



The Hebrew Servant.

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THE SERVICE OF THE LORD FOR HIS PEOPLE.

(EXO. XXI. 1-6; JOHN XII. 20-28; XVIII. 4-9; XX.
15-31.)

I DESIRE to speak of the Lord's service for His people. One feels increasingly the pressing need there is that the saints should understand this more intimately—what is really for them on the Lord's own side in His service. It is set forth in type in the Hebrew servant, which illustrates in a remarkable way the Lord's personal service to us. Every consideration of Him in that character, in the power of the Holy Spirit, must appeal to our affections and form us. There is much that we should attend to in our care for one another, and in connection with the things of the testimony, but all must proceed from what our hearts have taken in of the truth as it is in Jesus. There can only be fruitfulness and conformity to Christ as the Person of the Lord is before our hearts. I trust I may be enabled not only to make this point clear, but to set it forth in its attractiveness.

We hear a great deal as to the distinction between what is objective and what is subjective; but one would seek to connect them

more. It is very necessary that we should understand the distinction, but we may find it easier to distinguish than to connect them. When we come to consider the New Testament ministry we find that every presentation of the truth objectively comes as light intended to shine into our souls ; it is presented from God's own side in sovereignty. God has found His pleasure in Christ, and when *that* light finds its way into the souls of men it forms them in accordance with that which is first presented in the glad tidings. The power of the glad tidings does not come on the line of information ; enlightenment and power are in a blessed living Person. Saul of Tarsus was reached by the Speaker of the glad tidings—the Lord Himself—and from that moment it was clear that there was in his soul what was of God and for His pleasure and service. “The entrance of thy words giveth light ; it giveth understanding to the simple.” (Psa. cxix. 130.) The word of God gives light and understanding to a soul, and without that a soul is in the dark, whatever it may have in the way of religious information. That is how things began to work with Saul of Tarsus ; he was touched by the Lord personally. I can understand your saying, But Saul's conversion was indeed remarkable ; it was a conversion by the interven-

tion of the Lord personally. I know that Paul's conversion was very remarkable, but the conversion of every soul is remarkable, for the reason that it is the work of none other than of God Himself. Who but God could turn a man right round from the things which pleased himself to the things which please God, yea, to God Himself? All conversions are thus remarkable.

I would encourage all our hearts in the fact that in the work of God and the indwelling Spirit we have a living link with everything that God presents. In the gift of the Holy Spirit God has connected us with all that is for His pleasure, little as we knew of it at the start, and little as we may know of it yet. When God connected us livingly with His purpose, His truth and His pleasure in Christ He connected us, not with a part of it, but with all of it, so that subjectively we have a link with the things presented. If we understand the subjective line rightly, it will not make us self-occupied, self-centred, or lead us to measure ourselves by ourselves; for the right effect of the truth as it works subjectively is to turn the heart to the One who is the full expression of it, even to Christ Himself.

With this in view, I turn now to speak of the Lord as seen in the type of the Hebrew

servant. My earnest desire is not only that we may see the truth set out, but that it should shine with the preciousness of Christ. The greatness of the truth is only seen in the Lord Himself, and on that line one would seek to speak of the Hebrew servant—one of the sweetest types of the Lord that we find in the Old Testament.

This peculiar type of the Lord follows upon the giving of the commandments—the statement given as to the pleasure of God so far as the law could convey it ; but in it we get what was more than the requirement of law ; there is a character of devotedness which makes it one of the sweetest typical references to Christ that we have in Old Testament scripture. It would seem as if the heart of God moved to express itself suggestively in a personal type. In the law we have a statement of the mind of God as requirement, but when we come to the Hebrew servant we have a suggestion as to what God really sought.

The Hebrew servant was not on a lower plane than the calling itself. We see this from the message God sent to Pharaoh through Moses : “Let my son go, that he may serve me.” We are so accustomed to think of what is on certain lines of service as on a lower plane comparatively to the positions in

which grace sets us. This feeling, which is observed in the natural spheres of life, may enter in regard to service which is for the pleasure of God. Let us bear in mind, therefore, that when we are speaking of this service, we are not thinking of it on the line of gift, but on the line of what is in correspondence with the calling.

What is said about the Hebrew servant was an appeal to the whole congregation; it was a presentation of something on the line of service that would still retain the character of the calling. He was a *Hebrew servant*, not an alien or a stranger, but a Hebrew in the place of a servant. When we consider Christ in that way, we are subdued in drawing near to the truth of it in His own Person. Turning for a moment to John's gospel, we get the greatness of His Person; and there we find, too, that the greatness of His service is in accord with the truth of His Person. When we consider Him in all the light of what He is to God, we can understand how the hearts of those who beheld His glory were so profoundly moved: "We have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father, full of grace and truth." He came into this world not only to settle the righteous claims of God and to work out an answer to every item of those claims,

but also as the great servant of the Father's pleasure to accomplish the Father's purpose, so that we cannot regard His service as on a lower plane than as what He was as the Son.

You will remember that touching word at the close of the Book of Malachi. It was a word spoken by Jehovah at a time when His people were connecting His service with a line of demand only, and hesitatingly even in that way. There were only a few who were walking in His ways. What does Jehovah say? "I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." The true character and elevation of service according to God's pleasure was thus preserved in those who feared the Lord.

We read further that the Hebrew servant was to serve for six years, and then he could legitimately go out free without any personal encumbrance. There was nothing to hold him in the place of service and suffering; the time had come for his freedom. We find the Spirit of God going over certain features in connection with the setting of things. If he came in alone, he shall go out alone. If he were married, his wife shall go out with him. If his master had given him a wife, the wife and children were to be his master's. Here we see what was true in regard of Christ—He came in alone.

When the Apostle Paul, as moved by the Spirit in the contemplation and ministry of Christ, in writing to the Philippians, would occupy them with the mind that was in Christ Jesus, he said: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant." He did not reach up, the movement of His mind was to stoop down; He needed not to reach higher than the plane upon which He stood, but such was the movement of His mind that He must stoop down. He was in the form of God, but He took upon Him the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man: "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Brethren, this is not doctrine alone, it is Christ. You may say, I have long known this doctrine; it is long since I have handled this scripture, but perhaps it is not so very long since I (I will leave you to speak for yourselves) began to feel the truth of it. It is a description of Christ in His aloneness—alone in the beauty and blessedness of it—coming down into the place of service and suffering, laying down His life in death, even "the death of the cross," that

we might be linked with Him. We have been brought into the place given to us in divine counsel by nothing less than the immeasurable sufferings of Christ Himself. The Spirit describes Him in His own beauty: "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." May every heart respond to it!

"If his master hath given him a wife and she have born him sons and daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out alone." When you bring this into the presence of what the Spirit of God presents as to the pleasure of the blessed God, your heart begins to understand what sort of an answer the Lord Himself rendered to such an appeal as that. The time came when He could have been released—the day of His liberation, so to speak, but that moment was the hour of His trouble. Beloved, we are beginning to learn that in every doctrine and truth there comes the tender thought of the sufferings of Christ. I think it has come home to many of our hearts that if the Lord were to tarry much longer, and the pressure upon the spirits of the saints were to increase, it would not be information that would help us, but the knowledge in our hearts of the ever faithful, once suffering love of Christ,

and nothing else. You will remember that word of the Lord, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." (Matt. xxiv. 12.) How it touches our hearts that when He might have made His exit from all that was on the line of pressure, sorrow, and suffering, it was the hour of His trouble because of His great love and obedience to God, His great love for us and desire for our blessing, and, in a certain sense, His grace for all; He would not go out free, but went on down to the lowest depths of suffering, even the forsaking of God—the bearing of divine judgment. "If the servant shall plainly say." How plain was the speaking of Christ as recorded in the gospels! The fidelity of the love of Christ is seen there. How intensely plain was His speaking as He came to the close of His life down here: "From that time began Jesus to shew unto his disciples how he must go to Jerusalem and suffer."

In each of the accounts given of the mount of transfiguration the glory of the Lord in His own Person is given. In Matthew "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." Could there have been any question of His exit then? In Mark He was transfigured before them, and the Spirit of God makes a special point of His raiment: "His raiment became shining, ex-

ceeding white." He was God's Servant, God's Elect in whom His soul delighted. Could there have been any question of His exit then? In Luke we see Him as the vessel of suffering—the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—the One whose face was marred more than any man's, and His form more than the sons of men. He took the three disciples up into the mountain to pray, and as He prayed His countenance was altered. God is heard speaking there, and His plain speaking is this: "This is my beloved Son; hear him." Could there be any question of His exit then? He could have gone back into the presence and favour of God so far as His personal merit was concerned, but He had come to do the will of God—to take away the first that He might establish the second. In each of the accounts of the transfiguration you find the plain speaking of the Lord's own action, and He comes down from that mount of divine salutation and glory to His service of suffering which ended in the cross.

There is nothing as to the mount of transfiguration in John's gospel. It is not necessary there; His glory is seen most precious: "We have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father, full of grace and truth." Each of the first three gospels

has its Gethsemane, and you will see in each the pressure on the Lord's spirit and the burden on His heart in anticipation of all that He was about to pass through. In John's gospel (chap. xii.) we get His soul trouble: "Now is my soul troubled"; that was in anticipation of what was before Him. At the cross there was man's contribution to His cup of suffering, but the greater part of that cup of suffering was in what He went through in relation to God Himself. What must death have meant to His spirit, and what must it have been to Him to be forsaken of God? How plainly He said, "I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free," and we see the grace of His spirit in those words: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." A man might do something great in seeking to achieve some great object, but look at the Christ of God; He had His object in God—He died for the ungodly! There was no change in His attitude of obedience to God when He was confronted with puny, proud, miserable, malicious man, who heaped insults upon Him, and He surrendered His life in order that the very man who had mocked Him and heaped shame upon Him, might become the vessel of divine pleasure.

But to come to what He suffered from the

hand of God : we need much help from the Lord in speaking of these things, and we need His help in listening. We hear Him saying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring ?" Listen to His own answer. "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." These scriptures are well known and long known, but we shall never know, not even in eternity itself, their full meaning. We shall be where Christ will be known in His glory and where there will be no shade on our spirits, but we shall never measure the depths of suffering which the cross involved. It was the time of His trouble, when He was taken to the door, which normally would have been the place of His exit. He appears there in the presence of His judges and He says plainly, "I will not go out free." His ear was bored.

Now in Deuteronomy xv., where the Hebrew servant is also referred to, our side is indicated in the ear being *thrust* through. The ear being bored suggests a process, and being thrust through suggests an act. In Exodus the Spirit is presenting Christ Himself, and the word employed there suggests the process of His suffering and devotedness in which His love and obedience were proved. The mind

that was in Him is presented in His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. The scope of His interests and objects is presented in the widest way—his master, his wife and his children—so that in His love for all these (God first) He must suffer even unto death and in it, in order that He might become, having taken His life anew, a Servant for ever. Everything is possessed by that One who has entered into the presence of God, a Servant for ever.

The Spirit of God would seem to touch the matter in Exodus in a way that would, while occupying our hearts with the Lord Jesus Himself, move our spirits to take up in the way of privilege what corresponds to Him. The Epistle to the Philippians sets before us the mind that was in Christ Jesus and involves our having His Spirit; this would be productive of one mind in the Lord, which seems more the line of Deuteronomy xv., hence the process of suffering is not so much touched on there, but “thrust through,” involving rather what has been formed in the saints. It is the sign sought by the servant and given by the master, and therefore dependent on that mind being in us which was in Christ Jesus.

May our hearts in the presence of the contemplation of His sufferings learn a little

more as to the fidelity of the love of Christ. I trust our hearts are not saying, This is history; it is Christ that is in the mind of the Spirit in the Hebrew servant. Our hearts can rejoice in it as He appealed to the hearts of His disciples, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father." (John xiv. 28.) Though not the suffering One now, He ever will be the One who brought every element of abiding joy into being in the power of His suffering. His ear was bored through with an awl, and He returned again to be a Servant for ever. Oh, let that come home to our hearts—a Servant for ever! The world to come will be sustained in the power of the service of Christ. He will reign over all. He will sit as a priest upon His throne. Even now what is for the pleasure of God is sustained by that same power of service. In the day to come when He will shine out in His glory, Lord of all, adored, and honoured by all, refused by none, He will be the One who upholds all things in the power of His service: "He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (1 Cor. xv. 25, 26.) When we come to the close of the kingdom—the eternal state—when He will deliver up the kingdom to His Father, He Himself will become subject "that God

may be all in all." What an end! Divine pleasure is brought about by divine power, expressed in the most powerful of all its ways; in God giving His Son; "He that spared not his own Son," and in the Son, the Lord Jesus, giving Himself in the greatness of His love.

Referring again to John xii., when the Greeks desired to see Jesus, and when Andrew and Philip tell Jesus, the prospect seems to open out before the Lord in its widest way; "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me"; the great scope of things to be accomplished comes before His vision, and He speaks from the sense of that: "Now is my soul troubled," He says. When the Hebrew servant was brought to the door, what would have been in the normal course the year of his release was the hour of his trouble: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say?" What did He say? He spoke plainly, oh, so plainly. "Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." Everything He had done in those years of service had been done for the glory of His Father. "I will glorify it again" is connected, I think, with the return of the Hebrew Servant. He is coming in again on

a new ground: "I lay down my life that I might take it again." He takes His life again in a new way, connected with abiding objects of divine interest and divine pleasure. He has died, risen, and is ascended. "In that he died, he died unto sin once; in that he liveth, he liveth unto God."

In John xiii. we see what was to be the character of His service in respect of His own when He had gone into the presence of His Father. He was going to have them in His heart in the same way as when He was here; He would care for them with the same intensity of love and He would link His own with the same character of service in their love one for another. Then in chapter xx. we come to the moment of His joy—the joy that carried the heart of the true Hebrew Servant into the sphere of His service in a new way. The laying down of His life took place at the door and in the presence of the judges: "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." What a way out and a way in has been made in the death of the Lord Jesus!

We see Him as He comes to Mary and takes her out of the region of sorrow; she would have had Him in the old way, but listen to what He says: "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your

God." The former is on the line of privilege ; they were to enter into the joy and privilege of being in the same place that He had ; and the latter is on the line of divine pleasure and the service necessary to it. In verse 19 we see Him standing in the midst of His disciples and saying, "Peace be unto you," and He shews them His hands and His side—the great abiding marks of His service and the fidelity of His love were thus conveyed to them. He had taken His life anew.

I have been learning lately, and it appeals to one's spirit in a touching way, that every doctrine of scripture has come to us through the sufferings of Christ. Let me take the simplest—the forgiveness of sins—there is the doctrine of it set forth in the scriptures ; the doctrine is clear and we can understand it, but there would have been no forgiveness of sins if Jesus had not suffered. The forgiveness of sins is based on divine righteousness, but divine righteousness could not have been established if Jesus had not suffered. In the universe of bliss, sin, death, sorrow, famine, nakedness, and distress, will all be excluded because Christ suffered.

After eight days we see the Lord again with His disciples and Thomas called Didymus with them. The eighth day speaks of a new day—not the first day of the week ; it

has a different moral thought, and is connected with the seven previous days, and has its outcome of exercise and labour. It is the beginning of a new period with all the abiding results of the suffering and work of Christ. He speaks to Thomas—that one who had said he would not believe except he saw in His hands the print of the nails and put his finger into the print of the nails and thrust his hand into His side. The Lord comes to that doubting one and in His grace and goodness shews him His hands and His side, and says, “Be not faithless, but believing.” They were the marks of His suffering—applied very personally to Thomas to take him out of all doubting, and to seal his devotion to the Lord.

May the Lord help us, from the least to the greatest, to respond more to the love and faithfulness of that One who gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour, and who abides a Servant for ever.

THE DEVOTION OF THE HEBREW SERVANT.

(DEUT. xv. 12-18; ACTS ix. 1-9; xx. 17-38; xxviii.
23-31.)

WHAT is on my mind is to speak further, the Lord helping me, in regard to the Hebrew servant. When we were together last week it was our privilege to consider the Lord personally. We have to recognise that whatever is moving with us of a spiritual character as to the things of God, and which we may share together in the way of exercise and joy, and whatever we may learn from one another (for by such means God is pleased to teach us), must have its full expression in the Lord Himself. It is the joy of the Holy Spirit, and our spirits respond to it, to present the perfection of everything in Christ, not as history, but as an abiding fact. All that the Spirit of God has been pleased to put on record in regard to the ways, words and works of the Lord Jesus, His movements in and out amongst men, and His movements in relation to the pleasure of God—everything that the Spirit of God has presented

in that way, He would apply to our hearts as the presentation of Christ Himself.

Now in regard to our links together as believers, what comes out in the Person of the Lord Jesus takes practical shape in all that we share together. If we think of fellowship, it is the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. That should not only mean our being found together in a correct ecclesiastical position in separation from what is contrary to the truth in these last days, but in our mutual relations being in the power of the Holy Spirit, according to the sensibilities, feelings, and affections of God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; so that when we consider fellowship from that point of view we find an exercise created in our hearts which searches but does not shadow our spirits. It is encouraging, too, inasmuch as it presents the Lord to us.

We need to be reminded that the Spirit of God's Son has been given to us that there might be the joy of our relationship with the Father and also that there might be an enlargement and a strengthening of the bonds that are connected with our relationships together. Thus in the fellowship there would be the feelings proper to the true power and presence of the Holy Spirit. As He is un-grieved and unquenched, so we can abide

together in love, each one esteeming the other better than himself and devoted to divine interests.

When we come to consider the line of service as connected with fellowship, the Lord would lift our hearts above the ordinary outlook of service, merely that of needs to be met and voids to be filled. The great thought connected with service is that there is a vessel of divine affections being formed here—the assembly.

We have many who are young with us this evening, and most of them I would judge have been in the presence of the truth from their earliest days, and thus may have gathered precious impressions in regard to divine Persons. I would like to speak to the young who are His and who have an appreciation of the preciousness of Christ. I do not think those who are older will find this irksome; the most mature heart would surely enter with the greatest joy into the precious, simple elements of the truth of God. God works from the least to the greatest. On the line of responsibility it is from the greatest to the least. We have often felt the necessity of simplicity in handling the things of God.

For a long time one laboured under the misapprehension that one's efforts should be to make divine things simple, but I have

learned that it is not divine things that need to be simplified, but myself. It is my lack of simplicity that clouds, not the lack of simplicity in the truth. We need to be made simple. The further we travel in soul history the more simple we become ; "and become as little children," as the Lord said.

Now in regard to the Hebrew servant, I would like to point out that it is open to all to take up what is presented. When we come to the Book of Deuteronomy we find the very gracious extension of what comes out in Exodus. The reference to the Hebrew servant in Exodus applies specially to Christ. When you come to the Book of Deuteronomy the outlook is wider, so that the people of God may have their part in that which marked the Hebrew servant. In Deuteronomy it is open to a man or a woman to take up this course. It was not a commandment that at the end of their six years' service they should pass into service afresh on a new line, but it is a course that every heart, as deeply affected by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, would indeed covet to take for the pleasure of God. We are not commanded in an arbitrary way to love the brethren, and yet the Lord speaks of it very definitely as "a new commandment." We are to love not in word only, but in deed and in truth. It is a command-

ment which could only be carried out through an understanding of His own love, and the love of God expressed in Him. He gave us a new commandment that we should love one another. If we find a difficulty in loving one of the brethren, would it not be well to get before the Lord to seek to find out the kind of love we are seeking to exercise. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." (1 John iii. 14.) Passing from death unto life does not merely mean that we have passed out of worldly things in our associations together, nor that the things which surround us which used to appeal to us do not appeal to us now ; it means that in the circle of divine interests and in the sphere of divine affections we are not governed by what is natural but by what is spiritual. We love because He has first loved. There is not a brother or sister here who loves the Lord who is not worth loving for that very reason. All the brethren are well worth loving. You say, That is ideal, It is no ideal ; it is very practical. I do not think ideals go far. I have found myself through the grace of God in a sphere where all the brethren are loved for Christ's sake and for God's sake ; even the weak brother is regarded as one for whom Christ died.

This question as to devotedness arose in the case of the Hebrew servant. The time came when every man or maid who had served for six years might go out free. "If he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee, because he loveth thee and thine house." In the passage in Deuteronomy it is the sphere of interest connected with the house which is in view; it is not my master, my wife, and my children, as in Exodus, where in type it is speaking of Christ personally; it is our part as having heard Him and been taught by Him as the truth is in Jesus. So in Deuteronomy it is our taking up things together in intelligent and devoted attachment to divine interests—what is for Christ, for the assembly, and finally for the testimony.

If we are on the line of the mind of the Hebrew servant, our first consideration would be for God. One would raise a practical question with ourselves as to whether our first consideration is for God. The Apostle Paul in writing to the Thessalonians with reference to their conversion says, "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." God comes first. You may say, Surely conversion always begins with God. I admit that is so, but though I begin with God in conversion, and God begins with me, yet I may find myself handling divine interests

in a way or from a motive that does not put God first. The attitude of the Hebrew servant speaks plainly as to this: "And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee; because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with thee; then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever." How sweet to consider that our attachments are for ever! We are as believers in a scene of temporary conditions, both as to individuals and the testimony, and many needs arise from time to time; devotion, however, is not limited to meeting needs, and on occasions only, but has in view those composing the circle of divine interests; it is for whatever calls may be made on it, and it abides. Love never fails and it abides for ever.

Now, we may carry many with us as believers more by conscience than in faith working by love. How many have we with us who are on the line of the Hebrew servant—the line of devotion? You will notice how tenderly the apostle speaks to the Philippians on this line: "For unto you it is given, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." (Chap. i. 29.) There is a great deal of suffering in spirit that you will pass through if you are really set on the line of the Hebrew

servant. It is possible to think we are prepared to suffer for the Lord's sake and yet in a way have ourselves before us. Suffering for the Lord's sake cuts deeper than the public expression. What you find with the Hebrew servant in Deuteronomy is that he suffered for his master's sake, and for the sake of the house, and because he had learned that the best things were there. The interests that are most precious are there, the things that are of real value, the things that matter most, that are more important than my own personal reputation—the things connected with the circle of the saints.

You may say, It seems as if it were common since it applies to all. If you had gone in and out of the houses in Israel you would have found comparatively few with that mark on the ear; it was not so common. We do not speak critically, but with the sense on our spirit that nothing less than the appeal and the power of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ could move a heart to go on the line of the Hebrew servant. We may treat it as common because it was open to all, and the grace of it would apply to all, but the question is how far is my heart prepared to take up this line of things? It is all contrary to self-pleasing. The Christ pleased not Himself. The God of endurance and encouragement

would grant us to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus. You may say you never get beyond your locality. That might raise the question of self-pleasing. The Hebrew servant had to settle in his own mind the possibility that he might not move far. We have to learn that the Hebrew servant must begin in his own locality; that is where your ear is thrust through. We would only speak for encouragement. We must begin where God has begun with us. Let us devote ourselves to His pleasure and He will enlarge our border.

The thought of going forth is peculiarly treated in Deuteronomy xv., as if the servant found himself in no way deprived of liberty, but rather much enlarged. Had you or I gone amongst the houses in Israel, how many menservants or maidservants should we have found with their ears marked in that way? Do not think we are speaking in a discouraging way, but rather for exercise, because the thing is so precious. Why not add to the number? Why let the numbers be so few? Why not let there be many more who not only believe on His name, but who suffer for His sake?

It seems to me that the apostle would bring home to the Philippian saints that there was a greater privilege open to them than being

together as believers: that of being together in the spirit and mind of the true Hebrew Servant. The word "thrust" in Deuteronomy means giving. Who was it who gave this mark? It was the master. The servant gave himself. His master gave the seal of his devotion. Who bored the ear with the awl in Exodus, and who thrust the ear in Deuteronomy? It was the master. It is something given by the master which in its precious significance is above all other rewards or recognition. The most precious thing given to the Hebrew servant was the mark on the ear. That mark bore witness to the fact that he was a servant of such a kind that when the time came for him to go out free he chose to remain with his master and in that which he had attached him to—his master's house. We, too, may take that way. We may put God first in all the interests of the circle to which we have been received to the glory of God; then what weighs very sweetly is the interests connected with the saints as the body of Christ—the assembly.

I would touch for a moment on the apostle's utterance to the Colossians; he said, "who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the assembly." He was on the out-

look for what might be taken up with a view to the gain of the saints—the answer to the pleasure of the Lord was very dear to his heart. It was not the recognition of lordship only with the Apostle Paul. The Lord was a living Person whom he knew, and whose love for the assembly he knew. Hence he says, “for his body’s sake, which is the assembly.”

You may say that a person must be very advanced in knowledge to take up things connected with the church. Why do you think we need to be so advanced? I have been noticing this; the heart which with simplicity begins to handle such matters is the heart that is simple in the enjoyment of the love of Christ to the assembly. I would speak to the young for a moment with regard to the supper as in relation to the love of the Lord Jesus. We would not in any way give an impulse to a person to take his place at the breaking of bread: we would not give any one a push in that direction, and if the Lord leave us here, we would push less but would pull more. There is in the supper what I feel appeals to the youngest heart that loves Christ and gives deep consideration to the most mature. When we come to consider what the supper sets forth, there is that which speaks to the heart of the youngest. Not long ago I heard a child about eight years

old speaking, after a Lord's day morning meeting, of the Lord's death in a way that made me keep silent and turn aside. That child spoke in a way that was direct and simple, but yet profound. The supper speaks of the changeless love of Christ and the love of God. It is the presenting to our hearts of that great and precious love of Christ told out in all its strength and devotedness in the laying down of His life for the church; the same love in which as the living One He cares for the assembly, which is His body.

It may be asked, Will there not be discipline and testing connected with church exercises of this character? If there were no discipline connected with it, then we might be careless. I would instance Jacob as an illustration. He went to Syria for a wife, and when he saw Rachel he loved her and the desire of his heart was to have her. He did not have Rachel at the time. He had Leah first, and when he was ready for Rachel he had her. God gives us the best things when we are ready for them. It is to the one who has the mind of the Hebrew servant that the things most blessed and precious would be given. What would God give the Hebrew servant to do? What would God give us to handle together? Are we set on getting the mark that the Hebrew servant received?

It was something desired by the servant and for which he had served for six years.

I would seek to encourage the young on this line. Those who are older will bear with me. In the scope of things they know more than many here; they have reached things through experience and pressure that many may not have tasted yet, but which they may, if the Lord tarry and they are left here. The young are with us that we may give them the very best. A brother told me recently that Mr. Stoney was once asked what he would do to help the young, and he said he would give them the very best truth he had got. The Hebrew servant gave his best. He served six years for a mark, but it was the mark of conformity to Him who loved the assembly.

Is there any young person here, man or woman, who really covets to receive from the hands of the Lord the mark which He Himself had? Think of the sweetness of the word given to Philadelphia! All that He promises to the overcomer will bear the mark of His own character. Does He say, I will make him a pillar in the temple of God? No; He says, "I will make him a pillar in the temple of *my* God," that is from the Lord Himself, and like the Lord Himself. It is the Lord's own personal expression of approval and conveyed to the overcomer—the mark

of His own character, which He had Himself : "a pillar in the temple of my God . . . and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God . . . and I will write upon him my new name." What is His new name ? What does it convey to us on the line of the Hebrew servant ? That in the midst of a scene that shall be for the pleasure of the blessed God, He will be in it the expression of God. His new name will convey to us that He served here in suffering ; He has accomplished the will of God, and He will sustain all that is the result of His suffering in a scene where there will be no opposition or suffering, and nothing but divine joy and rest for ever. His new name is a changeless name. There is that, too, which can be written upon : "I will write upon *him*" ; upon that which has been formed along lines of suffering and pressure according to Christ Jesus. To go no more out would be a precious outlook to any heart that during the period of suffering would not go out free.

I want now for a moment to touch simply on what we read in the Acts of the Apostles. I would like to speak in a simple way as to the first touch that Saul of Tarsus received from the Lord. It was a wonderful touch and it came at a moment when he was ignorant, overbearing, and insolent, and a persecutor of

the saints. The Lord speaks to him, and I would like you to notice the impression conveyed by the Lord to him. He said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Saul answered, "Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." I wonder if all our hearts realise (one begins to taste it a little perhaps) that there are divine feelings in all that we handle. Take a reading meeting. We may come to a reading meeting, and in connection with some particular verse I put my opinion forward and you put yours, and our opinions clash; we insist on them, and we get a little bit heated and a little bit hurt. What I should like to say in this connection is that there are divine feelings and sensibilities connected with the things we handle. May the Lord help us to understand this.

What is doctrine? It is the statement of divine truth in divine accuracy and with divine authority. We must not tamper with it. Let us see that we have a spiritual opinion. On the other hand, there is in every doctrine of divine truth an impression to be conveyed to our spirits of the preciousness of the thing handled. We would have no doctrine to handle if Jesus had not suffered and died, if He had not been raised again from the dead by the glory of the Father. He lives, and He is the

One who spoke to Saul of Tarsus at the moment of his opposition and conveyed that wonderful impression to his heart. The impression conveyed to Saul and which converted him was the fact that the saints here in this scene—weak, poor, ignoble as they might appear—are nevertheless what the Lord Jesus considered the most precious and peculiar objects of His affections and of His care.

You may say, I was not converted by church truth. Are you quite sure? How were you converted? You may say, I was simply following a wrong course, doing wrong things, and I turned to God. But you were converted to be for God's pleasure, to take your place in the assembly, and to take an intelligent and devoted interest in the scope of the testimony. How many vessels of blessing there will be as the result of the sufferings of Christ! Let us seek the Spirit's help to visualise it for a moment. The world to come, in which there will be no opposition, could never be brought to pass apart from the sufferings of Christ. The eternal state, in which everything will be according to God Himself, will be based on the very same foundation. There will be a universe of bliss filled full with vessels of divine blessing and service, all because Jesus stooped down, suffered and died, rose again, and ascended

to the right hand of God. How very blessed and precious all this is. God has been pleased to link us together in the handling of what is spiritually of that universe now for God, for Christ, and for the testimony. May God keep us now and at all times free from assumption!

He would have us turn our faces to the inside first, and then outwardly in the handling of the testimony. In what spirit are we? You may think I am pressing things which possibly I should not. Well, we shall know. Suppose it were said to us that we had only a few days, weeks, or months to be here. Suppose it were told you that you had only another month to be with the saints, what would you want to put into that time? Would you want to put in your best humanly? Oh, no; you would want to put in your best spiritually. Would you not want your last month, week, or day to be marked by that which is going to mark Christ for the pleasure of God for ever? Would you not want your links with the saints to be in all the tenderness and power that marked Christ's love for the assembly? Would you not want to put into your gospel labours more affection than ever before? I am sure we all should. Then, beloved brethren, that is what the Lord means for us on the line of the Hebrew

servant ; that in our links here our spiritual best might ever be moving. May the Lord help us. It is something to be set for.

The Lord would have our hearts moving on the line of what is most precious to Himself. In connection with the gospel, one sometimes hears of a feeling of discontent in regard to the brother who has the responsibility of the gospel. That sounds rather strange. Who has the responsibility of the gospel ? The Holy Spirit has the keeping of the gospel. You may say, Have we no responsibility in it locally ? The Lord would encourage us to take up the gospel in the spirit of the Hebrew servant, not seeking to see how little we should give to one another in the way of responsibility, but how much we can take up together as to Himself in the way of prayer and tender care, and thus in the spirit of the Hebrew servant.

Look at the Apostle Paul at the end—mighty in word and deed. He was a man who humanly could have occupied any position amongst men ; one at whose words King Agrippa trembled, and yet himself a poor man, as men looked at him, content to remain in the place of the Hebrew servant—in his own house. Paul did not know he was going to be there for two years. The Spirit tells us how long he was there. What was he doing ?

The same things he had been doing from the outset. You say, But he had not the same audience. He had not the same audience as to numbers, but he had the peculiar comfort of knowing better the character of his audience when they came to him. There he was "two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him."

There is a peculiar resemblance between this scripture and what the Lord said in John vi.: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." They did not come to the apostle to do him homage, but to receive at his hands comfort and instruction, given in the spirit of the Hebrew servant, in connection with the kingdom of God and the things of our Lord Jesus Christ. How wonderful are those things—our Lord Jesus Christ. What are they? Everything connected with Him as the Man of divine pleasure.

The Acts of the Apostles closes, after shewing many evidences of the great power of God, with a circle of divine interests in a house. The apostle, as we know, had preached publicly in many places, but the Spirit signalises this as a peculiar test to his spirit that he dwelt in his own hired house. That speaks a great deal. Have we not felt at times that while we might speak in a public way, the

exercise connected with what is done from house to house is very testing. That which proves what might be called the adaptability of the mind of Christ formed in us lies in our ability to move from house to house.

You might have said to Paul, Do you not feel a little bit confined and cramped here ; would you not like to go further afield ? He would have said, I am not here by compulsion, I am here by choice ; because he hired that house.

May the grace of all this, as answering to the Lord, touch our spirits. Commit your affections definitely to the things of the Lord's own interest. May we pray over them more than we speak of them, and love them more than we express. What is best comes out at the end. You do not get the record of David's mighty men until you come to David's last words. We shall know the value of all that we have been moved to commit and sacrifice for the Lord's sake at the end. In the meantime, may the Lord help us each one to covet the mark of the Hebrew servant, not for public display, but for what He sees.

THE SPIRIT OF THE HEBREW SERVANT.

(THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON.)

I DESIRE to bring before you the way in which the Lord would afford us support in regard to the glad tidings, the testimony of God, and the interests of God in this scene.

I trust we all feel, and increasingly so as we draw nearer the end, how thankful we should be to God for the light and the knowledge of the truth that have been given to us. As we see around the solemn changes for the worse that are taking place in Christendom, one feels the need of thanksgiving to God for the light He has given; it is not that we deserve this favour more than others, for whatever exercises there may have been on our side in regard to the truth they have originated with God. Indeed, I think there is as much need for thanking God for the knowledge of the truth as for our conversion. It is all of divine mercy, and if any one here, from the least to the greatest of us, is found in a circle where the Lord is exalted and where the truth is regarded in its preciousness, its unchangeable purity and value, it is a matter for which to give

thanks. If the spirit of thankfulness were with us in greater degree (I do not say it is not present) I believe our intercession for the saints would increase.

As we look around on the state of things ecclesiastically, it is brought home to us how difficult it is to get into contact with many who love the Lord in the mass of Christendom, and I think that difficulty must not be under-estimated, for if we are careless as to it, we might drift from the path in which, in the great mercy of God, we have been set ; for separation must be maintained. If we value the truth in the place God has given us, then surely in thankfulness before God we would keep in that place. But while appreciating the fact that we cannot put ourselves into contact personally with many who are the Lord's, yet we can be learning more of the sweet possibility of putting ourselves in touch with them in that place where we can appear before God in regard of all saints. However contracted and difficult the ecclesiastical position may become, the presence of God will never lose its largeness, its preciousness, or its availability of approach. There never will be a day, until the Lord come, when we cannot seek the face of God for all saints.

As having part in a groaning creation, apart

from the intercession of the Holy Spirit, "we know not what we should pray for as we ought"; so it is true in principle that where souls are in ecclesiastical bondage they know not what to pray for, but those to whom in the mercy of God the truth has been made know may pray for all saints. Who can tell the value of such intercession? We may never know its results, and it may be better that it should be so; nevertheless the results would be sweetly assured to our hearts in faith if we take into account what the saints are to divine Persons.

In connection with the glad tidings, unless the preaching is accompanied by intercession and prayer, we shall be disappointed; preaching will not be effectual if it is not overweighted by the prayers of the saints; and I believe this explains why, with the clearest presentation of the gospel, you may find souls untouched and saints disappointed. Whether we think of what is due to God in the saints, or of what the assembly is to Christ, or the wide sphere of divine interests, if taken up in the Spirit of Christ they are taken up in the power of intercession. There is not a heart that rightly estimates what is of interest to Christ that does not immediately begin to pray about it. Think of what the saints are to Christ, and then look at their

present ecclesiastical position. They are as precious to Christ as ever, and one would fain convey to them what the assembly is to Christ, but how few there are available to listen to the presentation of such ministry. Then pray. You may say, That is the only alternative left. No, it is not an alternative. It was what the Apostle Paul started with at the outset; his ministry was balanced by his prayers. After presenting the truth in its peculiar blessedness to the Ephesians, then he adds: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"; he prayed. It is not a last alternative, but it is something that has been largely lost, and because of this, distance and departure have come in. If the place of intercession had been maintained, everything else would have been preserved, for intercession involves separation. Look at the blessed Lord Himself on the mount of transfiguration. In Luke's gospel we read, "He . . . went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered." What He prayed is not stated, but it is a prayer the scope and result of which can be seen now. The glory of God drew near that mountain-top and concentrated itself in the Person of God's own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ—the Man Christ Jesus.

Prayer brings in the interest of heaven itself. You may say, I know so few Christians ; then pray for those few to begin with. I sometimes ask myself (it is better to ask oneself the question than for another to ask it), How much do I pray for the brethren I know ? We have learned, I trust, that our real power with others lies in regard of those for whom we pray ; we shall have power with people if we pray for them. Is it to be wondered at that we feel our lack of power with souls in preaching the gospel if we do not pray for them ? If my prayers in connection with the gospel were confined to the preaching itself, I can understand the lack of power. The Lord has been teaching us with regard to the gospel that we should care less for subjects and more for souls. The Lord cared for souls.

I turn now to the Epistle to Philemon. It is a peculiarly tender and personal one, couched in terms of affection from "Paul the aged." There is a quality of things connected with age when found in the way of righteousness that is not to be found with youth, for the reason that with the aged there is the effect of the disciplinary ways of God, and an experimental knowledge of God as the result of these. Paul takes up the service in regard of Onesimus on the same principle

as the Hebrew servant. It was not thrust upon him ; it was his own choosing ; he took the place—he desired it. On the line of Deuteronomy he had become so attached to the interests of the house of his Master that he would not go out free. Such servants in Israel were not common ; I believe they were rare. I do not make these remarks with the idea of classifying some amongst us, but in order that we all might, in the sweetness of the truth, covet the place.

Now this epistle came from Paul the aged. He had been taken up by the Lord for a service that covered the whole scope of divine things on the line of the counsel of God, both as to the assembly in relation to Christ, and as to the glad tidings. When the apostle was before King Agrippa he testifies to the character and manner of the Lord's speaking to him ; he says, "I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue." It was the voice of the true Hebrew Servant. As regards the Jewish nation things were in great confusion at that time ; the Hebrews were not taken much account of ; indeed, they were then the tail and not the head. Saul of Tarsus was cosmopolitan and possibly he spoke many languages, but that voice spoke to him in the Hebrew tongue, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ?"

From that moment he was bound in all his interests to the One who was the great Hebrew Servant, and he took character from Him in a peculiarly blessed way. When the apostle speaks of his desires as to being in conformity to Christ, he says, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." (Phil. iii. 10.) He wanted to be kept in conformity to Christ, even to the laying down of his life.

You will notice the character Paul gives to Onesimus. In the New Translation it reads, "I beseech thee for my *child* Onesimus," not son. It may seem a small change, but it is very sweet. It shews all the tender feelings of one who was on the line of securing children.

Now when we take up the gospel in view of setting it forth, we do not know where God has been working nor how He has been working. We do not know by what means or ways He may have prepared souls for the reception of Christ, but faith counts upon God in regard to His sovereign movements. We have nothing to do with God's sovereign ways; our part is the preaching of Christ. Onesimus had been placed where there was regard for God. The apostle was aware of the love and faith of Philemon toward the

Lord Jesus and toward all saints, and it was a matter of constant prayer and thanksgiving to God. How much there is in prayer for persons! Doubtless it was God's overruling hand that had placed Onesimus in the house of Philemon; not that Onesimus had as yet any affectionate links with the truth, for it was still irksome to him, his heart had not been touched. It may be so even with many of the children of the saints. Many, if not most of us here, who have been brought up in christian households, have felt as Onesimus did; he was like Jacob, who said God's house was dreadful to him; so he ran away. He fled from the presence of God; but God so ordered that he came into contact with the Apostle Paul. Who could have understood him better than he? What rebellion there had been in the heart of Saul of Tarsus! Could Onesimus have come into contact with one who had better learned that "the way of transgressors is hard"? Our power in the presentation of grace lies in what we have learned of it. You may say, I learned the gospel long ago. I believe it is as we advance spiritually that we shall understand the greatness and scope of the gospel. It was from Paul the aged that this word came: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save

sinner; of whom I am chief." May our knowledge of the scope of the gospel increase more and more. I believe it will increase as our affections are deepened; and with those affections there will be supplications, and prayers, and intercessions for all men.

In running away Onesimus had cut his links with Philemon, with whom he had been placed by the overruling of God. I was speaking to a young person some time back who once had links with the saints with whom we walk, but she had drifted away; she said that the faith of her parents had cramped her prospects, that there were places to which she could not go, friends she could not have, and things she could not possess. That is what Onesimus felt. He saw a wider prospect outside the house of Philemon; he did not accept the ordering of God. I speak to those who have had christian parents, can you tell me what your position would have been but for their faith? If your parents had not had faith in the Lord Jesus, have you ever considered what you might have been exposed to? I can give God thanks now for the faith of my parents; I did not always do so, but I do so now. I look back to the time when I did not understand the object of the care that was bestowed on me, but I can see now that it was for Christ's sake

and for my own sake, and I can thank God for it.

In connection with the households of the saints, I believe it would be of the greatest value if there were more prayer for the preaching of the gospel. It might be the interest of a child in that way; indeed, I have known of many cases where the interest of a child in the gospel has been most precious. We need not go outside scripture for an example. Was not the little captive maid of 2 Kings v. personally interested in what was good news for a leper? She had come from a household in the land of Israel such as Philemon's, where the word of God and the lovingkindness of Jehovah were held in tender regard. When that little maid made known the glad tidings she prefaced her preaching, as the Apostle Paul did, with her prayer; she said, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria; for he would recover him of his leprosy." That was prayer and preaching together; so the great apostle spoke before King Agrippa: "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." The little maid did not speak from her head but from her heart. It was not a bare statement of fact, but a statement coming from a heart that

was deeply touched with what was the glad tidings of Jehovah. The result of the testimony is seen in what happened to Naaman.

Notice how the apostle handled the case of Onesimus. He did not go into the details of it ; there was much that could be covered and therefore would not have been profitable to expose, but the apostle puts the vitals of the case in this peculiarly tender and brief epistle. He speaks to Philemon of the way in which Onesimus had come into his hands, and he says, "I beseech thee for my child, whom I have begotten in my bonds."

There were three circles of interest in connection with the Hebrew servant in Exodus ; "My master, my wife, and my children." We have to distinguish between these. The Lord has given us light in regard to each of these circles. How much are our affections engaged with the truth thus presented ? We see it all in the Epistle to Philemon. The apostle speaks of "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," and he speaks of the "assembly which is in thine house," and then is added the peculiarly blessed effect of the faith of the glad tidings in Onesimus as one begotten in his bonds.

What would happen in our households if God were not given His place, and what would they be like if they were not held in relation

to what the church is to Christ? What would happen to our children if we confined them in their outlook only to our houses and the few with whom they might associate there? Would you not seek to give the children the sense that God had not only sought them, but He has sought many more? The apostle speaks to Philemon of his house, of his love and faith in the Lord Jesus and towards all the saints. Then he speaks to him of Onesimus, and he says, "for my child, whom I have begotten in my bonds." Onesimus had come in touch with the Apostle Paul. We are not told what the apostle preached nor what he said to him in detail, but we know that what he preached was Christ, the love of God, and the goodness of the blessed God. He would preach to Onesimus that God did not seek slaves, save to free them, so that as bondmen they should count themselves through grace bound in the will of God for ever, for that is the character of Christ. Onesimus had fought against his position in the house of his master and he thought he would get away where he would be a freeman. Many of the children of the saints, I do not doubt, feel like that. They feel that if they were elsewhere than where God has put them and covered them they would be better off. Alas! it happens sometimes that those who have been brought

up in nearness to the truth feel like slaves, bound up with things that do not interest or appeal to them, and they think that if they could get away from them they would be freemen. That is what Onesimus felt.

I knew a lad who left his father's house mainly because the Lord was working with him and the truth was becoming very irksome. The truth is never more irksome to a soul than when God begins to work. He enlisted in the Navy under a false name, and was sent to a training ship. He soon began to feel very miserable in his spirit, and he went away where he thought no one would see him and sat down and wept. He had not been there for more than ten minutes when he felt a hand placed on his shoulder, and a voice said, "My boy, don't you think you would be far better with Christ than without Him?" That was God speaking—speaking through one who loved the Lord Jesus, who was "instant in season and out of season," and who knew that the greatest need that possesses the heart is the need of God as He is revealed in Christ—the Man Christ Jesus. It was thus that Onesimus came into the hands of the Apostle Paul. If we had been there I think we should have heard the Apostle Paul saying, Onesimus, when I thought I was a freeman, I was a slave, and if you

knew the truth of things you are much more a slave now, because you are in the world where, unless God free you, you will never again be free, either in time or in eternity. Souls that love the world and pursue worldly things, unless God come in, will never be free.

Paul preached Christ and the heart of Onesimus was subdued and reached, and the apostle sent him back to Philemon, "not any longer as a bondman, but above a bondman, a beloved brother." Onesimus goes back into the place of discipline and service, but he is a freeman in the Lord. Grace brought him there to be serviceable to his former master. It makes no real difference what we are or who we are, provided that in the line of things we pursue there is nothing that comes between our conscience and God. We can be as much for the pleasure of Christ in one sphere of life as in another. We may think our lives are very ordinary. In a very ordinary path Christ may be shut out, but in a very ordinary path He may be sweetly brought in. There will be myriads of saints before God who in the eyes of men were very ordinary. We need not strive to get out of our circumstances; let the Lord come into our circumstances in the line of practical things; it was the littleness of Paul that was his salvation.

Onesimus had been with one in whom was the spirit of the Hebrew servant, and he comes back to Philemon in that same spirit ; no more a servant, but a brother beloved. The very same thing is said of him that the Spirit says of the Hebrew servant, "that thou mightest possess him fully for ever." Was he to go back to Philemon for six years ? No ; for ever ! Oh, you say, I have known many whom we have loved, who were with us for a time, but they have gone home, and we miss them much. Well, I would say for the comfort of our hearts, that if we had them for a little while we shall have them for ever. When God's end is reached and we are before His face for His service we shall also be for one another's joy for ever ! The truth is, we think too much in time and too little in eternity.

Referring again to the gospel for a moment, we may preach the gospel in the confidence that where God has been moving sovereignly His work will be brought to light ; souls will come out as children begotten of the glad tidings, and such will be added to the assembly and be here for God. May the Lord encourage us on these lines.

In connection with what is sovereign, you will remember that in Acts xvi., when the apostle and those with him would have gone

in one direction to preach the glad tidings, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit. He checked their course, not because they were moving wrongly, but because for the moment their attention was to be turned in another direction where the work of God was sovereignly moving. They were the servants of the glad tidings and God would have them carry the good news where souls had been sovereignly touched. After they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit they attempted to go to another place, but we read, "the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them." In the one case it was the Holy Spirit in His authority, and in the other it was the selfsame Spirit in the character of the Spirit of Jesus working along the lines of their sensibilities in communion. The desire of the Apostle Paul was good, and the Spirit of Jesus, understanding how much the heart of the apostle was bent upon the carrying of the glad tidings, turned him gently in another direction. What was the result? The peculiarly touching conversion of Lydia, and the wonderful conversion of the Philippian jailor. God turned him aside for that! When they came to Philippi, they found on the banks of the river a place where prayer was wont to be made. God had been moving there, and the Spirit tells us that Lydia attended to the things spoken by Paul, because

the Lord opened her heart. The next thing is that Paul encounters a woman with the spirit of divination, and he commanded the spirit to come out of her in the name of Jesus Christ. That brings in his suffering at the hands of those who were in authority and at the hands of the jailor.

Will you bear with me in saying that if we adopt an attitude in seeking to help souls of knowing better than others we shall be powerless to do so; but if we are touched by the sensibilities of Christ and are prepared to suffer we shall help them. What touched the Philippian jailor? The fact that, beaten as they had been with many stripes, their feet made fast in the stocks, and thrust into the inner prison, they were praying and praising God with singing. It was the power of the sufferings of Christ that brought the gospel near to the Philippian jailor. God shook the prison and caused the earthquake in answer to the prayers and intercessions of those who were suffering for Christ and who felt for the souls of men in sympathy with His heart for them.

I have been told that a beloved servant of the Lord once said, when speaking to some young men, "There are more of us prepared to thunder than to suffer, but if we are prepared to suffer, God is prepared to thunder."

The more we are prepared for the line of suffering, the more the Lord will support us. If we take our place before the Lord in the sense of what the gospel is to Him, "He is not willing that any should perish," there will be with us the power of intercession, for we shall feel the need of souls, and be in sympathy with the heart of God, who would have all men to be saved.
