, and every day it had to be fresh.

Why do we need manna ? I open my eyes

to a fresh day's exercises. I want to pass through the day for the will of God ; I number this day—whatever day it is—I take account of it for the will of God, my door open to the wilderness. How am I going to tread it for the will of God ? I cannot do it in my own skill or cleverness, therefore I am dependent on the manna. It strengthens my heart for the day's exercises. I do not want to get through it depending on my wits, but expressing the grace of Christ in this scene. God awakens us in the morning, He opens our eyes; we ought to accustom ourselves to be in touch with God, He cares for us in our slumbers. He giveth His beloved sleep. He awakens us to the day's exercises and education in the wilderness. If it be so, are we careless about it ? It does not help us to talk about it ; are we exercised to number our days ? We cannot get through a day according to God without having fed on the manna.

The dew is a very cheering consideration. God surrounded His people with blessing. As they slept the dew had fallen upon them, it surrounded the camp. It is an immense favour to be dwelling amongst those who are called the “Camp of God.” God visits that camp with peculiar blessing. If you are on individual lines you are where the dew and manna do not fall. The dew is preparation for

the manna. It is God's love to His beloved people, who went out into the wilderness in the day of their espousals. He surrounds them with blessing day and night; our waking minds should take account of that, and give themselves up to the blessed God who wakens us to surroundings of blessing. We are among the people who love the Lord Jesus, who have been attracted out of the world to follow Him, and to whom the principles of the kingdom of God are given. With that sense in our souls we would each say, I want to be here this day for the glory of God! If that be so we would not go through this scene like people in the world.

What about the manna being given in answer to their murmurings?

That speaks of the grace of God. It is so touching! God tells Moses to bring the people into His presence that He may tell them how gracious and patient He is. It is pure grace, administered in the Lord Jesus typified in Moses. The manna is given from heaven to cheer His people through their exercises in their daily need.

How do we feed on the manna?

It is a matter of desire. As desiring to be here for the will of God, one gets up and gathers the manna; we get something fresh to sustain us; what we had yesterday will not

do. The point is that we get up having a definite purpose in the pursuit of our souls to gather something fresh. God will give it, it is within our reach, we get up and gather it. It is not reading a chapter.

“What is it ? ” That is the meaning of the word—what is it ? I need the old corn of the land and other foods, but the point here is I look for the manna, I want to know it first. We get the description here, the description of the Lord Jesus in His spirit among men as shewn in the gospels in a peculiar way as He was down here ; one gathers something from that for every day’s exercises, some fresh impression, and you store that up in your heart for the day ; whatever you gather, by the Spirit’s power it will take you through. You get your omer, and having got it you eat it with a relish, you find it delicious to the soul ; whatever you are confronted with in the day, the food you have had enables you to meet it not with human skill but in the grace of another Man. A person looks at you, and sees that you act differently to others, and they say, “What is it ? ” It is before the exercises of the day begin that we eat the manna, not at eleven o’clock when we have got into a hopeless muddle and lost our temper ; we betray ourselves by the way we speak.

It is a meditation on the Lord as manna.

There are other meditations we might have, but this is seeking out the manna.

James tells of those who condemned the just and they did not resist. If I ponder what that means, it takes me to the Lord Jesus, to see a Person who went into death and did not resist. I get tested through the day. I either stand for my rights or go to the wall; fortified by the truth that *He* did not resist, I go to the wall. My persecutor says, It is not like him, what is it? Manna! Some day he is exercised about his soul, and says, That man has got something that no one else has, I would like to go to the meeting that he goes to and hear what he hears. A life of piety leads souls to Christ; it is our actions more than our words that speak. There should be suggested to men that are unrighteous in the way you do things that there is something about you that is not natural to you.

The manna was *small, white, round*, the colour like bdellium, the taste like fresh oil. These are the features brought in in Numbers, because the people were pouring contempt on the manna, they loathed it. The Spirit of God describes it again, if haply our hearts might spring to it again, and say, What wonderful food! In eating the manna one is saved

from acting by one's own wits. We are not to act as men, God would find no pleasure in that. We want to give an impression of Christ in all we do.

“White” is the spotless walk of the Lord Jesus here. Look at Him as He goes into Simon's house, invited in the spirit of patronage, slighted, yet He goes. He anticipates all; but sit down and watch Him in that beautiful scene. You may have a similar circumstance; if you are marked by the spirit of the Lord Jesus you will not want patronage, you have no use for it, you are here to express the One you have learned to love.

“Small”—see how small the Lord Jesus could be before Herod! They made nothing of Him. He accepted all that, He was lowly and small in His grace, and could go anywhere, no place too lowly for the Lord.

Would I have any kind of importance if I fed on the Lord Jesus in His grace down here in the morning? The world is full of it. I may be courteous and patronising, but I cannot be small unless I am feeding on that small round thing—nothing can get into corners like a round thing, and there is no friction. Whom did He ever offend? Whoever came in touch with Him felt that He was different to any other man. We each need to look for these qualities in the gospels.

If we look for the manna, God gives that presentation of Christ according to what we have to face that day. He so loves a lover of Christ, so appreciates a day and numbering it, that He delights to minister in the Spirit's power the very thing that fits us for the dangers we are going to be confronted with that day.

The colour was as bdellium. The only other place where bdellium is mentioned in scripture is Genesis ii. It is a fragrant resin. It is the fragrance of the life of that blessed Man—the fragrance of His grace. If we feed on that, there will be a fragrance about us, a sweetness—not natural but spiritual—as we pass through this world. The taste was like fresh oil. There is a sweetness in taking the Lord home to one's affection like that. The manna is most enjoyable. If careless as to spiritual conditions, our souls will loathe it. It was rained from heaven. In the gospels we get a heavenly Man down here. The Spirit of God would bring that afresh to our hearts morning by morning. We are oftentimes careless about it! We get up in the morning in a hurry it may be, so much time for breakfast, and so much time to catch the train; we see to everything but the manna and wonder why we do not get on spiritually! In the type a man gathers food for all in his tent; he has a sense

of responsibility that the manna is for every one in his household, even for the servants ; he is responsible to see that the manna is brought in and presented to the whole household. "This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons ; take ye every man for them which are in his tents. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less." It is the sense of responsibility that each man is to have who possesses a tent in regard to all who are in the tent ; the head had to see to it that at least there should be an omer of manna for every person. We get nothing at all without spiritual diligence. We are responsible for the spiritual well-being of every one in our households. As head of the house I am to be exercised that there should be in some way or other some suggestion of Christ as manna to the hearts of all—a suggestion to each one to take things up in piety individually. If we are careful about it, we find God is more than equal to it in blessing our exercises. If we only have three minutes it may be turned to the greatest gain possible—some have more time than others.

God says, if we are in touch with Him, I am not going to leave you starving in the

wilderness, just see what I will do ! These are My mercies and considerations for you. My delight is to awaken you in the morning with food to cheer and sustain you, so that you may be carried through the day in such a way that you will come out praising Me at the close—all thy day will be bright. Each one must have a tenth, it is the same measure for all. If you have children, they are responsible in the way suggested by you to get something of it. The child goes to school with the manna ; he will not fight for his rights, but goes to the wall ; but it is the head of the house that brings it in. Let us be frank ! Let us face our responsibility this way ! The suggestion that God gives in regard of the manna is a remarkable thing ; He says in answer to the murmuring, Bring them into My presence, I want them to have Me before them.

Think of the grace of God !

God says, I have drawn you into the wilderness, and I will never have you unconscious of My presence. Have I not been God to you since you moved out of Egypt ? I will not have you in the wilderness and not supply your need and sustain you in spiritual vigour there.

Manna was not to be gathered on the sabbath day. There are times when there is no

need to be exercised about the wilderness, and God would have us sit down and rest in our tents. We have the wilderness and its exercises, and the manna to take us through, but do let us have rest as well—the Lord says, Come and rest awhile. Sometimes we have a sense of rest at the meetings, as being apart from the world and the Lord ministering to us, but this is rest in our own tents. Let us see to it that our souls get a rest.

It is just the simple thought that we enjoy the love of God and communion without any sense of responsibility. We need manna on the sabbath day, some has to be kept over. We are very near the wilderness, so we need this grace at every time. There is a day that God would have us take account of, a day when we rest our souls, when we are apart from the conflict of the world.

God would stir us up with regard to this, that it is a fresh thought we get each morning, nothing else will do. We get something and we say, This will do for a while, and we store it up. The importance of gathering each morning cannot be too strongly emphasised. The thought is that I should get an impression for to-day. It will be a different one for to-morrow. It is called “daily need.” It is practical instruction; each day has its exercises; we know the disadvantage of hurry-

ing through things ; how much we lose on that account.

On the sabbath we rest from gathering. We sit down quietly in the presence of God and give Him this time. The sabbath was made for the heart of God and for us, that we should have our souls resting in His presence. We get spiritually tired, but there is a time when we have a rest with God. Some have not much time ; this is one of the greatest exercises to a mother who has so much to attend to, but if there is purpose of heart to get it, God will see that that heart gets what it needs.

Then we should be ready for fresh exercise when it is time to move out again. God will deal governmentally with us if we do not get these rests for our hearts. We are very good at looking after other people's souls, but let us look after our own. We can attend to the spiritual interests of others better when our own souls are attended to. Benjamin kept a part for himself. It is the right thing to do. "In the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil." (Gen. xlix. 27.)

Caulfield, 3/12/21.
