

B. K. O. S.

"A Witness  
and a  
Testimony"

1938

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A bi-monthly ministry by which it is sought to lead the Lord's people into His full thought for them.

# "A Witness and a Testimony"

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## The Living God

READING: Josh. iii. 10-11; 1 Thess. 1. 9; Heb. ix. 14; Rom. ix. 26; 2 Cor. iii. 3; vi. 16; 1 Tim. iv. 10; Matt. xvi. 16; 1 Tim. iii. 15; Heb. xii. 22; iii. 12.

Without attempting to touch in detail on all these passages, every one of which deals with a different aspect of practical relationship with the living God, we shall seek to gather the whole matter up into a small compass, and bring it down to some simple, direct, precise application.

### The Living One

In the first place we recognise the fact that *the God with whom we have to do is a living God*. Perhaps that does not sound very wonderful, very fresh, but I believe that with regard to that, as to everything else, it is possible to wake up to the realisation of a meaning from which we have been very largely estranged.

The God with whom we have to do is a living God! As these passages indicate, and as perhaps most of us have had reason to know, that fact has two sides and conveys two meanings. On the one side it is a fact of infinite comfort to the honest in heart. To begin with, when we turn to Him in honesty of heart it is perhaps the greatest thing to know that we are turning to a

living and true God. Of the Thessalonians we read that they turned from idols "to serve a living and true God". The Apostle was glorying in what that meant amongst those believers, for these letters to the Thessalonians are nothing if they are not letters of life. Read them with that thought in mind alone, and you will find that they throb with life. There are all the marks of a living experience, a joyous experience, an overflowing experience—yes, overflowing! so much so that the overflow reached far, far afield, and their faith was spoken of in all the churches. It was not necessary for the Apostle to refer to them, and that because through them the word went out far and wide. It meant something to them to discover that it was not to another religion, not to another system of teaching, not to another association of people, but to a living God that they were turning; not to things, but to a living Person.

It entirely depends upon our apprehension of the Lord as to what our testimony is. If we are turning to teaching, to tradition, to interpretations, to human associations, to Christianity, we are going to miss something, but if we are turning to the living God, in the realisation that He is the living God, we are going to come into

life ; everything is going to be all living in our experience right from the beginning.

It is not unnecessary to say a thing like that. We said at the outset we wake up, and some of us awoke too late. The thing that kept us asleep—though we did not know we were asleep, except that there was a restlessness, a sense of dissatisfaction, a turning from side to side, and a sighing and groaning—was the fact that we had been associated with Christianity and the things of the people of God from so early in our lives. Our Christianity and our relationship with the Lord was something into which we were brought in infancy, and it had all become a matter of a system of the things of the Lord around us, with which we were quite familiar. We had been taught to say prayers, and go to meetings, and so on. One day we awoke to the fact that this God was a living God. We had been associated with Him in a way for a long time, but He was not personal to us, not a living God.

Forgive me for going back to such an elementary stage, if it is necessary to ask forgiveness, for it is just possible there are some among us whose relationship is of that kind. Maybe you are associated with things related to the Lord, but what about this question of your own personal, inward enjoyment of the living God, of His really being to you a living Person ? We must begin back there, and all this is nothing to you unless the Holy Spirit has made it real, or does make it real, in your experience. I do know that it is true to fact in the life of a great many, that the day comes when, though they have been associated with the things of the Lord for a long time, they suddenly wake up to the fact that the Lord is a living Person. That contains so much for us as we come to realise it. It means everything to us from every point of view. We are the Lord's now ! We know the Lord ! But, oh, we pass into experiences, and into times which are so difficult, so mysterious, so full of shadows and clouds. We go through periods of deep trial, when everything seems to be in eclipse, and it is all so long-drawn-out ; the demand for patience is so great ; so much time is being taken, that very often we draw near to the point where we almost feel that, so far as we are concerned, the Lord is not the living God.

### The Purpose of Trial

So I want to say to those who are tried, to

those who are under a cloud, to those who may be tested at this time in that way, that the God with whom you have to do is a living God. He knows exactly what He is doing. You have to do with a living God, and that living God has you in hand, although you do not know it, do not realise it at the moment. You are not forgotten. If this is a living God with whom we have come into relation in Jesus Christ, then He knows all about us, and has His eye upon us ; and, what is more, He has a direct interest in us and concern for us ; He is not dead to our interests, but very much alive to us. What we are passing through is not an indication of His having forgotten us, abandoned us, or of His having ceased to be, so far as we are concerned ; He is dealing with us in the way which is most of all calculated to reach His end. He is the living God.

That can be said on more than one basis of authority. You can go through the Word of God and follow the life story of many of His servants and see that they had good opportunity, had they so desired, to consider that God was not ; that if God was, then they had been abandoned by Him ; everything in their experience, in their life, in their affairs seemed to say that they had been abandoned, or that God was dead. But you follow through the story, and you find that the sequel always shows that at the time when it seemed to them that God was most far off, outside of their world, He was most active in what He was doing, most directly bound up with their affairs, securing some state, some condition, some position in them which was fitting them for a position of trust, and of honour, and of fruitfulness. Although to them it seemed just the opposite, all the time in their very history He was the living God in truth. You have that made perfectly clear in the Word of God.

There are those of us who also know that in our experience there are times when it seems that God—to use the words of one in the Word of God—“ had forgotten to be gracious ”. But we are able to look back upon those very times to see that, although we knew it not, God was very active indeed, doing something very deep, and to-day we are living in the value of that. God had not left us. We had to do with the living God, and the living God had to do with us. That is simple again, but let us store it up against a time of need. In so many ways this fact should

be of infinite comfort to the honest in heart. The living God is the One with whom we have to do.

### The Note of Warning

But there is the other aspect, and we must not leave it on one side in a desire not to touch on unpleasant things; we must be faithful. This statement occurs in the Word of God accompanied, as you notice, by a shadow on more than one occasion. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in turning away from the living God". Take heed! It is a word of warning.

Now notice the connection. If you look at the third chapter of the letter to the Hebrews you will see that the point in view was that full purpose of God which He had fixed for His people. The illustration was taken from the life of Israel in the wilderness in view of the land. God's purpose for Israel was their coming to the land, with all its fulness, all its riches and its wealth, and its blessing, but through unbelief they fell short of the land and died in the wilderness. You see the designation "the living God" is used in that connection, which surely means, if it means anything at all, that the very fact that He is the living God signifies that His purpose and desire for His own is all that He can give—fulness! That is what is bound up with a living God. These other gods are always taking away, always robbing, always impoverishing. The gods of the heathen, the gods of the world are robber gods, they would rob you of everything. This living God is supremely characterised by His giving, and ever giving. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son..."; He "who delivered him up for us all, shall he not also with him freely give us all things". The mark of the living God is beneficence, fulness of thought, and desire, and purpose, and will for His own, to bring them in. To fall away from the living God means to fall away from all that He has purposed, designed and desired for us, and hence the word of warning.

But let us note this. The Word does not say, Take heed, brethren, lest you fall away from the blessing, lest you miss the good. The words used are "turning away from the living God". All our blessing is bound up with Himself. He is our blessing. In other words, to know Him as the living God is life eternal. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true

God, and Jesus Christ whom thou didst send". To know Him as the living God is fulness of blessing. So the warning is lest we, through unbelief, turn away from the living God. It is the question as to God that arises in the heart, the question, the doubt as to God, that robs us. Then the blessing is gone, because in doubting God we rear a fence between Him and ourselves.

Ah, but there is a still more solemn word in this connection. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God". That is the second passage with a shadow upon it. Now let us be solemn and quite frank. You and I have not to deal with men in the final issue. We have not to reckon with people, with teaching, as such, with places, with any *thing*; if you or I refuse truth, refuse light, withhold obedience, hide something from the Lord; if you and I are in any way unfaithful, it is with the living God that we have to do. It was a startling thing to Achan when his hidden, secret sin was tracked right down in that amazing way. Look at the hundreds of thousands in Israel, and one man among the hundreds of thousands does something which God had to uncover. That man sees an inquiry set up, and watches it being narrowed down from the multitude to the tribe, from the tribe to one of the families in the tribe, until his own personal tent is reached, and he, one man in hundreds of thousands, comes under the finger of God. Achan perhaps thought that he could default in the midst of so big a crowd and it would not be noticed, that he could deceive the elders of Israel and not be discovered. Achan had forgotten that it was the living God with whom he had to do. Such a thing becomes an occasion for that solemn warning, that we should be reminded that "it is an awful thing to fall into the hands of the living God".

You and I, if we are honest, need never fall into the hands of the living God in that way, but the point is that anything and everything that is secret in our lives, which represents sin, disobedience, refusal of light, anything that is not of God, brings us into the hands of the living God; it is with Him that we have to do sooner or later. Oh no, you have not even to reckon in the first or last place with those who are in authority over you in the Lord. The most blessed relief comes to such to recognise this, and it is a relief to us all to know it, that the responsibility in the final issue is with God, and that every one has to reckon with God. It is a

terrible and yet a helpful thing, a thing which is a strength to us even when we give the Lord's message, to know that people have not to answer to us. They may take an attitude over that message toward the one who gives it, and say, Oh, that is only so-and-so's interpretation, it is only what he says! Well, you do not get away with it like that. If that should happen to be the truth of God, it is not with the preacher that you have to reckon, it is with the living God.

That brings a terrible responsibility upon us all. Let us remember that for all that the Lord gives us, it is to a living God that we have to answer. Oh, the Lord is looking right into our hearts, and He knows. It is impossible for us to deceive Him. It cannot be done. He knows our inward hearts. He knows our home and what is going on there. He knows us in our business life. He knows us in our relationships with one another, just what we are and what is make believe. Sooner or later we are going to come up against the Lord on every point of hypocrisy, deception, sin.

Now it entirely depends upon our attitude toward the Lord whether the fact that He with whom we have to do, is a living God, is one which brings us comfort, or whether it strikes terror into our hearts. This word must be said. The Lord knows who it is for. You and I are dealing with the living God. That is a blessed fact, but it is also an awful fact. So let us always remember that there is nothing secret, nothing hidden, nothing that we can cover from Him. We cannot take a false position. There is a living God on the spot all the time, who sees right through it all, and presently He will say: Now, let us have that mask off; let us have that attempt at self-deception put aside; let us face this thing out. I know all about it! I have known about it all along; you have never been able to cover it from Me for a moment! He is the living God. That word "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" is a terrible word for those who fight God, and I think it is especially meant for such as oppose themselves to God.

Think of what is going on in this world to-day. I have been reading a book called "The War Against God". The whole history of long centuries of war against God is given, and it shows how that is developing to-day to such a tremendous extent that whole nations are making it their one object to throw God out of the

world, to get rid of God, to have nothing of God in their national life. Well, that is one side of this thing, and it does not apply to us; but we can say it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; not an imaginary God, not a traditional God, not the God of the religious systems, however hoary their history, but the living God. The fact is going to come back upon such. He holds the nations in His hand.

It might be that there is someone resisting God, fighting God, rebelling against God, who imagines—though perhaps it has never been put into words, into clear thinking—that he can get the better of God. Oh no, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"; and that is where we are all to come sooner or later.

Can you rejoice that you are in the hands of the living God? There is no need to be afraid of that. It may be the most blessed thing that ever can be enjoyed, to be in the hands of the living God. On the other hand, it may be the most terrible thing, a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. For the unbelieving and the unfaithful it is neither a welcome thing nor a blessed thing to know that the God with whom we have to do, and who has to do with us, is a living God.

### The Living Relationship

Now there is one other thing bound up with this oft-repeated designation "the living God". The fact that He is the living God is intended to make for a living state of things amongst His own people; they are to take character from Him in this very sense and truth that He is the living God. That means that relationship with Him is intended to be a living relationship. Relationship with God to-day in so many directions, and over such a wide range, is not a living relationship. There is an acknowledgment of God, there is a form of worship of God, there are rites connected with God; yes, there is a recognition in a greater or lesser measure of a kind of devotion to God, worship of God, acknowledgment of God, perhaps desire for God, but all short of a living relationship with God. Yet that He is the living God means that those who are related to Him should live. He would say, "Because I live ye shall live also". A living relationship with God is possible.

I have no doubt that probably nine out of every ten of those who read this have this knowledge of a living relationship with the living God;

He is to them in their own experience, enjoyment, and knowledge as alive as any to-day, in this world at least. Some of us can say that He is more alive to us, because He comes into closer touch with our innermost being, than anyone else we know. He is the living God. It is not a relationship with some dead order of things, but with a living Person. But I must ask, Have you that living relationship? Are you following a system, an order, or are you in living fellowship with a living God? The Lord desires that such relationship with Him shall be living all the way along. It is a great thing to know that you have access to the living God. You do not know whether a thing is right or wrong? Well, you have the living God, ask Him; He is open, He is accessible, He is alive; you can have dealings with Him. Just to enjoy living relationship with a living God is how He wills it to be. The desire of His heart is that you should treat Him as being a living God. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him". We must believe, when we come, that He is; not feeling out into the universe, the vacant, empty universe. No, we are coming to a living Person; we believe that He is! There is nothing vague about that.

But more than that, He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek. Every time you come to Him do you believe that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek? How far does your belief carry you? Does it enable you right on the spot where you are to thank Him when you seek Him, because you believe that He has answered? O Lord, I thank You that You do not deny me that which is in accord with Thy will; I have it. To give thanks with request is His order. "In everything by prayer...with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." That is faith. That is not imagining, making yourself believe that you have it. It is faith taking this position: He is a living God, and He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek, and if this request is inspired by His Spirit, in line with His will, whether I actually enter into possession of it at this moment or not, I know that He hears and answers, and I shall come into it. Faith may be tested. Many of us have asked the Lord for that which is revealed as His will for us in His Word, and we have been kept waiting a long time, but the day has come when we have

found ourselves in possession of the answer. There was no noise about it, it just happened. He proved Himself faithful. By such experiences we have learned to thank the Lord on the spot. Whether our prayer is immediately answered in our experience, or whether the possession is postponed for a year or two, our confidence is that we are coming into the answer, and so we give thanks. That is faith that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. God loves that ground, that attitude, that kind of living relationship. It is a relationship which is taking its character from Him, the living God.

If He is the living God, then our knowledge of Him ought to be living, and where life is in the ascendant there is always increase. It is only when life is fading that there is decrease. When life is in the ascendant—and this life may always be in the ascendant, there need be no winter time in the life of the Spirit—there is increase in the knowledge of the Lord, living knowledge of the Lord. It is altogether different from book knowledge, altogether different from information about the Lord; it is living, personal knowledge of the Lord, and knowledge that is ever growing. We have to do with the living God, and He would that our knowledge of Him should be living knowledge, a knowledge in which there is life.

So we could go on touching upon point after point as to what it means to be related to a living God, but in this comprehensive word it is that everything is living where you have the living God.

### The Supreme Testimony

Now we come to the closing word, which has to do with the pre-eminent evidences of the presence of the living God. If you have felt that all that has been said so far has hardly touched you, or has hardly had an application in your case, I have no question about the last word. I am quite sure you will get something now. The pre-eminent evidence that the living God is with us, what is it? "Hereby", said Joshua, "ye shall know the living God is among you...Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into the Jordan." Some of you will want that explained, and others will not. "Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into the Jordan." First

of all, Jordan is always a type of death, and at the time when those words were spoken Jordan was at the flood, overflowing all its banks. It was, in type, death at the flood-tide, the mighty flood of death overflowing all banks. Then, secondly, the ark of the covenant is the Lord Jesus Christ in type. He is typified in that ark of the covenant.

Now then, Jesus Christ goes right over into the flood-tide of Jordan, and immediately that ark comes into touch with that flood-tide, the flood gives way, and is forced back. The waters are made to stand up and give a passage to the people of faith. What is the supreme evidence of the living God being amongst us? It is that we know Jesus Christ as triumphant over the power of death in our experience; for, having met death in its full power, its full force, its flood-tide, He triumphed. It was the flood-tide of death that was encountered at Calvary; death, in all that death means, something far beyond mere physical death, even all the terrible, wicked power of spiritual death. The Lord Jesus went into the flood of iniquitous death, and death's power was taken from it, and it could not overflow. He broke the power of death and its curse, and made death stand back. "He tasted death in the behalf of every man". He has delivered us in His own victory over death. He stands for the testimony of a life which is incapable of being swallowed up by death. Thus the cry is, "O death, where is thy victory; O death where is thy sting?" "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through

our Lord Jesus Christ." What is the supreme evidence that the living God is amongst us? That we are enjoying the power of a deathless life, or in other words, are living in the blessing of Christ's victory over the power of death. You have a life in your heart, in your spirit which cannot be overwhelmed and overpowered by death. When death is all around there is life. "Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you."

The testimony, then, to all the world, to the universe, is that the Lord of life is in the midst of us, and is making Himself manifest in that very nature, in that very character, in that very designation "the Lord of life". Hereby you shall know, not that your doctrine is correct, not that you are sound, not that you are orthodox, not that you are true to the conditions, but that the living God is among you in the power of His triumphant life in Jesus Christ over death. You and I may know the living God amongst us like that all the time.

The enemy would destroy that testimony, because it is the pre-eminent evidence of the presence of the living Lord. The assault, therefore, is always upon that testimony of life. God has been manifested to us as the living God in Jesus Christ, who says, "I am he that liveth; I became dead, but I am alive unto the ages of the ages, and have the keys of death and of hades", the authority over all.

So may we remember the fact which governs everything that our God is a living God; He lives.  
T.A.S.

## Extracts from "Windows"

By AMY WILSON CARMICHAEL

"This united action has been our happy way from the beginning. When the Fellowship was first formed many called it Utopian to expect that as more joined us we could ever continue to be of one mind in an house. And yet we saw vital unity in our God's pattern for a fellowship of Christians. Would He have set an impossible pattern? The wise citizen of the world recognises that 'there are times when to be effective a whole council must have but a single thought, a single spirit informing it—must not only speak and act, but must feel like one man, and from instinct and nature rather than from reason.

*Even one discordant individual would be enough to break the mysterious charm through which a true personality is produced out of a group.' How much more, then, should we who are citizens of heaven recognise this truth. So we met smile with smile; but behind our smile was a prayer: 'Not Utopia the place that is not, but Eutopia the Happy Place—make us that and at all costs keep us that, O Lord.'*"

"In all the deeper missionary books there is sure to be some allusion to the power and deadliness of satanic attack upon the spirit of the

*Continued on page 26*

## While it is Day

READING : John v. 16-36 ; ix. 1-4.

“ We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day : the night cometh, when no man can work.”

That last phrase brings before us in a very vivid way an aspect of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus that we need strongly to hold in view. “ The night cometh when no man can work ”. Here are those who are under certain limitations. They have a night, they have a day. They have a life which is compared to a day, a limited life, with a beginning and a finish, a life-day when work may be done ; then the night comes when work must cease. That speaks quite clearly of our human position here in this world. The Lord Jesus takes His place among such : “ We must work the works of him that sent me while it is day ”. He has *His* life-day. There is urgency upon Him because of certain quite definite limits set to His ministry. You find that in chapter xi. when threatened with His life, He says : “ Are there not twelve hours in the day ? ” The day is given to Him. It cannot be shortened, it is not to be lengthened.

Here we see the Lord Jesus quite clearly set before us in His manhood, in His humanity. That, of course, is a matter of creed to every one of us, but how much we need to emphasise this fact that the Lord Jesus is truly presented before us as a Man. We have had so much over-emphasis on that point that the reaction has been to insist on His Deity to a point of over-balance. He is God manifest in the flesh, and we are so anxious to uphold His Deity that we put all the emphasis on “ God ”, and pass over “ manifest in the flesh ”, as if it were a detail. He is God, but He was, and is, manifest in the flesh, a real Man even as He is real God. We must preserve the balance. Over-emphasis in any direction means lack of balance and so loss of some of the strength that is meant for us from the Word of God.

Here the Lord Jesus is quite clearly depicted in His humanity as our example, and thus we may consider what He reveals to us in this

Gospel of John, of the attitude, the life, and more especially the work, of a Man in this world.

### Christ the Believers Pattern

#### (a) The Attitude of Heart

“ We must work the works of him that sent me while it is day : the night cometh, when no man can work ”. Thinking more especially of this active, working aspect of our life, we can learn much from the Lord’s attitude and His movements as depicted for us in this Gospel with regard to where we should stand and how we should be proceeding. We notice that this incident is concerned with human need. Here is a poor blind beggar, blind from his birth. The disciples approach him, and then begin to discuss him, and the very callousness and brutality of their attitude is appalling. They want to consider the man as a specimen. “ Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind ? ”. God may have made him blind ! God could have given him sight ! That is a matter for God ! They are only interested from the point of view of discussing him. What hardness, what coldness toward a man in need ! Are the Rabbis right in teaching that specific sins bring specific suffering ? Is it true that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children ? Everything is regarded from a detached view-point. The Lord’s soul goes out immediately against that sort of thing. That is not the way God’s Man looks at human need. And yet it is by no means an uncommon attitude of mind in the Lord’s people. Spirituality is not soul-lessness. To be crucified with Christ does not mean to repress every sympathetic and gentle feeling of the heart, to be cold and hard, stone-like. The Lord is not one with His disciples in their heartless consideration of what has brought the blind man to such a condition. His heart goes out to this man, and He sees in human need an occasion for God to work, and not merely for God to work, but for Him to do it by means of a human instrument which He has here on earth. “ We must work the works of him that sent me while

it is day ". Here He sees an opportunity for God, a chance for God to work, and here is He available for that work to be done.

As the Lord does not take sides with the one error, so He does not rush into the other. Human need does not evoke from Him an impulsive effort on His own part to do something, to try to help it. He meets a suffering soul. The night is coming, there is urgency. We see the beautiful perfection of His humanity in that He will not act independently. "We must work the works of him that sent me ...". Christ's heart goes out to this man that God might help him, but He does not rush in to try to do something of Himself, because if anything is to be done God must do it.

We may take this as an example of how to deal with spiritual blindness. Here are souls in darkness who do not see the Lord, nor do they see their need. On the one hand it is possible to regard them in this callous, brutal way of the disciples, as specimens, providing material for a metaphysical discussion. On the other hand it is possible to be so impressed with their blindness, as to make frantic efforts to illuminate them. We ply them with arguments from the Scriptures, and we are offended when they do not see. They are left as blind as ever, in spite of the fact that we were so anxious and concerned to give them sight. Needy ones must have help, but God must give it to them. That, I feel, is the message of this Gospel, as to the example of the Lord Jesus Christ in the matter of works. He works with urgency of spirit, knowing that the need is great, and that there is not a moment to be wasted! Oh, what a tremendous amount there is to be done! And yet He maintains the attitude that if anything is to be done, God must do it! God needs the human instrument, but He must do the works; His must be the initiative; His must be the power; His must be the choice in every way. We find that fully brought out in this Gospel.

#### (b) The Condition of Dependence

We turn to chapter v. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (verse 17). This reveals the whole basis of our Lord's activities here on earth. We find the phrases that He uses about His work show the nature of the work, how utterly and wholly it is of God. The suggestion here from the Jews was that the Lord Jesus was acting on His own initiative; and not only that, but that He was acting out of harmony with

God, because God had appointed certain external, rigid limitations as to when one might work, and to work out of those hours must be working out of harmony with God. They regarded the Lord Jesus as alone responsible for what He was doing, and implied that He had wilfully initiated something which could not be right because it was done at a time when man was forbidden of God to work.

Mark how the Lord put all the responsibility back upon God. The complete justification for His working is this: "My Father worketh...". This is the basis of the whole thing, "My Father worketh"! "And I work"! Not separately! Not that He is busy there and I am busy here! Not that We are dividing the thing up between Us! The Lord Jesus speaks as a Man, as the further explanation which He gives to the Jews shows. They objected that He was making Himself equal with God, and in a sense He refused to take that position. While He is, in His Godhead, equal with the Father, here He is working as dependent upon God. "My Father worketh"! God Almighty is doing something, and I, as His Son, in absolute dependence, have come into the thing that God is doing—"and I work".

This reveals the nature of the works which Jesus did. They were not something independent, nor done on His own initiative. The Jews' eyes were on the work, but the Lord's eyes were on His Father. It was a work of faith in this sense, that the Lord's whole heart was not set upon the work as such, but set upon the Father. He took His directions from the Father; the Father filled His vision. How full this Gospel is of that name "the Father"! Christ's chief consciousness is the Father. His whole mind and heart are set upon Him. There is much to be done. There is a world in need. He is not heartless, cold, nor indifferent toward that world, but His chief consciousness is not the souls around Him, not the work, not the hours so quickly passing, but the Father. His heart is set on the Father, and so He is able to work together with God.

Faith in its essence is that, to have the vision fixed upon God. We are apt to take such phrases from this Gospel as these: "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his inner man shall flow rivers of living water" (John vii. 38); "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do" (John xiv. 12), and

we look for the rivers of living water, or we look for the greater works. Our attention is directed toward them, and if there are any rivers how quickly they then become just a trickling stream. The greater works! Where are they? We imagine that faith means to have the mind set on the rivers of living water, or on the greater works, whereas the Lord is saying, "He that believeth on me...". Faith is belief in Him. Faith is occupation with Him. The rivers of living water are the result. The greater works are not what we are to be occupied with. Faith lays hold of God and keeps hold of Him. The works are the outcome of such an attitude.

These Jews wanted the Lord to be governed by a rigid external law, the Sabbath; meaning that there is a certain hour in the day—we will say half past five on Friday evening—when you may do things, and another—say half past six—when you may not. It is merely a question of the external. The Lord will not submit to such a ruling. That is not His method of doing things. The life must be governed by a walk with God, by a vision of God. The question is, Is God working? Is He seeking to work through me, bringing me into something? If He is, then I work; not governed by these earthly considerations, but governed by God. They would have Him follow in what was, after all, a convention, an imitation of that which had been, or which they imagined to have been, in the past. They applied ideas to the Sabbath that God never intended: their attitude of mind was that Moses would not have done that, or Moses would have done this, and we must imitate him. We are called on to imitate faith, but not to imitate the expressions of faith in other people. There is a big difference between those two things. Some servant of the Lord has been led of Him along a certain line. We read a wonderful account of the dealings of the Lord through that particular one, and our immediate tendency is to set out to imitate him. We could well imitate his spirit. We could well imitate his faith, but that is a very different thing from imitating the expression of that faith as God worked through him. We welcome every life-story set before us which can give us an insight as to how to work more closely with the Lord, but we get into terrible bondage when we seek merely to follow external outworkings in that life of God's servant. The earnest emphasis in one's own heart, is this, that if we are to work for God, if we are really to achieve works of

faith, then our hearts must be utterly and wholly set on the Lord Himself, on God. That is the way, the walk, of faith.

This takes time; more time perhaps than some of us have given to it. The day begins with, "My Father worketh", and my heart must be on my Father! It does not begin with, What is my programme? What did so-and-so do at the beginning of the day? It begins with the heart set on God, seeking God, coming into close and intimate fellowship with God. From such a beginning, and in such a continuance, the day is to be wrought out, and God has to be our occupation. We are not to lay hold of something which is told us, some idea, some plan or vision, nor even some promise of Scripture, and trust the Lord for that. That is not faith. Faith is waiting before God, having that word spoken into one's heart by God Himself, and going out on that. Anything less than that is less than real faith. God is working, and so I work. There is a clear distinction between our seeking to work for the Lord, and the Lord bringing us into His works for us. That may sound a mere juggling with words, but it is not. There is a very real difference.

You remember that chapter at the end of this Gospel, in which Peter said, "I go a fishing"! The others said, "We also come with thee". They go. It is night. They work hard all night, but in the morning they have caught nothing. Then the Lord comes, and He does not say, "You ought not to be fishing here!" He meets them on their own ground, that of fishing, tells them to let their net down on the right side, and immediately there is a big draft of fishes. The whole subject just at the moment is fishing. It is not a question of whether they ought to be fishing or not. "I am going to do something"! says Peter, in effect. I am going fishing! Much honest and skilful effort is expended, but without result. Then in the stillness of the morning a voice is heard; it is obeyed, and immediately there is a big result. Is there any difference there? That surely is the difference between our striving to work for the Lord, and our waiting for the Lord's voice and walking in simple obedience with Him. That is what the Lord is showing us, and what we have been so slow to learn. The need is clamant. There is a tremendous amount to be done. But it is not done by our rushing in and seeking to meet it with a cry to God in our hearts that He will set His seal on

what we are doing. Faith is of a different order from that. Faith moves as God moves. Then follow the works of faith.

The cloud in the wilderness taught the same lesson, of how utterly dependent the child of God is. The cloud moved, and the people moved; the cloud stopped, they stopped, whether it was for a year, or a month, or two days. When they got up each morning the question was as to whether the cloud was moving or whether it was still. For them there was no programme, nothing set, nothing known. They stayed in one place perhaps for a night, perhaps for a year, never knowing the future. They proved that it was a practical life, but everything for them, so far as movement was concerned, depended upon that cloud. The Lord was in that cloud, and their eyes in a sense were on the Lord as they were on the cloud. They did not move according to a time-table, or to plans which they laid down. They moved as the Lord moved, they stayed as the Lord stayed. The Jews, though they held the Scriptures in such reverence, had not learned these lessons, but we see it worked out in the Lord's life as it is meant to work out in ours. Any time should not be suitable for us. We should not be living in that realm where we make our own plans. We should be where the Father's time, the Father's word is what moves us, or holds us, in every detail of our lives.

### (c) The Single Aim

There is a further word to be said about the works of God in the fourth chapter. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (verse 34). The Lord had arrived at the well-side tired and hungry (for the disciples had gone to buy food) as well as thirsty. Presently the disciples come with food, expecting that He would be grateful for it and take it eagerly, but He was as a man refreshed already. There seemed to be no concern about the food that they had brought, so they inquired the reason. His reply was: "I have meat to eat that ye know not" (verse 32). He was refreshed. How was this? By doing the will of God; by stepping forth in faith into those works which the Father had given Him to do. It would have been very easy for the Lord to have considered Himself and to have reserved the little energy that He had left. But He found strength in this, in moving forward in the will of God. He found that there was renewal in obeying God and in

working His works. He did not keep back for Himself the strength He had, but expended it in the work of God. This interview with the woman, instead of exhausting him still more, seems to have brought Him life and strength. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work". There is strength to be received in walking deliberately in the works of God. Is that practical? It is! It works! To do God's works is to get fresh strength from God. To enter God's works without the capacity in oneself to do them, is to find that God's strength is sufficient for their fulfilment.

How many of the Lord's servants again and again have proved this, doing the impossible and finding strength in doing it. There is strength from God to meet the need as we walk in His works. That does not mean that we can rashly undertake any work which we consider to be a work of God, and trust Him to give us strength for it. It must be our specific work. The Lord is not speaking of the work of God in the general sense in which we use the term. It is a specific, chosen work of God, allotted to Him, and in that He can find strength, out of that He cannot.

That is a truth which the Lord has brought very strongly home to one's heart. We cannot go out trusting in an optimistic way that if we are concerned with the Lord's glory, trying to do something for Him, He will stand by us. That is not what the Lord meant. What He meant was this: As I go on step by step in those particular works which my Father has assigned to me, and clearly spoken into my heart as being His will for me, so I receive from Him strength to do them.

That may mean that the time comes when, after something has been on our heart for a long time and we have been quite incapable of doing it, we can step out and go ahead, and the Lord upholds and enables. We are then apt to feel, Why didn't I do that before? Such a long time has passed and it has now proved to be all right; it would have been all right then! Would it have been so? Not if it was before God's time. The time has come now and we step out, and we find He stands by us because this is His will for us. We do not feel strong; our strength comes from going on with Him, not from waiting for that strength and feeling sufficiently able to do the work. This shows how careful we need to be that we are guided of Him.

It may mean the converse of what we have

mentioned. It may mean that we have been able to do things in the past, trusting the Lord to give us strength, and He has done it, but that now there is no confidence to continue. On our part we may wonder, Is our faith failing? Have we degenerated spiritually? It depends what the Lord is saying. If the Lord's will is for us to cease from a task, then it is of no use our trying to work up "faith" to continue. In those days, now past, the Lord stood by us, because it was His will that we should be so occupied. Maybe it is not His will now. Our only safety is to keep our eyes wholly on the Lord. We cannot even try to repeat what we have done in the past, still less imitate anybody else. We can only walk a moment at a time, with our eyes on Him. To walk in the works which God puts before us, and gives us, means to get strength to go on. But there is no room at all for foolhardiness, or for any optimistic idea that God will stand by us if we try to do something for Him outside of His will.

#### (d) The Completed Course

Then further, we see the determination to finish His work: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work". Later on He says to the Jews, "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do..." (John v. 36). For the present I am going on doing those same works, but My heart is intent on finishing what He has given Me to do. I cannot contemplate an unfinished task. So there comes the time when our Lord stands before His Father in that wonderful prayer of John xvii. and says, "I have glorified thee on the earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (verse 4). The hour has come: the Lord is now ready to lay down His life because this is to be the finish. That word "finish" has the idea of completion, or rounding off. Of course, a great deal still lay ahead when the Lord said this. The awful hour in Gethsemane, and the Cross lay ahead, but faith could say, even before that, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do". Then on the Cross He cried, with that triumphant voice, "It is finished"!

To compare our little lives with the Lord in this respect would seem perhaps to be a presumptuous thing, yet there is a principle there which applies to us. We must finish the work. In Hebrews xi. it is written of Abraham and others,

"These all died in faith...". We are apt to put the emphasis on the fact that they died, but in the original the emphasis is on the faith. It was in faith that they died. They did not just shuffle out of this life. They refused to die until it could be by faith. When they died it was by faith; their time on earth was finished, their task was completed.

The Lord Jesus would not die, would not allow Himself to be killed, until the time came when He could say, "The hour is come", the work is finished. It is the same in the case of the Apostle Paul. He would not die until he could say, "I have finished". I do not think that Paul was frightened on the occasion of that shipwreck on the way to Rome. I believe that of the two hundred and seventy odd people on board he would have been the most glad to think of being taken to glory. For him death would have been "far better", but he would not die. "I believe God", was his declaration concerning a word of deliverance (Acts. xxvii. 25). By faith he came through that shipwreck because his time was not yet.

I do not know whether our experience may ever have led us to the point where by far the easiest thing would be to go quietly out of things, but faith is of this nature that if one is to die one must only die in God's will. It was in faith that Abraham died. Nothing could be seen of the promise except Isaac, but it was all right, his time on earth was rounded off. Nothing more was to be gained by his being here, and so in faith he died. And our blessed Lord Jesus only had His life—a shorter one than most of ours—cut off when He could no longer work. What an urgency there must have been in His spirit, but the work was gloriously finished. And in the urgency He was restfully dependent upon the Father; there was no rush, no panic, He walked with God; and so the time came when the work was finished. If our eyes are on the Lord we shall not admit of anything less than the finishing of His work as it is bound up with our lives.

Speaking of the works, the Lord says, "The Father that dwelleth in me doeth the works" (John xiv. 10). Here we have the whole secret of the life of the Lord, even the indwelling Father. Here again there is comfort to our hearts, as we contemplate the perfect humanity of our Lord: "Not my will", He says. Not My will; not My plans; not My works; not Mine, but the Father's! Everything is from the

Father ; " the works which the Father doeth ", " the words which the Father giveth ". The Lord Jesus did not address the Father dwelling in Him. When He prayed He lifted up His eyes and addressed the Father in heaven as we do. Our hearts go out, not to the Lord dwelling within, but to the Lord on His Throne, though as we do so it is in reliance upon the fact that He dwells within. In this case, then, we see, as in every other, that the Lord Jesus did not draw upon resources which are not available to us ; that though so different in some respects, He is utterly like us in this. He lived a human life. He lived on resources which He received from God, and which we may receive from God. We are to work by the power of an indwelling life, even the Spirit of God. How did the Lord live ? How did the Lord work ? If there is any doubt about it He shows us quite clearly. It was by the indwelling Spirit of the Father : " The Father that dwelleth in me... ". What a comfort ! What a strength to our hearts ! This is the way. We may rely upon Him within. We may have confidence in the fact that He is within. Faith accepts, faith trusts, faith acts with the assurance that the Lord is within.

### The Weapon of Prayer

The work of God was mentioned by Christ to His disciples when He said, " The works that I do shall ye do also, and greater works than these ...because I go unto the Father ". This is immediately followed by the words, " Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name... ". One of the big realms in which we are to work the works of God is in this sphere of prayer. " The works that I do...greater works than these... ". How shall these be done ? " Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name... ". There is a whole realm of activity open to us by prayer. There is no doubt that

this is the Lord's urgent message in these days to many of us, His call to prayer. This is the sphere where things are accomplished for Him. Yet prayer is not simply a case of our knowing certain people and situations, and getting down to pray for them. Prayer, like every other activity of the Christian life, must be on this same basis that we have considered : " My Father worketh hitherto and I work " ; coming into the works of God.

Some of the Lord's servants have been conscious of difficulties in their lives, attributed to soulish prayers, that is, prayer not directed by the Holy Spirit, concerning them. It is not enough to fall on our knees and take up some matter in our own way and ask for certain things from the Lord, and think that we are in the works of God. We are not, any more than we are in any of the other activities we have considered ; perhaps less, because we are touching a realm where there are spiritual forces at work which we do not fully understand. Prayer, surely, must grow out of waiting upon the Lord. Holy Spirit directed prayer is not this thing that we arrange or effect, it is on the same principle of working with God, of God working His own works through us. We do need, alone and together, to be directed in that way. It may not be the moment for praying for one specific thing or person. There may be an urgent need for another person. It shows how much we need to be in the Lord's hands, even more for our praying than for anything else.

These truths are very simply expressed but they are vitally necessary. What a life of activity God has for us ! How many works there are to be done ! But works must only be on this basis : " the works of Him that sent me ". As He moves, so are we to move, with our heart set on Him.

H.F.

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# All Things in Christ

No. 5.

## His Excellent Greatness

READING: 1 Kings iv. 1, 7, 20-34; x. 1-9.  
Matthew xii. 42.

Some of the passages which have provided the background for our meditations have referred very definitely and precisely to the excellence and exceeding greatness of the Lord Jesus. One basic passage of tremendous implication is that which came from His own lips: "...no one knoweth the Son, save the Father..." That is a declaration, in other words, that only the Father knows the Son, knows who the Son is and what the Son is; only the Father knows all that the Son means. Along with that we have the profound statement of the Apostle Paul: "...it was the good pleasure of God...to reveal his Son in me..." That relates to the beginning of his life in Christ Jesus, and it was a revelation which was destined to become so full that after all his years of learning, after all his discovery of Christ, at the end he is still to be found crying from his heart, "...I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ..." (Philip. iii. 8). It indicates clearly that even at the end the Apostle recognised that there was a knowledge of Christ still available to him which was beyond anything that had yet come to him, and such knowledge was more precious and more important than all other things. We often sing in one of our hymns, "Tell of His excellent greatness;"—"Behold, a greater than Solomon is here."

Our difficulty always will be to comprehend, to grasp, to bring that excellent greatness, that transcendent fulness within the compass of practical every-day life and experience. Yet it is necessary that this should be, and our approach to that fulness must be of such a kind as to render it of immediate value to us; for all that vast range of power and fulness, although so far beyond our comprehension, is yet for our present good and advantage. There are some features in

this account of Solomon's greatness which foreshadow this greatness of the Lord Jesus, a greatness which, as we have said, is for our present benefit.

### (1) Supreme Dominion

We mark that it is said of Solomon that he was king over all Israel and that he had dominion over all the region beyond the river; and a greater than Solomon is here. The first feature, then, is this of his supreme dominion, his excelling lordship, kingship, sovereignty. That is of tremendous practical value. It operated, as we see, in two realms; He was king over all Israel, and he had dominion over all the region *beyond* the river.

Those statements suggest that the Lord Jesus is not only King within the compass of those who acknowledge Him as Lord, His own saved ones, but that, in spite of what may seem, He is King in a far wider sense. We are moving much in the realm of Ephesians in our consideration, and in Ephesians it is the universal sovereignty of the Lord Jesus that is brought before us, not only His relation to the Church. He is Head over the Church which is His Body, He is Lord there, but He is, in addition, far above all rule and authority, principality and power. He is *now* universal Lord. It does not appear like it; everything would seem to contradict the fact; but we need to be given sight to see that the kingship, the lordship, the universal dominion of the Lord Jesus at this present time does not necessarily mean that all are enjoying that lordship, nor that for all within the universe is it a beneficent reign. But even if that be the case, it does not alter the fact. There are other things which also point to the fact in a very positive way.

Of course, our trouble is that we take such short views. We are children of a span of time, and that span of time is of such great importance with us that our view of things is so narrow. If we could but take the long view, and see things

from God's standpoint, how different would be the result in our own hearts. In saying that, we have in mind the wide-spread denial of the kingship, the lordship, the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ. This period of the world's history is called the day of His rejection, and there is a verse of a hymn that commences thus :—

“ Our Lord is now rejected,  
And by the world disowned ”.

But it is not so easy a matter to put the Lord Jesus aside. Men may reject, nations may reject, may seek to put Him out, deny Him a place, repudiate His rights, refuse to acknowledge His claims and His lordship, but that does not get rid of Him. God has set His king upon His throne. Of the Son He has said, “ Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever... ” (Heb. i. 8). Nothing can upset that. The attitude of men, the attitude of the world, cannot interfere with that, cannot depose the Lord Jesus. It may be said : That is a statement, but how will you prove it ? Well, there are evidences. We have evidence that He is Lord, that He is holding things in His own sovereign hand, that *nothing can take His place*.

#### The Witness of History

Look at history and see what has tried to take the place of the Lord Jesus in sovereignty ; tried to do what only the Lord Jesus could do ; tried to bring about a state of things, to accomplish which is put into the power of the Son alone, and see how far those efforts have succeeded. Anything which seeks to bring about a state of things which the Lord Jesus alone can establish is doomed. You can see it repeated through history again and again. World dominion has been sought by one and another. Things which were ideals, magnificent conceptions for the world, have been attempted, and they have all failed, all broken down. Kingdoms and empires, despots, dictators, monarchs, have risen to a tremendous height, some of them having great sway, but the empire has broken and passed, the reign has broken down. So you have these things coming and going all the way through history ; and, mark you, the whole matter is related to the Lord Jesus.

Read the book of Daniel again, and you will perceive the realm in which we are moving. There you have the prophetic unveiling of world empires ; Babylonia, the empire of the Medes and Persians, then that of the Greeks, and on to

the great Roman empire ; they all pass in review, and pass away. The lesson of the book of Daniel is this, that there is but *One* whom God has appointed to be universal Lord, and that no one else can hold that place. Others may go a long way, but they can never gain that place, and so they must pass. We may yet see great powers coming into being, vast ranges of territory under one sway, but all this will pass. The matter is held in the hands of the Lord Jesus. All this endeavour is doomed from its birth to go so far, and then pass out. The Lord Jesus alone can have world dominion. He alone can bring universal peace. He alone can bring prosperity to all nations. That is held in reserve for Him and His reign. Till then there will be fluctuations and variations in world fortunes, but it will all pass.

This passing, this breakdown, this confusion, this dead-lock is all because the course of things is in His hands, and He is holding it all unto Himself. He is King ! He is Lord ! It is a tremendous thing to recognise that the very course of the nations, the very history of this world, is held in the hands of the Lord Jesus unto His own destined end. God has for ever set His Son as the only one to be full, complete, and final Lord of His universe, King of kings and Lord of lords, with a beneficent sway and reign over all the earth. Peace and prosperity is locked up with the Lord Jesus, and He holds the destiny of nations unto that. Men may attempt it of themselves, and they may go a long way to usurp His place, but the end is foreseen, foreshown. He must come whose right it is, and of *His kingdom there shall be no end*. It has commenced in heaven ; it is already vested in Him and held in His hands. That is how we must read history. That is how we must read our daily papers. That is how we shall be saved from the evil depression and despair that would creep into our hearts as we mark the state of things in this world. All is being held by Him to a certain end. The meaning is that *nothing can take the place of the Lord Jesus*.

You can apply that in various ways, and in different directions. It explains the history of the so-called church, the history of Christendom. Why is it that what professes to be of Christ, but in reality is not, breaks down, continually breaks down all the way through history ? Simply because it is something assuming the place of Christ, which is not of Christ. Failure is written upon it from the beginning. Everything that is

not of Christ is going to break down ; and it does break down. Though a thing may begin with Christ and evidence a measure of Christ, immediately it moves beyond the range of Christ and becomes of man, its end is in view.

That is the explanation of things which God has raised up in relation to His Son, things which were pure and true, but of which, because of the blessing resting upon them, men have taken hold. Whenever this has been done the end of these things has come into view, that is, as a spiritual force. Why is this ? It has gone beyond Christ, it has gone outside of Christ, and nothing can take the place of Christ. Oh, how necessary it is to abide wholly in Christ, to be wholly of Christ, according to Christ, governed by the Holy Spirit. He operates His sovereignty against the success, the prosperity, the final triumph of anything and everything that is not of Himself, and if we want the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus on our side, then we have to be utterly on the side of the Lord Jesus ; otherwise that sovereignty works against us. The world confusion, and the world trouble, and the world despair, is all a mighty evidence that Jesus is Lord, because it is a world that is trying to get on without Him, but cannot do so. No ! He says it cannot be done. He says : I am essential ! I am indispensable ! If you would have it otherwise, then you must learn that without Me it cannot be !

We could spend all our time considering Solomon's dominion and kingship. He was king over Israel, and had dominion over all the land beyond the river. But we must pass on to consider another feature in which Solomon foreshadows the excellency of the Lord Jesus.

### (2) The Bounty of Solomon's Table

"And Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and three score measures of meal ; ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, beside harts, and gazelles, and roebucks, and fatted fowl". That is a great day's feast for Solomon ! What does this speak of, if not of the bountifulness of Solomon. This is no mean fare, no starvation diet ! "A greater than Solomon is here".

When by the Holy Spirit we really come into the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, there is no need to starve spiritually. Oh, the tragedy of starving believers, with such a King ! The

tragedy, the unspeakable grief of children of the Lord spiritually starving ! The fact is there is a fulness for His people which far excels that of Solomon.

Read the Gospel by John again with this one thought in mind, and you will see how the truth receives confirmation from the earthly life of the Lord Jesus. Take chapter six, with its great incident of the feeding of the multitude, all leading up to the spiritual interpretation : "I am the bread..." His disciples broke down in faith at one point, and He was amazed : "Do ye not yet perceive, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up ? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up ?" (Matt. xvi. 9-10). He was amazed at their failure to understand that in Him was not only enough, but abundance. There is something wrong with us if we have not discovered it to be so. The fulness of Christ is for our spiritual satisfaction. There is abundance of food.

Again, consider not only the pathetic tragedy, but the wicked tragedy of starvation. What is it that is keeping the Lord's people out of fulness ? Very largely it is prejudice, the Devil's trick of putting up the barrier of prejudice between the need and the supply. Oh, the wickedness of the Devil in coming in by these works of blinding to starve the Lord's people. There is bread in Christ. He is an inexhaustible fulness for the spiritual life. We know that we shall come to the same position as Paul, when he cried, "...that I may know him..." ; that is, to a consciousness of there being a knowledge beyond anything that we have yet attained unto, and where everything is counted as nothing compared with that. This is not mere words, it is true. There is bread in the Lord Jesus ; there is bread in His house. This is where He is superior to Solomon. There is bread for a mighty host, a company capable of doing greater justice to His fare than ever Solomon's household could do. If they had sat down to his bounty, they could have gone so far and no farther, but our appetite will go on. We have a spiritual capacity which is growing, and growing all the time, unto the fulness of Christ. Solomon's bounty, then, is another feature by which He foreshadows the excellent greatness of the Lord Jesus. We touch but briefly on a third.

### (3) The Glory of Solomon

The glory of Solomon is proverbial. Even the

Lord Jesus spoke of it as being so: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory (and they knew what his glory was) was not arrayed like one of these." (Matt. vi. 28, 29). But what was Solomon in his glory compared with the Lord Jesus? What is the glory of the Lord Jesus? Inclusively it is the revelation of the fulness of God, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

That may not sound very practical, but let us mark that this glory of Solomon was closely associated with his wisdom; his wisdom indicated the nature of his glory. There was something beyond the glory. This glory was not mere tinsel, or mere show, but was the fruit of a great wisdom that God had given him. It was the wisdom of Solomon that issued in his glory and his fame. What may be said of his wisdom? He spoke three thousand proverbs, he wrote many songs; he spoke of trees, and of beasts, and of birds, of creeping things, and of fishes. They are all very practical things. How did he speak of them? He invested everything in the creation with a meaning. If he speaks of trees, he will give you a secret, give a meaning to the trees, from the cedar in Lebanon (trees in the Word of God all have a significance) to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall. We know of what hyssop speaks as we first meet with it away back in Exodus and Leviticus. We know what the cedars of Lebanon stand for, and all the trees in between the two equally bear a meaning. Solomon gave the secret significance, the Divine meaning. Then he spoke of beasts, and we know that the Bible speaks of many beasts, and they all have a significance. He spoke of fowls also, and of creeping things, and of fishes. He unfolded the secrets of the creation, and invested everything in the creation with a deeper meaning. To be able to do that is proof of no mean wisdom.

Wherein is the Lord Jesus superior? Well, after all, Solomon's was only poetic wisdom in those realms. The Lord Jesus has practical wisdom; in this sense, that everything is laid hold of by Him in relation to His purpose, and made to serve that purpose. Oh that we could see and believe that at all times in our experience! So many things come into our lives. What a diversity! What a range! How mysterious some things seem to be! How strange it is that the Lord's own people have so many more experiences, both in number and variety, than anyone

else. It seems that almost anything that can happen to a person, happens to a believer. You wonder sometimes, if anything else is possible. Have we not exhausted the whole store of possible experiences? That is how we question. There is not one thing in the life of a child of God but what is controlled and governed by a deeper meaning in relation to His purpose. We recall Paul's statement: "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose." (Rom. viii. 28). The more accurate translation is, God worketh in all things good. God invests everything with a meaning, for those who love Him, and are the called according to His purpose. The wisdom of God lays hold of everything and gives to it a value. It may be that only eternity will reveal to us the value of some things, but we must believe that, inasmuch as our lives are wholly under His government, there is nothing without a meaning, nothing without a value. His wisdom is governing everything.

It is when we come to realise that, to accept and believe it, that we find rest in our hearts, and find ourselves on the way to gain rather than loss. When we revolt against these things, then we are in the way to rob ourselves of something. But when we come into line with the Lord in these things we find, firstly, rest in our hearts, and then the discipline produces something of value. It is gain, not loss; it is good, not evil. This is wisdom. That is better than having so many poems; it is practical. A greater than Solomon is here! That is the glory of the Lord Jesus. How does His wisdom work out to His glory? You and I go through a painful experience, a mysterious experience; we can see no good in it; we can only see harm in it. We are led to look to the Lord, to believe that although we cannot see, cannot understand, He knows; and we trust Him. We come through the trial, and our eyes are enlightened about the purpose of it, and we worship. Oh, we never saw that such a thing as that could produce this! We never, never imagined that this value could result from it. The thing which seemed to be for our undoing is the thing that has brought us into a greater fulness of the Lord. That is His glory.

Remember that His wisdom is governed by His love. That is a great point with Solomon. It was the heart of Solomon which was behind his wisdom. It was a wise and understanding

heart (not brain). Now look at Solomon. Two women bring a babe to him. Solomon is watching. For what is he watching? For something that he knows out of his own experience. Read the story of Solomon's birth. Read that little clause about his mother's special love for him. Solomon was the darling of his mother's heart, and Solomon knew what mother love was. He knew what the love of a mother for her babe was, and he watches these two women. He has the keen eye of a mother for her child upon those two women, and he says to one at his side: Take this sword and divide the child in two. That does not sound very much like a mother heart; but he is watching. Then he sees the mother heart leap, and hears her cry: No! I had rather that the other woman had the child than that you should hurt it! And Solomon knew who was the mother of that child. That is the wisdom of Solomon which is actuated by his love.

Supremely does this characterize the Lord Jesus. Oh, it seems at times that the way He goes to work is hard, but it is actuated by His love. It may be strange and mysterious, but love is in it; there is a great heart behind it all.

When at the direction of Solomon the Ark was brought into the sanctuary, and set there in its appointed place, speaking of the Lord coming into His rest and satisfaction, we are told that this symbolic realisation of the Lord's end in rest was attested from heaven, and that Solomon turned his face to the people and blessed them. God has come into His rest in His Son, into full satisfaction, and then the Son, in whose face is the glory of God, turns to us in blessing: "... the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. iv. 6). A greater than Solomon is here.

The Lord give us a new apprehension of His Son.

T.A.S.

## Spiritual Ministry

No. 5.

### Christ the Power for the New Warfare

Judges vi. 11-14, 33-34; vii. 1-25; viii. 4, 22-23.

2 Cor. iv. 7-18.

There is little doubt that the thought of Gideon flashed into the mind of the Apostle at the time of writing his second letter to the Corinthians, and his brief allusion to him is left as a deposit which is in the nature of a clue to a spiritual principle. As we take up these passages, we shall find that they all constitute another aspect of the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. In this connection we shall see Christ as the power for the new warfare.

While we shall be dwelling in mind in the times of Gideon, a very great deal has to be left untouched, and we must be content just to get the main lines of instruction. For instance, we cannot give the time to any particular and detailed explanation of the meaning of "the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the East". They have their meaning, and their meaning is very illuminating, but

we simply have to leave all that detail and content ourselves with the observation that they represent the forces which are set against the pure testimony of the Lord. They are the enemies which have the ascendancy when the Lord's people sink on to a lower level of spiritual life. So it was in the days of the Judges. Because of the low spiritual level, various antagonistic forces gained the upper hand, and brought the Lord's people into subjection. Amongst those forces there were "the Midianites and the Amalekites, and all the children of the East".

#### The Corruption of the Testimony

There is this one thing we may observe about them, that they speak of a mixture of what is positively evil and wrong, and having no association with the Lord whatever, and elements which have had some kind of relationship with the things of God. The Amalekites, for instance, had no natural connection whatever with Israel, but

the Midianites had their rise from the relationship of Abraham and Keturah, so that there you have some kind of historic connection with the things of God. These two things, that which has a background of connection with Divine things in association with something that is positively and altogether outside of God, constituted a combined force to destroy the pure testimony, to hold it in captivity.

It is generally like that. It is not often that the enemy openly gains that dominion over the people of God. It is usually by alliance with some historic or traditional thing, by means of something which somewhere has a background relationship with the things of God, that he gains his advantage. It is the historic and traditional association, not a pure hundred-percent fellowship with God.

You will notice that one of the characteristics or features of these combined forces is that they were all the time depriving the people of God of their food. Gideon was threshing wheat behind the wall to hide it from them. These forces were against the very sustenance and nourishment of the people of God, and that itself has a significance which we cannot stay to pursue at the moment ; but let the wise learn.

Thus the conflict here is for a true and pure testimony in the Lord's people. That is what arises as the issue. The whole question and issue here is that of the Lord's testimony in purity and fulness being found in the lives of His people, and expressed through them, or ministered by them, and it is against this that these forces are set. The Lord moves in the matter, and what we have to note is how the power of God is put forth in relation to a full and pure testimony to His glory, or, in other words, how the light of the knowledge of the glory of God is recovered in a day of spiritual declension ; by what means, and in what way, the power of God is displayed unto the showing of the knowledge of His glory.

#### **The Choice and Preparation of an Instrument of Recovery**

Seeing what the issue is, what is in view, we are able to analyse that to which allusion is made, namely, Gideon as God's instrument. First of all we note what Gideon's conception of himself was, what he himself as in nature is set forth as being : " I am the least in my father's house ". That is enough—the least, but faithful.

If you are faithful, though you may be the least, God has His eye on you, and that in relation to a very precious purpose for Himself. Faithfulness is that which makes a man great in the sight of God, not what man is in himself. The Lord on His part is heard saying to such a one, " The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour ". It is not because of what the man is in himself, it is the estimate given to him by reason of his faithfulness to God's thoughts, God's testimony, his faithful, though hidden and secret, exercise in relation to what God wants for His people.

Next we look at Gideon's army. First of all, from thirty two thousand it is reduced at one sweep to ten thousand, and then with one more stroke of the hand reduced from ten thousand to three hundred.

Now look again at Gideon, a man of no estimation in his own sight, surrounded by thirty two thousand men as his means and instrument. He might have looked upon the thirty two thousand and felt some sense of rising confidence, assurance, strength. As he looked upon that great army there may have been in his heart some feeling that there was something that could be of use, something not too small, not too despised, a worth-while instrument. Then God with a sweep of His hand took away twenty two thousand. Gideon looked again at the ten thousand. This is a terrible blow, a devastating blow, to take away twenty two thousand in one stroke ! Well, ten thousand with the blessing of God may go a long way ! Then the Lord moved His hand again, and Gideon was shorn of all but three hundred. But it was the Lord who did it, and Gideon knew it was the Lord. It was not an accident, not a misfortune, not a calamity, it was the Lord ; and because Gideon knew that it was the Lord he went on, and did not give up.

The instrument, then, was stripped. In the first place it was stripped of all dividedness of heart, and then of all personal interest. When a man gets down on his knees and takes his fill, he is not in an attitude of eagerness to get on with the business for the glory of God ; he is taking his fill, betraying that he has personal interests to satisfy, personal concerns to serve. But here three hundred remained on their feet. They simply took up the water in their hands and lapped, eager to get on. The instrument is stripped of all personal interest. No member of that company would take glory to himself. It is stripped down to the place where there is no

ground whatever for glorying in the flesh, no ground upon which any great success could be said to stand, humanly nothing in all the world which could account for triumph. Three hundred against the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the East, like locusts upon the ground for multitude, and their camels like the sand of the sea shore innumerable! Then there is no ground here for anything but the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. Something of God is coming to light here. Here is an opportunity indeed, an excellent occasion. The occasion for the flesh to take any of the glory is set aside: "Lest Israel vaunt themselves against me", that is to say, take My glory from Me. God is securing His glory by this stripping.

The lesson that is clearly brought to us is that the Lord alone was the power. The power was to be of God. The exceeding greatness of the power is "of God and not of ourselves".

### The Weapons of our Warfare

This is further seen by the equipment: earthen vessels with lamps inside, a sword, and a trumpet. A vessel, but a vessel of fragile clay: a light within, sustained by the oil of the Spirit, an inward illumination; the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit; the word of their testimony, the trumpet. And one more thing, a barley loaf! What a big place that barley loaf played in this whole drama. It was but a barley loaf, but it upset everything.

Let us come back to the second letter to the Corinthians, and see what Paul says about all this that we have mentioned in connection with Gideon. "But we have this treasure in vessels of fragile clay, that the excellency of the power might be of God and not of ourselves". (2 Cor. iv. 7)—treasures in earthen vessels. What are those vessels? "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day". (2 Cor. iv. 16)—the outward man is decaying. "We know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved..." (2 Cor. v. 1) Then clearly the vessels of Gideon, spiritually understood, are frail human bodies.

Then the lamp or the light. This is the shining into our hearts by God, who said: "Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". The lamp or

the light is the shining of God into our hearts by His Spirit.

The sword. Paul makes perfectly clear what that is. "For we are not as many, which corrupt the Word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ". (2 Cor. ii. 17)—"But we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully..." (2 Cor. iv. 2) The sword is the Word of God.

The trumpet. We have said that the trumpet represents the word of their testimony. What is that? "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake". (2 Cor. iv. 5)

"Blow the trumpet loud and long,  
Jesus Christ is Lord".

The barley loaf. "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead". (2 Cor. i. 9)—"Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you". (2 Cor. iv. 14) The barley loaf is always a type of resurrection, and Christ in the power of resurrection upsets everything. Christ in risen power is enough to solve the whole problem of "the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the East". What a place that barley loaf had! It is "God who raiseth the dead", or, in other words, Christ in resurrection life in us that is represented. "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you"—the barley loaf, the power of resurrection.

The pursuit. It says that Gideon and his men pursued even though they were faint. What does Paul say of that? "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day". (2 Cor. iv. 16)—inward renewal by Christ in risen life. "Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit". (2 Cor. v. 5).

Paul covers all that ground connected with Gideon, takes up all those elements, carries them over to the Lord Jesus, and says, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is for our hearts by revelation.

What was the result of it all with Gideon? Gideon and his three hundred swept the ground,

broke the tyranny of the foe, delivered the Lord's people, brought them back into a place of ascendancy, to the place where the glory of God was once more revealed in them.

The one thing which issued was the leadership of the Lord. Israel came to Gideon and said, "Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also". But Gideon replies, "I will not rule over you...the Lord shall rule over you." "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord", says the Apostle.

### **Christ the Power of God in the Earthen Vessel.**

Now all this, as taken up in Christ to be revealed in us, constitutes the power of God for this new warfare of recovering and establishing a full and pure testimony to the Lord Himself in His people. Oh, what a warfare it is! If you are standing for but a part of the testimony you will not meet the same conflict. If you are out on merely a single line of testimony you will not have the same tremendous pressure, though you may have it in measure. But if, in the purpose of God, you are a vessel, individually or collectively, related to His whole testimony, His testimony in fulness and in purity, without mixture, then you are launched into a terrific warfare. The battle will rage. All the mighty host of darkness will concentrate to make that recovery impossible. There is no doubt about it. It always has been so.

Paul is a man who is out for the full testimony. There could be no partial testimony with him. Others may go just so far, may remain on Jewish ground, and not be of those who go right on, but Paul will not remain on any ground lower and less than the full, the utter testimony of the Lord Jesus. The result is that of which you read here in the first chapter: "Our afflictions, which befell us in Asia"; "Pressed out of measure"; "We despaired even of life"; "We had the sentence of death in ourselves"; "The sufferings of Christ abound unto us". The breaking, the stripping, in the spiritual sense, was as utter as that of Gideon, and all because of that for which he was standing; a fulness, a holiness, a purity, an utterness of testimony to the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ in the Church which is His Body, and in the universe. So the result is the conflict.

How will God triumph? For God's triumph in such a situation it is necessary that He should have all the ground to Himself, and so He

allowed the sufferings, the stripping. He took away every ground of fleshly glorying, and brought the vessel to a very fragile state. The Apostle saw the meaning of it. Like Gideon he knew it to be the Lord who was doing it, the Lord who was breaking, emptying, weakening, stripping, and he sums it all up in these words: "We have this treasure in vessels of fragile clay". This is the deliberate object on the part of God, this is not an accident, not just something that has happened to us by chance; there is a definite object in God's mind. "We have this treasure in vessels of fragile clay, that the exceeding greatness of the power should be of God and not of ourselves". That is the way in which the light of the knowledge of the glory of God comes. It is a way of suffering, of conflict, but a way in which Christ as the exceeding great power of God comes to be known in His leadership.

We ought to be comforted, encouraged, strengthened, though it is not indeed a prospect in which the flesh can take any pleasure. On that ground we might well be in fear and much trembling, might well shrink from all that is involved. But let us, like Paul, look away from the things which are seen and mark that all this affliction, when viewed in the light of the unseen, the eternal, is light affliction for a passing moment; it is working a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

As we have said, this is the way in which the ultimate and full glory of God is going to be displayed through us. How are the forces of evil encountering the impact of Christ now? Through people who count for something? Through people who are mighty? Through people on whom you may look and say, This is a great people? No! Never! If they ever were anything in themselves, God has taken pains to see that they have had to abandon that ground and that now in themselves they are as nothing. Take Paul at the time of the writing of this letter, and ask him what natural value can now be set upon his life. He will tell you it is at a discount, ruled out. At the same time he will be heard to say that "our inner man is renewed day by day". I glory in the fact that, although Paul went through such sufferings—and we by no means know of all that overtook him, and how often he was, as we would say, on the brink of death—he was never cut off, he never died; he laid down his life, it was never taken away from

him. When the time came for Paul to leave this scene of his service, he said, "I have finished my course..." ; "I am now being offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand". He is a man in possession of the offering. Like his Master he could say, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself". When you see the background, then you know this to be a revelation of the glory of God, the power of the risen life of the Lord. That is how the enemy is

put to flight and destroyed. It is a glorious revelation of what Christ is. It is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ in our hearts, and in these vessels of fragile clay, when the treasure is in them.

May the Lord make all this true ; not a beautiful meditation or contemplation, but something which is laid hold of by our faith, even Christ our life.

T.A.S.

## The Meaning of Divine Life

No. 2.

### Full Satisfaction in Union with Christ

John iii. 14-15 : " And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up : that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life ".

iv. 10-11 : " If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink ; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him...from whence then hast thou that living water ? "

verse 14 : " ...Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life ".

verse 10 : " ...If thou knewest the gift of God...thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water ".

Rom. vi. 23 " For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord ".

We are going to pass now to the second stage in the meaning of Divine life. We have seen the

first stage in connection with Nicodemus. There in John iii. Divine life is set forth as the way into the Divine kingdom. Chapter iv. advances upon that position, and brings us to the next great reality about Divine life, and the link between chapter iii. and chapter iv. may be said to be chapter iii. verse 14 : " As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life."

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, gives us the spiritual interpretation of the serpent lifted up. He infers and implies in what he says that the curse which was pronounced upon the serpent at the beginning, and which became a dominating thing in the whole fallen creation—" the whole world lieth in the evil one"—was assumed, was taken by the Lord Jesus when, as Paul says, He was made a curse for us. He entered into the old creation, and took upon Him the curse of that old creation, died under the curse, and in His resurrection He becomes the first of the new creation, in which the curse is destroyed, where there is no more curse.

### The Mark of the Curse

If you look into the Scriptures to discover the meaning, the effect of the curse, you will see that it always works out to vanity, to impotence, inability to get through to an end which is com-

plete and perfect. Paul says in Romans viii. that the creation itself was subjected to vanity by reason of Him who subjected it, by which he means that there was a time when God said concerning the creation : It shall not reach the goal for which I brought it into being ; I put it under the reign of vanity ; that is, all its struggles and efforts will be in vain. Paul declares that to be the meaning of the groaning which he hears in the whole creation. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together..." It is seeking to reach an end, and it cannot. It is all the time reaching out for something which it cannot grasp, and that end for which it knows it was brought into being is beyond it, and eluding it all the time. That is the mark of the curse.

It is seen in the case of Jericho, the city that was laid under a curse by Joshua. We find years afterward in the days of Elisha that the people of Jericho came to him and said : The position of the city is good, but the waters are bad, and the trees cast their fruit before their time. There was no reaching of ripeness and maturity. Everything fell to the ground before it had reached that point of perfection. That was the mark of a curse, failure to reach its intended end, the end for which it was created.

Before we go further or say any more about Christ being made a curse, and of His taking the curse and destroying it, in order to make possible perfection, fulness, finality, completeness, let us see how this is transferred to Chapter iv. of John's Gospel ; for what you have as the outstanding ground, shall we say, the very foreground, of this picture upon which the Lord Himself constructs this beautiful truth of Divine life, is a condition of deep, conscious longing, need, desire, craving, along with a good deal of a continuous activity and energy, in the endeavour to satisfy it, without such satisfaction ever being reached. "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again..." ; and the woman knew it right well. So that the governing thing here is a consciousness of need, a craving for satisfaction, and, despite all the effort, never attaining to it. That is the mark of the curse.

### The Deliverer is Come

You must remember that the Lord Jesus always knows what He is doing. What we mean is this, that He sees the whole thing and is all the time active in relation to the fundamental and ultimate principles of things. If the Lord Jesus

is saying something, you may take it for granted that He is getting right down to rock bottom. These are not just casual observations of His ; He is right back of everything touching ultimate things. Whenever He speaks He is going right back there behind everything, touching the things which govern eternal destiny.

When this woman came to draw water there were Divine factors at work, and the first was that of Divine sovereignty. It was an unusual time for anyone to come and draw water. That has been explained on the ground of what the woman was, that, being the character she was, she would come at an unusual time, so that she should not meet other people. I am not sure that such an explanation is satisfactory. There is no doubt at all that when she began to see the light she went back to the town, and had no hesitation in letting everybody know and hear. She was clearly not keeping apart from people then. It may be true, but there seems to be a deeper meaning in this, for things are not just accidents. When the Lord Jesus came upon a case it was usually there for a sovereign purpose. All those cases of sickness and blindness are so timed, their setting and occasion is so exact, as to indicate a relation to some bigger issue than just the opening of the eyes of the blind, the healing of the sick, or the raising of the dead. It is all staged from heaven and timed in relation to bigger issues. I think we are right in saying that this woman came at that unusual time as a consequence of Divine sovereignty. We may see that as we go on.

Well, she came, and she came to draw water, but it was not as though the Lord merely took hold of that natural factor to turn it to account. He did that, but He was seeking far bigger things than that. He knew quite well that here in this woman there was that which is always the mark of the curse. That which presently becomes so apparent, with all His use of the familiar and every-day facts of thirst and water, is this, that the Lord Jesus has His finger upon the truth in that woman's life. He has got right back of things, and has touched her in the very depths of her being ; and that is the marvel to her. In the end, the thing at which she wonders is that here is a Man who has read her right through, and who knows the deepest reality of her being. "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did : is not this the Christ ?" He had got right down to the depths of her being, and read

her through. He knew that this woman was representative of the creation which lies under the curse, and the deepest mark in any such life is this longing, craving, groaning, reaching out for something, but never reaching it, never finding the answer, never getting satisfaction: "Vanity, vanity, all is vanity". That is the mark of the curse. It cannot reach its goal. It is right in the presence of the main features of the curse that the Lord Jesus brings this message of Divine life. Having that setting, you are able to understand the meaning of Divine life, and of what the Lord Jesus went on to say to this woman.

### **The Natural Cannot Meet the Spiritual**

Now let us get the detail of the picture. There is the foreground, there is the main factor upon which He is working. But then you notice that, both in the case of the woman and of Christ Himself, the natural need is the occasion of what is said, and becomes the illustration, the analogy of spiritual need. The woman came to draw water, speaking of a need in her life. The Lord Jesus, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well, and His disciples went into the town to buy bread. Now the Lord Jesus was in a state of need also, and what came out afterward with the woman and with the disciples came as the analogy of this natural need. But, of course, the real need is far deeper than the natural. It is that which lies behind. So it proved to be, and is shown to be so by the results in both cases. The results in both the case of the woman and of Christ are tremendously illuminating with regard to spiritual need and the way in which it is met. What we want to recognise is that once more the fact is made perfectly clear that the natural can never meet the spiritual. The woman may draw as much water as she likes, and come as often as she likes, but her real need will never be met.

If we are still out of Christ, in the realm where the curse operates, we may procure everything that could come to us in the natural, and the real need never be met. That, again, is something which hardly needs to be said, but it has to be recognised, that no amount of natural feelings can touch the beginnings of spiritual need. Let no one think that if he had this or that, if he were here or there, if his circumstances were different from what they are, or if he were only given certain things, his deepest need would be met. No, that is not so. Whatever we might

have in the natural, and however much that might be, the natural never can, even at its fullest, begin to touch spiritual need. Spiritual need stands apart. That is what is made perfectly clear here. Both in the case of the woman, and in the case of the Lord Jesus, that is so. The bread which the disciples went away to buy would never satisfy the Lord Jesus. We shall see the meaning of that presently.

### **The Meeting of Ultimate Need an Inward Matter**

That leads us to this point, that the silencing of every cry for satisfaction is an inward matter, not an outward. Not in things, circumstances, or possessions, advantages or anything else, but the answer to every cry of the human spirit is by way of having the very spring or well of satisfaction placed right at the very centre of our being. That is the final word on satisfaction in this chapter. That is the Lord's thought, the Lord's mind. That is what the Lord shows to be essential, and therefore blessedly possible, that you can have, right down deep in the very centre of your own being, the well itself springing up unto perfect satisfaction. If you have not that, you will have no real satisfaction, though you have everything else. The longing, the craving, the hunger will still go on, and the marks of the curse will still be present—"Vanity, vanity, all is vanity".

It is in this way that believers, the children of God, are entirely weaned from the world and lost to its appeal. They have satisfaction within. It is not a thing that can be explained to anyone else, and no one else can understand it, but there is the fact that they have found their satisfaction in an inward way, and they are completely delivered from outward things.

That is what the Lord Jesus says to this woman, and that is what this woman evidently comes to understand and enjoy, because when you have a well within, you discard the water pot of external things. "She left her water pot and went into the city..." Her water pot was the symbol of her dissatisfaction, the symbol of an unsatisfied longing. She left it. At one time that water pot represented her life. It represented all the satisfaction that she had, and it was poor satisfaction. Nevertheless, it was her life. Now she just leaves it because she knows something of the meaning of the well within.

That is a very simple illustration of the truth that all those things which were to us the life—

poor life as we now see it to have been—simply drop away from us, and become of very little account now. We just leave them, when the well is within. If you take the water pot away from the person who has not the well within, you take all he has ; but when once one has the well within the water pots of earthly satisfaction no longer have any interest, any meaning ; they have no value, they are simply discarded. There is no struggle to give them up, no battle, they are just left.

Now we see that there is a step beyond that, for the woman represents one side of this truth and the Lord Jesus represents the other. The woman represents the receiving of Divine life as an inward thing. I take it that the Holy Spirit is the well of water, and the water that Christ gives is the Spirit, who is the Spirit of Life.

The life is in Christ, and He comes to reside within, by the Spirit, and thus you have the well of life within. The woman represents that ; the receiving of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, which is receiving the Lord Jesus Himself, and with Him, eternal life to be inwardly resident and abounding.

#### **Setting Aside the Natural for the Spiritual**

But, having received the life, there is still a further fact to be noted. It is not a contradiction, but the outworking of the truth we have considered. The abiding value of that satisfaction is known and enjoyed as there is a continual setting aside of the natural for the spiritual. The Lord Jesus illustrates that in His own case that is before us. He was weary ; what He needed naturally was rest. He was hungry ; what He needed naturally was food. Had He acted entirely upon the natural basis, He would have said : Here comes a woman ; poor soul, she looks very tired, she looks very needy, and I know what she needs ; but I am too tired, I must have a rest before I can say anything ; and then I am very hungry, I must have something to eat before I can take up this work. If He had acted upon the natural basis in this case, what would have happened ? There is no telling, perhaps, all that would have happened, but if you look to see what did happen because He did not act on that basis, then you see the principle in operation. He set aside the natural for the spiritual deliberately. In effect He said, I am tired, and need rest ; nevertheless, I do not live in that realm. I am hungry, and need food ;

nevertheless, that is not my world. My life is not in those things, My life is in God. He said to His disciples, " I have meat to eat that ye know not of."—" My meat is to do the will of him that sent me ". So He put aside the natural for the spiritual, gave the spiritual first place ; and with what result ? When the disciples came back they found Him as much refreshed as though He had had a wonderful rest, and no longer at all hungry, as though He had had a wonderful meal, and could brush aside those things. They are so impressed with this that they say, " Has any man brought him aught to eat " ? What has happened ? He does not need our bread. We left Him tired out, and here He is in full vigour. The Lord Jesus was one who had the well within. But in order to prove the continuous efficacy and value of that Divine life that was in Him, He had to live on the basis of it, and not come down on to the basis of the natural.

Now you may not be able to see the follow through of that principle, but it does apply, and it is of tremendous importance to the life of the child of God.

We have dealt now with the need, and God's way of meeting it. I trust that we are in the position to say that we know in our own experience the meaning of that, of the well within having answered all our longings, and become the secret of our satisfaction.

As we go on there is such a thing as co-operating continually with the life of the Lord in us, and co-operation with the life of the Lord in us is after this manner of refusing to come down and make the natural the basis upon which we live. Are we weary ? Is that the criterion ? Because we are weary and tired, are we to say that nothing can be done ; we must have a rest, and no one must expect to see us until we are refreshed ? It depends entirely upon whether there is some spiritual need present. The Lord does not forbid rest of body to His children, but there are times when the natural call comes into collision with a spiritual demand, something is there of eternal value in relation to God. Now what are we going to do ? Are we going to suspend this Divine interest in favour of our natural renewal or advantage, until we feel better able to tackle it ? Or are we going to say : I am weary, I am tired, I am finished, but there is Divine life, there is the Lord of life in me, and I can, and I will, draw upon Him in my

weariness. What is the testimony at the end of every such co-operating with the Lord? It is the Lord's own testimony: "I have meat to eat that ye know not of". There is wonderful renewal apart from natural rest.

There may be physical sickness, downright illness, and then there arises a spiritual need in the will of God—not something we imagine, not something we regard as a need, but something that is shown to us by the Lord as being in His will—and yet in ourselves there is an impossible state. What are we going to do? Are we going to say, Well, it is impossible! I cannot do it! and let the matter end there? Or are we going to face this Divine demand, and say, There is the Lord's life? We shall find that to be the way of a wonderful new enjoyment of what we have. It is not just the question of possession, but of the enjoyment, the discovery of the values of what we have. We have all things, but how little we know of what we have, how little we know of the values of what we have. We know what it is to be satisfied with Christ, and yet there is an ever growing wonder for us about that satisfaction, and that comes along the line of co-operating with Divine life.

Thus Christ here represents a step in advance of receiving the well. Co-operation with the life, so that all the time there is a testimony in us, and an enjoying of the Lord, is what is typified. The testimony is not only that we have the Lord, but of how wonderful the Lord is, again, and again, and again. In tiredness, in weakness, in weariness, in human inability, we discover what a wonderful Lord we have. But that is only made manifest to us by deliberate acts of repudiating the natural when the Lord's interests call for such a repudiation. We have to qualify at cost. We know quite well that the Lord does say sometimes: Now, you must have a rest! and requires it, not simply because the Lord comes down to our human level and suspends all His Divine life, and accepts our human frailty, but because there are spiritual values bound up with our resting. For that reason the Lord calls us aside for the spiritual value of rest and quietness at times. But, granted that, we must recognise that the Lord will never have us allow a natural condition to be the ground of decision in any matter of His interests.

So to the child of God the truest satisfaction, and the abiding joy of that satisfaction, is in

being occupied with spiritual things. That is what it amounts to. Our real joy is in being occupied with the things of the Lord.

This is a word which will be needed specially by young people, because the fight for them may be even more acute and keen than for others. They are so often brought up against the alternatives of some natural enjoyment and something for the Lord, some spiritual business, and, as is usually the case, the enemy seeks at such times to cast his mist over the spiritual things, and says, in effect: You will have to give up your pleasures for spiritual things. Thus the things of the Lord are represented as really robbing us of some enjoyment, some pleasure. For young people that very often represents a battle. For such, and for all of us, let us say that it is a false interpretation. If we are really the children of God we shall find so much more joy and satisfaction in the things of the Lord than in anything else, and we shall find in the end, when we have set aside the natural for the spiritual, the earthly for the heavenly, that we have a joy that all that we have set aside could never have given us.

The Lord Jesus shows us that in His own case in the chapter before us. He was weary. Well, He needed rest. He was hungry. Well, He needed food. He put both rest and food aside, and the demand for it, and threw Himself into spiritual interests, and came out a wonderfully re-invigorated man, refreshed and full of joy.

I have no doubt that the Lord entered into this occasion conscious of His own deeper need, that He needed something deeper than food and rest. I think that what really was there was just a heart longing for something that was a response to the heavenly. There was so much around Him through which He was passing, which was dead, unresponsive, and He just longed for some response to spiritual things. He was hungry for that, and that was the governing thing, and He found the satisfaction of His longing in setting aside all natural interests and giving the spiritual the first place, and came out Himself wonderfully refreshed, and very joyful we may be sure.

Were we to say much more we should but bury these things, and we do not want to do that. We want to keep them clear and unharmed by too much wrapping round. We will, therefore, stop there and just gather it all up into this: Full satisfaction is found in receiving into ourselves by faith Divine life; and then, full

satisfaction is maintained in its glow and its glory in living on that Divine life we have received, and living on it continually. The secret of all is, however we may put it, union with Christ; for that is the meaning of, "He that believeth on me". Faith brings about a living

link. It is union with Christ, and of course, abiding in Christ, that is signified.

The Lord write these things in our hearts, and make them the governing things of our lives.

T.A.S.

*Continued from page 6.*

missionary; but there is seldom detail given upon which one who wants to understand can lay hold. It sounds terrible but vague.

And yet the attack follows certain lines, such as these: during the dumb years of language study before the new roots have had time to grow, there may be discouragement; if the life that has been left was full to overflowing, almost certainly there will be the penetrating, hissing whisper, 'How much more you might have done for God at home!' After the language is learned and one is perhaps alone in idolatrous city or Muslim town, a black sea can sweep up, wave upon wave. 'Hell's foundations quiver,' says the hymn. It is one's own foundations that quiver under the impact of those tremendous floods. Or fierce temptations assail, and fiery darts rain on the naked soul.

Or there may be something different. A man's lot is cast where there is a mass of nominal Christianity. At first he feels it keenly and speaks sincerely. But gradually the sharp edges of feeling wear smooth. He slides into slack content. 'From slack contentment keep me free,' is a vital prayer.

To another is offered delicious spiritual flattery and the soul has drunk deep of that enchantment or ever it is aware that it has drunk at all. But others know, for in speech and in writing he who has drunk of that cup mixes sugar with his salt.

Or the dark forces may work with inoffensive simplicity: a fog of depression descends, 'the climate is so trying'; or pricks of irritation assail, 'we are so sensitive'; or there may be that discontent which the ancients called *accidie*: 'When this besieges the unhappy mind, it begets aversion from the place, boredom with one's cell, and scorn and contempt for one's brethren, whether they be dwelling with one or some way off, as careless and unspiritually-minded persons.' Or there may be just plain dryness, and somehow the missionary had never expected to feel dry.

'What is it?' he asks, astonished at the

vehemence of these invasions. But the enemy never answers, 'It is I,' nor does the soul always say, 'Is it I?' It often lays the blame of weakness and defeat on something else, or on someone else, or on that convenient scapegoat, 'my circumstances.'

But there is deliverance for him who is set upon victory: *As for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped. When I said, My foot slippeth; Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.* There is never a fear that has not a corresponding 'Fear not.'

\* \* \*

"Is there ever a fresh advance made into the enemy's territory without a move on his part? If he did not retaliate might we not be sure that our movements were of so little moment to him that he did not think us worth attack?"

Think it not strange, then, that just before the time appointed for the Dedication, a patient came in with tetanus, and another died, so that several who had looked forward to that hour could not be present, and the doctor, instead of being with the already assembled family, was detained...

And think it not strange that within three days of the Dedication eleven of the Fellowship were out of action. It was as if an invisible hand had struck down one after another, till at last, every time the door opened we wondered, 'What now?' 'While he was yet speaking there came also another'—Not for the first time in our story those words were recalled.

\* \* \*

"These times pass; broken arms mend; other hurts heal. There comes an hour when the Lord our God lifts up His hand and the foe slinks off defeated. And never was he more than an outside foe. If peace be granted within, what do storms outside matter? 'And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.' The Lord grant that the prisoners of a stronger power than Rome, who are listening for sighs here in South India when 'things go wrong,' may hear nothing but songs."

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The following form in which we have set out points in connection with "business" seems to need some fuller word of explanation. Many friends are in the dark as to its meaning, and have therefore acted on a surmise or idea in addressing letters wrongly.

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*EDITOR.*

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NO. 2, VOL. 16

## All Things in Christ

No. 6.

### The Heavenly Man—The Inclusiveness and Exclusiveness of Jesus Christ

We have under consideration a phrase from the letter to the Ephesians, "ALL THINGS IN CHRIST": "...unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ..." (Ephes. i. 10). That is the great general vision that is occupying us, and we will now begin to break it up into its parts.

To begin with, it is supremely important that we should recognise that there is one basic and all-governing factor with God, which is a supreme matter for our knowledge, and that is the inclusiveness and exclusiveness of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Everything intended and required for the realisation of Divine purpose and intention is in, and with, Christ, not only as a deposit, but all *is* Christ. That is the inclusiveness of Christ.

Then, on the other hand, nothing but what is of Christ is accepted or permitted by God in the final issue. That is the exclusiveness of Christ. However God may seem in His patience and long-suffering, in His grace and mercy, to be bearing with much, even in us His people, which is not of Christ; however much He seems for

the time being to allow, it is of supreme importance that we settle it once for all that God is not really allowing it. He may extend to us His forbearance, His long-suffering, but He is not in any way accepting what is not of Christ. He has initially said that it is dead to Him, and He is progressively working death in that realm. So that in the final issue, not one fragment anywhere that is not of Christ will be allowed. Christ excludes everything that is not of Himself. That is God's ruling of the matter.

### The Church to be what Christ was and is as the Heavenly Man

In view of what we have just said, it is of the utmost importance for real effectiveness that we should realise that the Church is intended to be what Christ was, and is, as the Heavenly Man. Only that which is of Christ, the Heavenly Man, is eternally effective. Therefore, the more there is of Christ, the more effectiveness there is from God's standpoint. That means that what was, and what is, true of Him as the Heavenly Man, as to His being, as to the laws of His life, as to

His ministry and His mission, is to be true of the Church. (When we speak of the Church, of course, we speak of all the members as forming the Church.)

Do you notice that we are speaking of Christ as the Heavenly Man, and not of His co-equality with the Father in Deity. We are not saying that the Church is to be, in the same sense as Christ, God incarnate, occupying the place of Deity; we are speaking of the Heavenly Man. Christ was, and is, a *heavenly* Man. The Church in Him is also a heavenly man, one "new man". It is not to be thought of as Jew and Greek, circumcision and uncircumcision, bond and free, a combination of earthly elements, of various aspects of human life as here on this earth. These and all other earthly distinctions are lost sight of and set aside, and one "new man" is brought in, where "Christ is all, and in all" (Col. iii. 11).

Christ has never been, in His essential nature, of the earth. He had a relationship to Israel, a relationship to man here; He has a judicial relationship to this earth, but in His essential nature He never has been earthly. He is the Lord from heaven. He takes pains to stress the fact, and to keep it clearly in view: "...I am from above..." (John viii. 23).

Now as Christ in His essential nature never was of the earth, neither is the Church. The Church has never been an earthly thing in God's thought. That is where the gap is bridged. Paul takes you right back, and shows you that the Church is in the heavenlies before ever the fall took place. In Christ we are made to bridge the gap created by the fallen ages. Before the world was, Christ existed with the Father, literally and personally. The Church existed in the foreknowledge of God before the world was, though not literally in the same way that Christ did; that is, this is not a re-incarnation, but, in the foreknowledge of God, the Church was as actual before time as it is now, or ever will be. Whenever Paul speaks of the Church, he always speaks of it as though it were complete. He never speaks of a completing of it. Much has to be done to add the members, to bring it to its numerical completeness, and its spiritual and moral completeness and perfection, but while Paul has much to say about spiritual growth and increase, he yet speaks of the Church as though it were already completed. He is viewing it from the heavenly, eternal, Divine standpoint, from the standpoint of the foreknowledge of

God. There in that foreknowledge of God, and that foreordaining according to foreknowledge, the Church existed as a complete whole with the Father and the Son before times eternal. Then came the break, the gap, the dip down; but in Christ it is bridged, and the Church is seen as a continuous thing in the heavenlies, above it all.

The Church is seen as being literally formed in this dispensation, but it is as immediately translated to heaven. Immediately we come into Christ, we are seated in the heavenlies in Christ: "God...when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ... and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenlies..." (Ephes. ii. 6). It does not say that we are to be placed there at some future date. Or ever we believed, we became a heavenly people from God's standpoint. We were cut clear of this world, translated out of this kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love, and ceased to be earthly, immediately we came into Christ. We are lifted right back on to the level of the original purpose, and linked up with the first thought of God in Christ. We become the corporate heavenly man, even as He is the Heavenly Man in person.

We are called upon to recognise our link with the eternal and the heavenly, and to take things up from there. There would not be that terrible anomaly of "worldly Christians", if only this were apprehended. Look at all that has to be dealt with because of failure to keep the testimony pure for the Lord's people. Worldly Christians! What a contradiction to the Divine thought! How impossible it is to accept anything like that! Let us repeat, we are called upon to recognise our link with the eternal and heavenly, and to take things up from there. It is not the case that we are struggling, working, striving to be a heavenly people; not aiming at such a state, and hoping that at some time it will be realised, but we are a heavenly people, and we must take things up from that standpoint.

The convert, the young child of God, must remember that by his union with Christ he becomes entirely a heavenly part of Christ from the first, linked with everything heavenly and eternal. Everything here is to be as out from another realm. That should be kept in view. We should have a very different kind of believer if that were always kept to the fore. That is God's standpoint, God's mind.

This, then, brings us to the point at which that eternal and heavenly relationship is resumed. It is not the commencement but the resumption in Christ of something that was broken off, interrupted, and which ought never to have suffered such an interruption.

#### Nothing but what is of Christ Allowed by God in the Ultimate Issue

Before we deal with the point of resumption, we will spend a few moments in looking yet further at the implication of what has been emphasised already. Nothing but what is of Christ is allowed by God in the ultimate issue. Now, because that is true, all the activities of God in discipline are introduced and pursued. All the discipline which comes by failure, for example, is followed out. Failure is in the way of God's thought now, a necessity as it were. Lives reach a point, and then are unable to get beyond that point; there is a going on so far in a measure of blessing, and then the state of things changes, the kind of blessing that has been is withheld, and a state of things ensues which has but one issue, that of an absolute necessity for a new position in the Lord. It is not that the Lord blesses what is not of Christ in such a period, but in His grace and mercy He blesses us, in order to lead us on in Christ: then, when we have come to a place where we have a certain knowledge of the Lord, the Lord suspends that outward blessing, and we pass into a time of trial, of conscious failure, defeat, arrest, helplessness, and we are found before long in that realm saying: My need is of a new place with the Lord, a new experience of the Lord, a new knowledge of the Lord. All that has been, has been very wonderful, but it is as nothing now, and the need now is of a new place with the Lord.

That will go on to the end. The experience is not relative to the early stages alone, but continues throughout the course. How many of us have cried, Lord, we need a new position! Why is this? It is the outworking of this law, that with God nothing but what is of Christ is allowed. Only that which is of Christ can be effective, and our experience means that more of the mixture has to go, and Christ has to take its place. Failure leads to that.

The same thing applies with regard to work, to great movements. The history of a movement is like that of the individual. Even that which

has been blessed of God comes to the place where, as a movement, as a collective instrumentality, it knows that the old days have passed, and for that which now obtains, and that which is before, a new position is necessary. Unfortunately so many try to live upon the past, try to go on upon a reputation, a history, and will not confess to the fact that things have changed and that God requires something more. If only they would face up to that, how much more glorious in its effectiveness would be the future, than ever the past has been. But there you have the interpretation of the experience. However it is apprehended by those concerned, the fact remains that God applies this law, that in the end, when everything has been said and done, and when all these present ages have run their course, in God's ages of the ages there will be nothing but what is of Christ. He is seeking to bring the Church to that goal, to be the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. It cannot be the fulness of Christ while anything else is there.

How manifold is the application of this truth! How many a detail it touches, and how ashamed it should make us! If we really do see it, if it really strikes our hearts, we shall be greatly humbled. Inwardly we shall feel thoroughly disgusted with ourselves as in the light of this we think of *our* assertiveness, of *our* strength, of *our* activity in the things of God, of all that has been of ourselves in this realm. The putting forth of strength is only effective in the proportion in which it represents a measure of Christ. We puny folk on this earth stand up and think we are of some account! What insignificant people we are if viewed from the heavenlies! The Lord looks down upon us and sees us trying to make names for ourselves in His things; dominating other lives; trying to exercise our influence with other lives; manipulating, putting our hands upon them. It is all pride, all conceit, all self in some form. The aspects of it are countless. The Lord looks at it and says, No, it is not of Christ; therefore, in the final issue it has to go! That is why He breaks us, and empties us, and brings us down to the place where we cry from a deep, heart-broken consciousness: Lord, unless Thou doest it, it is impossible! Unless Thou dost speak the word, my words are useless! That is why He works in that way. The Lord in His sovereignty sees to it that we meet with plenty of things to keep us humble.

The Lord keeps us humble through the difficult people He sets around us, and whom He does not take away however much we cry to Him to do so, even though in themselves they are all wrong and an apparent menace to the Lord's interests. They serve to keep us humble and dependent. The Lord does that sort of thing, all in keeping with this law, that everything in us must be of Christ. Christ fills the universe for God. If He sees anything but what is of Christ, it cannot have a place. Only His Son can fill all things, excluding everything else. Oh, how humbly we need to seek of the Lord that there shall be nothing about us that, as of ourselves, presses itself upon others—our manner, our mannerisms, our presence, our conduct, our spirit, even our voice. The Spirit would oft-times check us and cause us to walk softly. None of us has attained to very high levels in this matter, and we are all having to acknowledge failure. The Spirit is dealing with us in that way. If even in our dress, or in any other

thing, we come into view as the Lord's children, the Holy Spirit would seek to bring us to a place of sensitiveness, where He can say: That is bringing yourself into view! That is out from you! Now, get covered, get hidden! That thing excludes Christ!

God has determined from all eternity that this universe shall be filled with Christ, the Heavenly Man, through that corporate heavenly man joined to Him as its Head. He is getting rid of the Jew in us, of the Greek in us, and constituting us according to Christ, conforming us to the image of His Son. Blessed be God! the moment we come to the place where the last remnants and relics of what is not of Christ fall from us, then He will be displayed in us; He shall come to be glorified in the saints. It is Christ who is to be glorified, not ourselves; yet so close is the relationship that He is to be glorified in us. The Lord hasten the day!

T.A-S.

## The Meaning of Divine Life

No. 3.

### The Nature and Meaning of Union with Christ

John v.

We concluded our last meditation with the remark that Divine life is not a separate deposit in the believer, but is a matter of union with Christ. When we pass into the 5th chapter of the Gospel by John, we come more immediately to the nature and meaning of union with Christ, in which there are always many things hard to be understood unless the Holy Spirit gives very real enlightenment; but we are greatly helped toward an understanding by the occasions of these great utterances of the Lord. The man at the Pool of Bethesda constitutes the occasion in the present instance, for undoubtedly the teaching which follows takes its rise from the incident of this man's healing. So then, to help us toward that understanding, let us examine the position at the Pool of Bethesda.

#### A Picture of Spiritual Death

In the first place here is a man's impotency. There is no doubt about it, and the details are

Divinely inspired, so that the picture is made conclusive. The man was there in the midst of others. He was a part of a general situation. He was representative of a whole company. Then his impotency is made perfectly plain when, on his being singled out, and his case clearly defined, it is learnt that he had been there thirty and eight years. That is long enough to discover whether you can do anything or not. We may be sure that in the course of thirty eight years no effort had been spared, no resource had been neglected. His being where he was at the end of that time represented the utter failure of all resource, and the completeness of his helplessness. Then his own declaration, "I have no man when the water is troubled to put me into the pool", shows there is no help in man; all human help fails. It is a picture of complete impotence, weakness.

Now, looked at in the light of the context, and all that comes out of it as to the teaching of the Lord Jesus, as to His utterances, you see that

this is the occasion, the basis of that teaching. This is what is meant by spiritual death. You notice that immediately after this the Lord Jesus begins to speak about the Father quickening, and the Son quickening, of their raising the dead and giving life. The supreme matter of life and death, and of life overcoming death comes into view. "Resurrection" is the great word in this chapter. The whole subject, without any break, emerges spontaneously from this incident.

Thus you see something of the meaning of spiritual death when you look at this man. Spiritual death is established, and we are in the presence of helpless impotence. It is a condition in which neither those concerned, nor anyone else, can find help, something established over the whole course of things. Of course, in the background we realise that the Lord Jesus is dealing with Israel. He is making Israel His illustration, His instrument for this wider, this larger spiritual teaching. Thirty-eight years was exactly the duration of time spent in the wilderness by the generation that died therein and never entered the land, and is the outstanding illustration in the Bible of impotence in the flesh. They could not enter in, and they died, and their carcasses fell in the wilderness. There we see spiritual death, the helplessness, and hopelessness of the flesh. That is what lies behind.

The Lord says, in effect, This man in his condition at the pool is a good example of what spiritual death is; a man whose whole course of life is marked by inability in a certain realm. A world is closed to him; he is shut out from a whole realm of things. He is bound there, imprisoned, tied. He cannot escape because there is no strength in himself to do it, no power to overcome his own condition; neither is there any man who can save him, who can deliver him from that condition, because there is no man who can give him resurrection life, the one indispensable thing. He cannot walk well-pleasing unto God. That is what it means, and that is a picture of spiritual death. It needs no enlarging upon, but that is what is taken up here in connection with this man, to be made the illustration of this great teaching.

### A Three-fold Cord

The third thing in connection with this man is that he is made to live, and in his being made to pass from death unto life two things go

together. Firstly, there was the word of the Lord: "Jesus saith unto him, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk." (Later on you will hear the Lord Jesus saying, "The hour cometh, and now is, when they that are in the tombs shall hear the voice...and they that hear shall live". That is a follow-on). "Jesus saith unto him"—the rulers asked, "Who is the man that said unto thee...?" It was by the word of the Lord that he was made to live, and, of course, his faith acting in relation to that word.

This is a very simple thing, and elementary, namely, that the very first movement into life is by a faith response to the word of the Lord. We must always remember that nothing happens until then. We shall still be lying on our couch in impotency, even after having heard the word of the Lord, and knowing what the Lord says about things, if we do not make an inward response thereto in faith. There has to be an active heart response. There must have been a moment—just a moment perhaps; it need not have been more than that—when the man heard the command, and, in spite of having been there all those years, somehow sought to move in response to that word. He must have taken an attitude which was quite other than one of evasion: Well, of course, I have been here all these years, and it is all very well for You to say, Rise up, and walk! I have tried to do that many times, and I am not going to try it any more! There must have been some inward gesture, and when he made that gesture he made a discovery that he could do that which had been impossible before.

That is very simple, and yet it governs every step of our life with the Lord. On all matters it is like that, that there must be, in knowing the Lord's word, an inward movement toward that word and what it calls for.

Then, going along with the word of Christ, which finds that response of faith, there is the imparted life of Christ. The life is in the word; but the life in the word is not found, proved, and enjoyed, until there is that instant response to the word, and then the life is found. So that the man was made to live by the word, and the imparted life which came in with the co-operation of his heart. The Lord does not expect us to do what we cannot do—and we cannot make ourselves to live—but what the Lord does call for is an attitude, and the attitude is one of faith. That is where everything begins.

### The Divine Pattern in Christ as Man

Mark the movement from the occasion to that of which it is made the occasion. Now, says Christ, As this man could do nothing apart from Me, so I can do nothing apart from the Father. You notice that is twice repeated. Firstly in verse 19 we read: "Verily, verily (truly, truly) I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself..."; and then in verse 30: "I can of myself do nothing". The Lord Jesus has taken the place of man deliberately, voluntarily, not by compulsion. As we shall see presently, this very chapter presents Him in both His titles of Son of God and Son of Man. By His own consent He is placed on the basis of man, to live man's life. As Man he can do nothing of Himself, is wholly impotent. That is true of the Lord Jesus as of every other man.

But there is another factor that is governing all that is in this chapter. It is a question of relationship. The Lord Jesus says He can do nothing apart from the Father, nothing as out from Himself. This man, again, could do nothing apart from Him. There was nothing that could come out of himself. That is one side. There is also the positive side, to which we are being led.

Now we must notice that there are two men in this chapter. The one is spelt with a small "m", and the other with a capital. The one is a type and representation of the old creation severed from God and in death; and here you see what that death is. That is the old creation man. The other is the new-creation Man, a Man as representing the new creation. The one is dead and helpless, with no life, and no energy in the things of God; the other is living, competent, full of life and power. The one has "no man", no resource, no link with any source of help; the other is the Son of Man, who is Son of God, in whom God and Man are joined. It is just that great difference between the two which is the difference between death and life.

Then you see that a large section of this chapter is occupied with the union between Christ and the Father. If you read it carefully you will see how much the Lord Jesus says of this union; and it is the union of Man with God. It is out of that He says, with repeated emphasis and affirmation, that everything proceeds—all that He Himself had done, and the greater works that were to follow—the occasion of all, is this union between the Father and the Son, the Son and the Father, Man and God.

Look, then, at that oneness of Christ with the Father. In the first place the Father is set forth as being actively engaged in work. "My Father worketh"; "Whatsoever he seeth the Father doing..."; "The Father raiseth the dead..." That is the first thing. God is engaged in work. There are the works of God. All the works begin with God. Let us remember that. All the works with which we are to be occupied, and in which we are to have interest, are the works which God is doing, works which come from God.

Further God's work, as set forth here, is the giving of life. "The Father raiseth the dead, and quickeneth..." The Father's work is the giving of life, raising the dead, and quickening. Now, says the Lord Jesus, by reason of oneness with the Father there is oneness in this work. It is the one work of the Father and the Son, of the Father through the Son. It is God working, with the Son as His instrument. That is the nature of the union between Christ and the Father.

Before we go further we must recognise a profound thing here, and that is the significance of verse 27: "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man" (the margin says "a son of man"). You can use which of these forms you like. Surely if ever there was a place in which the other term was called for, it was here. Surely the correct form would have been, "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is"—the Son of God? No! The Lord Jesus has just used that phrase in verse 25, but here the designation is that of Son of Man.

Now notice that, and mark the significance of the change of the designation used by Him. Verse 25: "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live". The voice is the voice of the Son of God, but expressed through Him as the Son of Man. Here is God's voice which is life, resurrection, power, authority, in a new creation; it dwells in a Man; it is functioning and operating in a Man. It is God's voice, the voice of the Son of God, but finding expression through Him as Son of Man. It is that which is of God in a Man. Oh, then, after all the generations, after all the tragedy of the generations, after all that the fall meant, after all, Divine life, with all that it means, is found in a Man! Never was this the case before. You say, It was impossible for the old creation. You

perceive, then, the analogy. There is the tree of life. It was the symbol of eternal life. Man had never had it. He was placed on probation with a view to it, but he sinned, and to that "man" God closed the way of access to the tree of life, lest he should "put forth his hand and take of the tree of life, and live for ever".

That old and fallen creation could never partake of eternal life, and yet it was God's will for man. God had never prohibited man from taking of the tree of life. He had done so in respect of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but not of the tree of life. Man would doubtless have come to partake of it had he remained faithful to the terms of his probation, but when once man had fallen, eternal life could never be for that creation. Yet God willed man to have eternal life.

Now God has His new-creation Man, the First-born of this new creation, the new creation which Paul says is in Christ Jesus, and in this first Man of the new creation there is life. "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given the Son to have life in himself". It is in a Man, the Man Christ Jesus.

#### The Import of Union with Christ

What, then, is union with Christ? It is union with Him as the new creation, as the new-creation Man; union with Him in the life which is the life of the new creation by the Spirit of Life. Our subject is, The Nature and Meaning of Union with Christ. It is union with Him as the new-creation Man in new-creation life by the eternal Spirit. What is the meaning of that union? It is that only by such union can God's works be done. What governed Him in relation to the Father governs us. Nothing can be done except on the ground of this union. It is not a matter of action, or of undertaking for God, however well intentioned. What we see as seeming necessary to be done for the Lord's glory is not the criterion of service. Many things are embarked upon by the mere simple, though honest and sincere judgment of the heart, when confronted by what is judged as something to be done for God, something needing to be done. A tragic situation, for example, calls for action; we have the means to meet that situation, and so we embark upon it for the Lord. A vast variety of undertakings have been embarked upon in that way, from that basis, and the Lord Jesus in this chapter

says, No! Not so! He is not governed by the apparent demand of a situation. He is not governed by the impact of things upon Himself, as calling for an undertaking. With Him it is a question of what God is doing, and doing just at the particular time. With one object, God does different things at different times, and has a different emphasis from time to time, and those who are really in union with Christ have to be governed by that which Christ at that particular time is Himself undertaking, is giving Himself to: "...what things soever he doeth these the Son also doeth in like manner". The whole question of spiritual perception in relation to the work of God is bound up with this union. We may embark upon many undertakings for the Lord; we have done it, and many are doing it. Sovereignly the Lord blesses and uses, but there is something which comes nearer to the heart of God than that, and which gets more directly and immediately to God's end. In a less roundabout way it gets right to the heart of things. It is that we should be found in that which is God's immediate object at a given time. Union with Christ brings us under that law. It is a matter of what God is doing, and life-union with Him in Christ for the accomplishment of that.

So then, we have to put back all our schemes, and all our plans, and all our arrangements, and all our programmes for the Lord, and in the secret place with the Lord get into the value of true, living, spiritual union with Him, that the purpose may not commence with us—in our thought, in our desire, in our will—but may begin with God and find a registration in us from God. He would have us see with spiritual perception what He is doing, and do it, and "in like manner"; for God is as particular about His method as He is about His purpose. The question is not one of doing a thing for God, but of God. That is why the Apostle adds that governing clause to his great statement about the new creation, when he says, "If any man be in Christ there is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold all things are become new. *But* all things are of (out from) God..." In the new creation all things are out from God.

There is a Man in the work of God. There is a Man to whom all the works of God are entrusted. There is one Man, only one. All the works of God are bound up with that Man in the glory. The important thing for us is to see what Christ is; not only who Christ is (though it is

important to see that Christ is God), but what Christ is, that Christ is an inclusive new-creation Man ; that He is a Divine humanity now, and that He fully and utterly, conclusively and finally, expresses the thought of God. There is no expression of God apart from Jesus Christ, so far as the new creation is concerned. God's thoughts, God's will, God's desires, God's works, are finished in Him. He is the First and the Last, and you cannot get outside of that.

Christ is representative and inclusive of the new creation. You and I, in order to come into the new creation, and to work according to the new creation, that is, according to God's thoughts, and will, and desire, and God's works, have to come into that union with the Lord Jesus Christ, and which means that we live by what He is. Our old humanity has to be set aside, and the new humanity of Christ has to take its place.

#### What it is to live wholly by Christ

In the next chapter of John you will hear mysterious sayings, so mysterious that many of His disciples said of one of these, "This is a hard saying", and from that time went away and walked no more with Him. These, then, are among the sayings you will hear: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life..."; "He that eateth me shall live by me"; "I live by the Father". No wonder they could not understand. What is it to feed upon Christ, to eat His flesh, and to drink His blood? for we mark that it is something to be done. The text there does not indicate that it is something done once for all, but a continuous process. Literally it is, He that keeps on eating and drinking shall live (have life) by Me. What does He mean? What do we mean when we gather around the Lord's Table and in symbol eat His flesh and drink His blood? The deep mystery of Christ and union with Christ is this, that by, and in, the Holy Spirit, in the one life which we thus share with Christ, we are living upon His glorified, perfected humanity. That is to say, what Christ is as Man in the glory is our life. When we take food and drink we take it into our very tissue, and that food becomes us physically. You know how that works in various ways. You become the kind of person you are physically, very largely because of the kind of food you eat. You can tell very often what

people feed upon by looking at them. It could be illustrated in many ways.

That is the governing law here in things spiritual. God has a standard Man in His presence. God has a conception of humanity realised in His presence. God says, For Me that standard, that conception governs everything, and you have to live according to that, and that has to become you. What Christ is has to become you, to become the very life of your life, the innermost reality of your being.

Your food becomes your power of thought. You do not know how it is done, but you can prove it; for if you but abstain from food long enough, you will have no more thoughts. How your daily food is translated into the letters you write, the poems you may compose, you do not know, but it is a fact. Stop your daily food and there will be no more letters and no more poems. You cannot trace the relationship, but it is a fact. Your food becomes your activity. That is your food in action. Stop your food and you do nothing more. You see the illustration.

Christ is God's standard, God's mind, God's thought, and in the Spirit, by union with Him, you have to live on Him, be governed by Him, open your being to Him, and think your thoughts, speak your words, do your deeds after Him, let Him become your mind, your utterance, your activity. That is the clear teaching of the New Testament. "Not doing thine own ways...nor speaking thine own words", said the Lord by the mouth of Isaiah. The Son does not speak His own words. "The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself" (John 14. 10). "Not in the wisdom of words, but in words which the Holy Ghost teacheth", says Paul. What is that then? It is simply Christ finding expression; not things springing from us, but coming out from Him. That is the meaning of union with Christ.

#### The Choice of the Heart

Is your reaction to all this, much as follows: Oh, well, how few know it, and how few live like that. With ninety per cent. it is just the opposite of that, it is a case of works for the Lord, according to the judgment of the one or more concerned, and so the Lord has done His work through the generations! Are we going to reason like that? First of all, we must ask ourselves, Is this what is set forth in the Word of God? After all, that must govern us. There are a few other considera-

tions besides, of course, which influence the matter. Are we quite sure, for example, that in comparison with all the mass of undertakings for God, the spiritual result is commensurate? Surely that is a question we need to ask ourselves? If we are influenced by the Word of God, we shall be brought to the position where we have to say: Well, the Word of God makes it perfectly clear that everything begins with God. The words "In the beginning God..." express a ruling principle, and as in the old creation, so in the new. Everything is out from God, and the Holy Spirit is the executive member of the Godhead. He alone knows what God would do, and He alone can accomplish it. Now, am I to abandon myself to what that implies, or am I, in all sincerity and earnestness, according to the best light I have, and the best desires I possess, to launch out in a lot of undertakings for God? They are two quite different things. We shall, if we are honest, sooner or later be brought to the position where, however things may appear, and however small may be that which lives according to this standard, we cannot help ourselves, we must capitulate to this law, namely, that it must be the Lord initiating, the Lord projecting, the Lord energising, the Lord directing; it must all come from the Lord. It is not for me to sit down and plan things for God, it must come to me by the quickening movement of the Holy Spirit. That is the meaning of union with Christ.

Oh, for a revelation of Jesus Christ. Paul said, "It pleased God...to reveal his Son in me..." That is the explanation of everything that followed in the life of the Apostle. If you read his life purely from a human standpoint, as so many have done, and run through his life as though it were the life of any other man lived for God, then you may argue for human initiative, human enterprise; but to get back of all that, and to see God, to see Christ, that alone can truly account for the effect of that life.

We have taken Paul as an example; we could well take the greater example of the Lord Jesus Himself. Write the life of Jesus on a human level, and you cannot explain it in that way. The influence, the power through all these centuries, the spontaneous growth, cannot be accounted for on the ground of His being just a man. In a lesser way that was so with the Apostle. To-day Paul lives more than he did when he was here in the flesh. He has been

growing all the time. The things which give men to-day their greatest trouble are the writings of Paul. He still beats them, and defies them all. If time goes on long enough, there will yet be worlds of literature built up upon the writings of Paul. What is the secret of that vitality? Why is it that we turn to those writings and every time we turn to them find something fresh? The explanation is union with Christ and in Christ, and thereby union with the Father; and you find at length it is a matter of what God is doing in the universe, not what a man did, or undertook to do. Our works will fail, will break down, will cease, and all works of men do. There are only two works that persist, one for the age, and one for the ages of the ages. One is the work of the Devil, which goes on, and on, and on. It is spiritual in the evil sense, and it goes on to the end of the age. The other is the work of God, which has no end. All other works come to an end. Union with Christ embraces the work of God, which is unto the ages of the ages.

There are those who want to build up a work which will for ever be a monument of their name. They are building tombs, like Absalom, to their own memory; but that is a poor thing, and is bound to fade sooner or later. That which shall abide for ever is that which comes out from God Himself and is not done by us, but through us, so that all things are of God.

Do you think that is a limiting relationship? No! For Paul who says, "*but* all things are of God", and seems by his "*but*" to limit things, also says, "I can do all things in Christ who strengtheneth me". There you have boundless possibility, and the only governing law is that all is out from God, and not out from ourselves.

A true knowledge of the Lord Jesus will reverse a good many of our ideas, and a good many of our procedures. A true knowledge of Christ and union with Christ, with all that means, will make us go to work in entirely the opposite way from that in which we have been accustomed to go. We shall come to be governed by this one consideration, that it is not what we would do for the Lord, but what the Lord would do through us, that is alone to rule.

It is a very testing way. You can hardly believe, unless you have been the same way, how often and intensely and bitterly the enemy fights and tempts you to come down on to a lower position, and to take up things again for God and launch big schemes, enter upon big under-

takings, set up some thing on the earth that can be seen, because all those who are governed by that standard of things seen have said: You see, you are doing nothing! Show us what you are doing! You cannot show us anything for it all! Satan does work on that line. To the flesh that is not easy. To go on with God and have nothing to show for it, never to be able to have the work written up in the papers, to publish no reports, nor statistics, and yet to know in your heart of hearts that, although it is hidden, something is going on, and that you cannot do otherwise than you are doing, is far from being a path of ease to the flesh.

It is a testing way, but, blessed be God, if we do endure the testing and go on patiently with Him, in His time, when that flesh has been finally laid low; when the voice of natural ambition is no longer sounding and having influence, and we are now utterly at the place where if things are not going to be of the Lord then there is not going to be anything at all, the Lord has a free way, and He is able to indicate that all the time something has been going on. He shows how He has been at work, and how that in time there will be manifested a work of God, a work that shall have such a large percentage of spiritual value and meaning in it that you are very glad, after all, that you walked with God and not with men in the work of God.

It gets to the heart of things. If only we saw what Christ is to God, and to us-ward, it would reverse so many of our present ways, methods

and procedure. The natural is put back all the time. In chapter vi. the Lord Jesus had been presenting this very truth, profound, mysterious, and from that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. Then what did He say? "Therefore, I said unto you that no one can come after me except the Father draw him". Oh, I see then, these many disciples that went away had come of their own accord; their coming was not a work of God! All natural inclination and undertaking in relation to the Lord is dispensed with; it does not get through, it is put back. Are you, because desirous or inclined in a natural way to things of the Lord, on that basis? Well, that will meet a terrible affront presently. The Lord will have to say to that, No! not out from you, not even in your discipleship, but out from God. All has to begin with God. No man can come after Me except the Father draw him! Relationship to Christ is a matter of God's work, not ours, and if it is not God's work, then at some point the mystery of things will offend us. We wanted something for ourselves, and this is far too other than self, and we cannot go on with it. This does not give us a place. All that is natural is put back if we are going on with God; we shall only do so on the basis of God's own work in us, "all things out from God".

We surely see the need for praying for more understanding and enablement to grasp the deepest realities of the things of Christ.

T.A-S.

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# Life in the Spirit

No. 1.

## Introduction

That which is before us can be put in several ways, and we shall seek to outline at least the introductory part of our meditation.

### God's Present Purpose

#### 1. The Gathering Out of a People from the World

In the first place it would be helpful for us to be reminded of the special nature of this dispensation, which embraces the period from the ascension of the Lord Jesus to His coming again ; and it is well for us to be reminded (since it is a tragedy that the Lord's people have not been continually reminded through the dispensation) that in this age, in this dispensation, God's main concern with this world is to take something out of it, and not to do anything with it, nor to have anything in it as of it. Until we have become clear on that matter we shall be confused on all other matters in relation to the Lord, as to His work, His purpose, and our life in fellowship with Him.

The Lord is pre-eminently occupied with the taking of something out of this world. All the rest is but a preparation of this world for judgment. When that activity of God is finished in the taking out of the earth, then the judgment of this world will take place. So that all ideas about improving this world, and setting up something of God in it as of it, establishing something here for God, are false ideas, and will lead into a great deal of error, and, in the long run, to disappointment.

#### II. The Gathering Out is Mainly Spiritual

In connection with that primary activity of God in the dispensation, the next thing to remember is that this extraction from the earth is mainly spiritual. Of course, the Lord is taking His people literally out of the world from generation to generation, and there will be, at the end, a mighty literal taking out of the residue of

those who look for His appearing ; but mainly the taking out through the dispensation is a spiritual thing, the literal or physical is but the end of a phase.

That taking out spiritually is, firstly, by a crisis, the crisis of new birth, in which we become aware that we have been born out from another realm, and that we are no longer belonging to this one ; that in the deepest reality of our beings through new birth we are not of this earth, but are from above. That is the crisis of our extraction from the world.

Then, secondly, the crisis once passed, the extraction, the redemption, or the emancipation (whichever word you prefer) is a progressive thing. It is, in a sense, a pilgrimage, a moving away, and as we walk with the Lord in a true way we are getting further and further away from this world in a spiritual sense.

These are simple and elementary truths, new to no one, but necessary of emphasis by way of laying the foundation.

#### III. God's Purpose in Leaving His People in the World

That which remains of God in this world is here for three purposes. We are now referring to that which has come through the crisis and is in the process, but is still here ; here, and yet not of this earth. While it remains, it remains for three purposes, which are in three different directions, firstly toward God, secondly toward itself, thirdly toward the world.

The Godward purpose of being here is the representing of God's rights in the earth. Just as David, when driven out of his kingdom away from Jerusalem sent back Zadok the priest with the ark into Jerusalem as a testimony to the fact that that was his place and he would come back into it one day, so the Lord, who has been driven out of this world, strategically puts His

people here as in relation to Himself, representing His rights here. Thus we are called upon deliberately to stand here on this earth against the claims of this usurper, as a challenge to the Devil's claim to be prince of this world, for the rights of Him whose right it is to reign. We simply stand here toward Him for that purpose.

As to the aspect of this purpose which is toward the thing of God itself which is here, that is for the purpose of learning the true nature of what is of God. We are left on this earth for the time of our sojourn amongst these other things for the purpose of education, and our education is in the direction of learning what the nature of a thing of God is. We have many lessons to learn, many things to know as to the difference between what is of man and what is of God, what is of Adam and what is of Christ, what is of earth and what is of heaven, what is of the flesh and what is of the Spirit, and our education lies in that direction.

It is a very experimental and practical thing. If you and I were suddenly taken to heaven; that is, if immediately we were saved we were transplanted to heaven, we should know the nature of all that is of God fully, immediately, but we should know it in a way in which we do not know it now. To put that the other way, we are knowing it now in a way which we should not know it if that were the case. We should then know it as objective, as something which obtained all around us, and into which we came in that way; but being left here in the conflicting elements we are learning it in an experimental way, it is being wrought into us through sufferings, through contradictions, through discipline, through a great deal of inner history. It is being wrought into our very being, and that is God's way of teaching His people. It is the most profitable way; otherwise He would have adopted another method.

Then as to the manward aspect of that which is here of God, that is a matter of testimony and witness. Those two words do not mean the same thing. The witness is the instrument itself, the testimony is that which is given by the witness. The Lord must have something here which is the embodiment of the truth, and, being the embodiment, it gives forth the truth. That is the difference between witness and testimony, and we are here on the earth manward, world-ward, for that purpose, to be the embodiment and the expression of the truth.

So you see that, while the Lord leaves that which is essential and strictly of Himself here for a time, He does not mean that it is to settle in; to consolidate itself here; to become a part of things here, but it is only here for Divine purposes, and when those purposes have reached that point where the Lord sees in His own wisdom and sovereignty that it would be better that the vessel should be transplanted to heaven, then He takes action accordingly.

#### **The Son of Man the Divine Exemplar**

All this is gathered up in two features of Christ's life.

(a) *As in the world, yet not of it.* Into that short sojourn there were packed all the laws of a life which is lived as in relation to heaven, and not in relation to this earth. His position was, while here, in the bosom of the Father; with God, not of this world. He lived by the laws of such a relationship, and He lived thus in order to show forth the fact that man is called to live by God. It is true that He was God. That is not the question for the moment, but we emphasise the other side in order to see why it was necessary for Him to live here, and that is to set forth the fact that man can live on the earth, and yet be governed by laws which, if obeyed, make him something other than a man of this world.

That may sound complicated, but it can be resolved into one simple fact. He lived, a Man in this world, yet not of it; and in order to do so He had to move as governed by laws which were not the laws of this world, but the laws of heaven. That is one phase of His life in which that which we have been saying is gathered up.

(b) *As in heaven, yet expressing His heavenly life in the Church by the Holy Spirit.* All is gathered into that. The Holy Spirit is sent for the main object of "re-hving" Christ in the Church, and thus constituting the Church one Heavenly Man according to Christ. Thus it becomes necessary for us to know what the life in the Spirit is, what the life governed by the Spirit is.

#### **Spirituality the Great Governing Law**

There is a parenthetical period in which these two phases of His life are joined and yet divided, where they meet and where they part. That parenthetical period is the great forty days after His resurrection. The first phase of His life on earth reaches unto that, and His new life in heaven also reached unto that. The two meet.

He is still Jesus of Nazareth, but there is a difference. While they meet in that period, they are not one; they are different, they are separate. Mary would fain have proceeded according to the old regime when she met Him on the morning of the resurrection. She would have embraced Him, but He said, "Touch me not". There is a difference, there is a change. In a word, that old kind of relationship is at an end, the relationship is going to be different; and yet the deepest realities are going to abide. The two phases, the earthly and the heavenly, meet in the forty days, and yet they are different, and they are separate. The one great inclusive law governing both of those phases, and that is so clearly set forth in the parenthetical period, is spirituality.

Spirituality is the great determining truth. It determines the truth of everything, determines the value of everything, governs everything. Mary, with the others, thought and believed that to possess Christ they must see Him, and handle Him, and hold Him. He was teaching them two things. One is, that is not really to possess Christ. In the deepest reality, the deepest truth, in the greatest value of Christ, that is not possessing Christ. On the other hand, it is possible to possess Christ as truly as though you saw Him, and handled Him, and to possess Him even more really than if He were here in physical presence. The governing law of that greatest of all realities is spirituality.

What is spirituality? We shall see as we consider the forty days that spirituality resolves itself into this fact of knowing Christ, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; not according to the standards of man in the flesh, the soulish standards of the changeable, the seen, but knowing Christ in an inward, spiritual way according to the power of a Divine life. That is spirituality in a word. Much more has to be said about it.

You can see where the two phases were meeting, overlapping, and yet were divided. The Lord, while He brought them together, showed perfectly clearly that these are not the same, and that they are not one; there is this mighty difference. As I understand it, that was the object of the forty days. It was to set before them and establish in them the fact that spirituality is the great governing law of our relationship with Christ, and of everything that has to do with that relationship.

### A Vital Discrimination

As to spirituality it is, of course, necessary to say something more. We must not confuse spirituality with an abstract, ethereal, atmospheric, mystical element which is unrelated to all that is positive and practical. There are strange ideas in men's minds as to the meaning of spirituality. If you pass through an Art Gallery with an art critic, you will hear that word often upon his lips. He will refer to the work of art as "spiritual" or otherwise, and he will tell you of a certain work that it has a spirituality about it. Or if you go to a great musical production you hear the same thing. It is the "spirituality" of the thing that is either there or absent which determines the real artistic value. If you go into the realm of architecture you will have the word used. It is not only the actual structure and adornment, but there is some intangible thing said to be about that edifice, it is the "spiritual" element.

We must get that idea entirely out of our conception of spirituality. That is not the Scriptural meaning of spirituality. That is the mystical, the ethereal, the abstract, the atmospheric, but that is not what the Word of God means by the word spiritual. Perhaps it is unnecessary to say that, and yet when we talk about spirituality some people drift mentally into the realm of the unreal. Upon true spirituality according to the Word of God the greatest issues hang, the most tremendous consequences depend.

We take a familiar illustration of this. There was a revelation given by God through His Word as to the means and method for the transportation of the ark. The day came when that ark was to be transported from a certain place to Jerusalem, and David assayed to do it. On the one side with David there was the Word of God that the ark should be in a certain place, a deep devotion to the Lord on the part of His servant, a whole-hearted zeal for the Lord's interests; and then out of his devotion, and in his zeal, in accordance with what he perceived to be the Lord's purpose (and his perception of the Lord's purpose was perfectly right) he acted, and tragedy overtook the execution of the purpose, the carrying out of the design. The Lord made a breach that day and Uzzah died before the Lord. What was wrong? The Divine purpose was not wrong, God's thought was that the ark should be in a certain place; the devotion was all right, the zeal for the Lord was all right.

Where was the breakdown, the flaw ? It was in failure to perceive at that time the Lord's *way* of realising His own purpose, *how* the Lord would do the thing that He wanted to do, or *how* the Lord would have it done. Everything hung upon *how* the thing was done. It was not the object, not the motive, not the devotion, not the zeal that was wrong, but perception broke down in the realm of how it was to be done. It meant that David acted upon a lower level than was revealed within the Word of God, or was embodied within the Word of God. It was a failure in spirituality, because spirituality has as its hall-mark spiritual intelligence, intelligence as to, not only the intention of God, but the methods of God ; not only the purpose of God, but how the purpose was to be fulfilled.

We can have general conceptions of what God wants done, and not be sure as to exactly how, but it does not end there. There can be tragedy in that realm. So that you will see that, in this instance, spirituality was a matter of perception as to the Lord's thoughts for the carrying out of His purpose.

Is that practical ? Ask Uzzah whether it is practical. Ask David on that day when the Lord made a breach whether it is practical. It is a practical matter whether we get through with a thing or not. It is so practical that it becomes a matter of life and death. It is practical as to whether the Lord's blessing is upon it or withheld from it. The greatest consequences are bound up with spirituality, for spirituality means a knowing of the Lord in an inward way. So that spirituality is very practical, very real ; it comes right down to the most tremendous consequences in our lives.

We have taken that familiar illustration, as touching upon one phase of things, and indicating what spirituality means. David came eventually to the perception of God's meaning, and came to see that it does matter very much whether you have apprehended the whole thought of God or whether you have only apprehended a part. The part that he grasped was that the Lord wanted the ark in a certain position, in a certain place. That was enough for him. It did not matter very much in his zeal for the end how it was done, so long as it was done ; but that is of very great significance to the Lord, as we see in this case. There is a wrong way of doing a right thing, which may bring the whole thing to disaster. The result here undoubtedly

was a tragedy in the realm of a rightly conceived purpose of God wrongly carried out. It was a failure in spirituality, because spirituality means perception as to the Lord's ways, in the Lord's interests.

#### Spirituality the Outcome of a Divine Nature

When we speak of spiritual people or of the Church being a spiritual thing in this age, we do not mean that they are just mystical. We hear that word very much in connection with the Church as the Body of Christ, the mystical Body of Christ. We have to be very careful what we mean by that. The Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul brings that down on to very practical matters. For example, this word is addressed to the members of Christ : "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you". There is nothing mystical about that. That is very practical indeed. Let your own eye say to your hand, I have no need of you, and work accordingly, and see how far you get on ! You find it is a very practical matter. The Body of Christ is not mystical in that sense of being something out of the realm of practical, positive interests. When we speak of spiritual people, spiritual men, or of the Church in this dispensation being spiritual, we are not meaning that it is mystical, that it is a hidden, remote thing. The true nature of a child of God and of the Church is something hidden from the world and is a mystery to the world. Concerning it the man of nature will always be saying, "How can a man be born again ?" "How can this man give us his flesh to eat ?" "How are the dead raised ?" To the unenlightened it is a mystery and is hidden. Nevertheless, spiritual people, and the spiritual nature of the Church, are something very definite, very positive, because, in the first place, it represents the possession of a nature which is altogether different from that possessed by man naturally, altogether different in its qualities and in its capacities and capabilities. The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit, he cannot know them ; the spiritual man can. "As it is written, Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him. But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit..." (1 Cor. ii. 9).

Spirituality, therefore, represents the possession of a nature which is superior altogether to the ordinary human nature, and has capacities

and capabilities which are higher altogether than those belonging to man ordinarily. That is the nature of spirituality. It is a Divine capability, a Divine capacity, brought within by reason of the operation and presence of the Holy Spirit.

That is a fact, something which you and I know to be a fact, but it constitutes the greatest practical difficulty between us and those who do not possess it. Try to resolve that. Begin to talk to the unregenerate man about the things of the Lord, and you know that you come up against a blank. You can talk about religion, about Christianity, theology, and perhaps go a long way, but when you come to the realities of knowing the Lord, even beginning with new birth (the greatest reality with us), those who have not gone through, who have not been born from above, do not understand. They will say : I do not know what you mean by being born again. Advance beyond that to the things of the Lord which have come to us in the course of our walk with Him, and you find it is a realm which we move in alone, and all who are not spiritual are excluded, and it is no use trying to put a bridge over the two realms. It is the greatest practical problem of our lives. We know quite well that we are wrecked wholly upon the sufficiency of the Holy Spirit in this matter where other people are concerned.

We can preach to the end of our lives, with every ounce of strength we have, and unless the Spirit of God gives quickening, illumination, and a capacity to those who hear, the preaching is in vain, and we are as fools, we have spent our strength for naught. We can never get spiritual things across to natural minds, and yet we cannot say that these spiritual things are mystical, vapoury, abstractions, unreal, merely a matter of atmosphere. They are the greatest realities in the universe. We would not admit for an instant that it is a matter of imagination. Neither is that true of any other thing that has come to us in our union with Christ. They are so real that they are our very being. If any man can give up his faith, change his mind about his beliefs, you may take it that that is something he has put on like a coat ; it is not the true.

#### The Inner Knowledge of God

Now all this that we have already said is ploughing the way to the explanation of what true spirituality is, and its true value. One thing

that surely concerns all the people of God very strongly, very definitely, very mightily, is the question of that which is invulnerable, indestructible ; that which will stand when everything else in the universe crashes, when all else is consumed, destroyed : when in the shaking of the heavens and the earth that which can be shaken is shaken, then there shall be that which abides the shaking, abides the fire, and goes through indestructible for eternity. That concerns us in a practical way as to the result of our being here on this earth.

If the great feature of spirituality is spiritual intelligence, which is knowing the Lord in the inner way of His thought, of His purpose, that is what God is after, because it is that which is going to outlast everything else. That is what is meant by being in the pre-eminent, the supreme activity of God in this dispensation. This world and everything related to it is not going to last, therefore we will not get our roots into it ; we will not lay deep foundations in it ; we will not build in union with it, with the Name of God on it, not even in a religious way. You and I must come into God's supreme activity in this dispensation, which is to get out from this world, in association with Himself, that which will abide eternally when all else has gone. This may be in a people, but the thing itself is the inner knowledge of God. That is spirituality.

Speaking of spiritual people, of the Church being spiritual, we are speaking of that which, having the higher (may we use that word) intelligence, the knowledge that is superior to human knowledge and intelligence, works accordingly. That is the practical side. Any kind of mental apprehension of God's thoughts which does not lead to a corresponding activity, is either a wrong apprehension or has fallen short of its purpose. There are a great many people who dwell much upon spiritual thoughts, ideas, always probing beneath the surface to get something that is not apparent and they are most unpractical ; there is no working out of things in life. It is not enough to have thoughts that seem to be Divine, there must be an expression of those thoughts in practical ways.

The work of God has to be done according to the principles of God, and those principles are to be revealed by the Holy Spirit. That is spirituality in life and in work. The difference is so manifest in this dispensation. You can see that right through men have got hold of ideas

which are in the Word of God, and then they have made that which corresponds to the Philistine cart, which David constructed ; that is, they have put those ideas into a form which is something quite tangible, and of this earth, established here in the world, and they will point to their order of things, what they sometimes call the Church, and say : This is according to the Word, and this is the Scripture by which we have acted in doing this. So you find that you get a dozen different things set up, all of which are in disagreement amongst themselves, yet all of them claiming to be constituted by the Word of God. Is that right ? So many of them are mutually exclusive, and yet they support themselves by the Word of God. Is that right ? Now in so far as any of them are something on this earth, established on this earth, there is a failure to perceive the mind of God in His Word. That is where everything has gone astray. That is where the whole thing is at fault. That is why you get the confusion and the contradiction, why you get a state of things like that, which cannot possibly be accepted as an expression of God's mind. It is saying, in effect, that God has a dozen different minds and no two of them are agreed. God is of one mind. In order to have God's mind you must be essentially spiritual, and being spiritually minded you will get oneness in expression. The Apostles are a great example of this.

We shall come later to this first chapter of the book of the Acts, and probably go on further than that, but the emphasis for us just now is this. You see here men who manifestly were not in agreement in the former years of their connection with Christ, all standing up together and speaking, and you have an exhibition of a oneness of mind, of word, of thought, so that they

are as one man. The immediate expression of the Holy Spirit's advent was oneness in a most remarkable way between those who were anything but one before. Oh, the divergencies, oh, the differences which separate men ! Oneness is a mighty, wonderful mark of the advent of the Holy Spirit. That is the one mind of God operating in all who are under the complete domination of the Spirit of God. That is spirituality. It is intelligence as to God's thought. So that we have in the spiritual man, and in the Church, as a spiritual thing, that working according to a higher intelligence than that possessed by the natural man. It is so high that he cannot attain unto it.

Now we cannot go further in this present meditation. This is preparing the way, and is intended to indicate at least that what the Lord is seeking pre-eminently in this age is a spiritual people possessed of a knowledge, an understanding, a perception of Himself which is something altogether different from that possessed by the natural man, and which is, therefore, the thing which is going to abide when all else goes, to endure throughout all testings, all trials. It is the inward knowledge of God in an ever-growing way.

The Lord's concern for us at this time is that we should know what God's mind is as to a spiritual mind (and that refers to the individual, and to the Church as the collective man, the one new man), as constituted according to Christ in heaven by the Holy Spirit ; the Holy Spirit reproducing in us the life, the mind, the intelligence of the Lord Jesus as God's heavenly Man.

May our eyes be opened to that, and the Lord give us increasing liberty as we go on in that consideration.

T.A.S.

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## SPECIAL GATHERINGS AT EASTER (D.V.)

Friday, April 15.	. . . . .	11 a.m., 3 and 7 p.m.
Saturday, ,, 16.	. . . . .	3.30 and 7 p.m.
Lord's Day ,, 17.	. . . . .	10.30 a.m., 3 and 6.30 p.m.
Monday ,, 18.	. . . . .	11 a.m., 3 and 7 p.m.

# The Kingdom of the God of Heaven

No. 1.

## A Revealer of Secrets

READING: Daniel ii. 28, 47; Matt. xi. 25-27; Gal. i. 15-16; Col. i. 27.

In Daniel ii. 47 we have one of the many titles applied to the Lord which are in this book. They are all significant and full of helpfulness, but as the Lord would speak to us concerning the matter of Divine spiritual revelation it is this title that we take hold of; and let us hold it with both hands, "a revealer of secrets". God, our God, is a Revealer of Secrets.

Of course, Nebuchadnezzar said that, and he would not know what we know, having the whole book before us; and I suppose Daniel would have used the same title; indeed he did use it, as we find: "There is a God in heaven which revealeth secrets". But I think if Daniel had spoken at the end of his life, and if he had been able to give his verdict upon that which we find in this book under his name, he would have come to the conclusion which we must come to in reading it, that, after all, the secrets, in so far as they are of importance and value, are better summed up in one great comprehensive and inclusive singular, "secret"; the Revealer of a secret. For the book of Daniel, while it tells us many things, and has provided fields of exploration and interest for those who will pursue the many little touches of enlightenment that are given, has but one objective, one message, one real inclusive secret. That brings it right over into the New Testament, where we read that God willed to manifest what is the mystery; or we may use the same word that we have in Daniel—and to us it conveys the idea better than this one here—to make known the secret.

God is a revealer of a secret. God has a secret, and it is His good pleasure, His purpose, His desire to make that secret known, and if you will seek what is the mystery—the term that is commonly used by the Apostle Paul—or what is the secret, it is this. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul writes that he prays and desires that they might have the riches of the full under-

standing, to "know the mystery of God, even Christ". That is God's secret. You find it in various aspects—"the preaching of Jesus Christ", "the gospel of Christ", "Christ in you, the hope of glory"; but to sum it all up, the great, inclusive, heart secret, of God is Christ, and God is not keeping His secret to Himself. That is the joy to my own heart. That God is a holder of secrets the whole world will admit, but the blessed word to us is that God is a revealer of secrets; He has opened His heart, He wants to, and His great longing desire for us all is, Oh, that I might be able to uncover My heart's secret to them, that they might know My secret, even Christ!

### The State of Incapacity of Man by Nature

While we want to have that all the time as a theme, and the background of what we are saying, that God wants to reveal, we must first of all be very definite in realising how utter is our need, and the need of all human beings, that God should be the revealer; or, to put that the other way round, how absolutely impossible it is for anybody by his own will or skill or application to discover God's secrets. You cannot do it. There is nothing available to any man except that which God in His good pleasure unveils and opens and discovers.

There is so much in the New Testament which would give us that in doctrinal form, and doubtless you will in your minds be remembering verses and texts which teach that, but let us keep in this meditation to the book of Daniel, and the purely illustrative which we find here. You will remember that in this story there is another dream, and again Daniel is called upon to give the interpretation. Still further on there is the writing on the wall, and again it is Daniel who has to decipher and explain that writing; but on each of those occasions you have present the massed intelligence of the capital of the world empire. The astrologers, and the magi-

and the Chaldeans represent the cream of the intelligence of their day. We are apt to look on other ages and imagine they were the poor, ignorant ones of the earth. Babylon in its day, and the Chaldeans in their time, held the world's intellectual and perhaps supernatural knowledge. These are all brought in, and their united confession is, We cannot! "It is a rare thing that the king asks". Pursue the quest of learning in the world, follow those who hold all the intelligence that men by diligence through the centuries have been able to acquire, and you find nothing which will answer to such a quest as you make; it is impossible, we cannot! Three times in this book, for our instruction, the Lord brings together the princes of this world, as Paul calls them, the wisest men of this generation, and together as one man they have to confess, We cannot!

If it is true of them, there is not much hope for us along that line, and the sooner we learn that the better. Daniel had been in the same schools, and learned the same lessons, not that he might unveil God's secrets by excelling the others in their own line, but that it might be clearly seen that, though he holds all that, it is of no avail to him when he comes to deal with the things of God.

It is an important lesson, and we are all so slow to learn it. That with which the world can supply us, of instruction, of information, of education, valuable as it may be in its place, is absolutely ruled out of court when we come to consider the matter of Divine revelation. You may have little or you may have much of this world's wisdom, but however much or however little you have, you will never come to know God's secret by pursuing that line.

God's people are very slow to learn that, but it is a lesson that must be wrought deeply into our being. We are glad when some person more outstanding in a social or intellectual realm is converted—of course we are glad when any man or woman comes to the Lord Jesus Christ—but never let us or them imagine that what they bring of themselves or of their own acquirements into their new life, is going to help them one bit in the discovery of God's secret, Jesus Christ. There is a realm in which sometimes it does help, as it did with Daniel no doubt, and as it did with Moses; it gives them a greater chance to humble themselves before the Lord. And perhaps their very learning has had a helpful effect upon them

in this respect, that they have come to know how little they do know. The great difference between the educated and the uneducated, in coming to the things of God, is there. Why is it that we are sometimes caused to stand back and to realise that in certain realms there is limitation? Perhaps it is because they have not had much education, and much chance in the things of this world we say to ourselves; and here perhaps there is advance and we say: Well, that one had more opportunities than most. No! The real fact of the matter so often is that this one here, or that one there, because of his ignorance is puffed up and proud, and thinks he knows, and has not yet learned the first lesson, that he does not know. So ignorance would not be a barrier in so far as it was a mere lack of knowledge, but it is a barrier in so far as it blinds to how little we know. The ones who know more perhaps have learned this first fundamental lesson, that we must learn in the Christian life our own inability.

#### The Believer's Incapacity in Himself

In that sense the help of the world does come in perhaps along such a line, but it does not make us capable of understanding God's secrets, nor, mark you, is the difference between Daniel and these others merely that he is one of God's people and they are not. The child of God, as such, has no more knowledge of God's truth than those who are not children of God; he has a capacity, but not the knowledge. If you go carefully through the story you will find that Daniel, the faithful, true child of God, is each time just as nonplussed, just as ignorant as these other men in himself, and that when each time he finally produces the revelation it is because he has gone to God, sought something from Him, and received. He has nothing in himself, no knowledge.

Let us, as children of God, remember that. The fact that we are converted, the mere truth that we belong to the Lord, does not mean that automatically we know all about the Christian life and the things of God. That is not so. You see how Daniel has to confess that along with the others he knows nothing; and so when the need arises he calls together his fellows, and they must come to understand what this secret is. What do they do? They have a conference; but it is a prayer conference. And we would never gather as we do if it were not wholly on the basis upon

which Daniel discovered his secret, with all prayer. Prayer in itself is a recognition of emptiness, it is a recognition of an absence of knowledge. Daniel and these men sought time from the king, but it was not for time to study, it was for time to pray; it was not for time to get to work themselves, it was for time to wait upon God, to humble themselves before Him, and to beseech mercies of Him.

So you find as you go on, and the narrative passes into the visions of Daniel which are found later in the book, that again and again, though he is a faithful child of God, and though visions are presented to him, there are such confessions as this: "And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the issue of these things?" That is to say, Daniel represents something for us. He is different from those other men, he belongs to God, but even so he has not at his disposal the knowledge of the Divine secrets. What he has that marks the distinction between him and them is a capacity for knowing. Believe me, that if you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ you have a capacity; God can show you things, if He is given the right conditions. He cannot show all these others except perhaps through you, but you have a capacity. That does not mean to say, however, that you have everything at your finger tips, within the power of your manipulation. Like Daniel and his fellows, the call is for humble witness before God. If there is to be revelation at all it must come from Him, and so we find that even when Daniel has the book open, as we read in chapter ix: "...I, Daniel, understood by the books..." even there, with the Word of God open, he is still humbling himself and seeking and praying. He does not see; he knows he does not see. When the angel comes to him it is not just to say: Well, Daniel, you saw that in the Word! but rather is the whole purpose of the visit to this end: Daniel, you have been seeking further understanding, and I have come to give it to you. Daniel ix. ends with the Messiah, "the anointed one" (verse 25). Daniel could not see that in the books, though it was there. We cannot take the Word of God in this kind of attitude: Well, I am a child of God, I have the Holy Spirit, by the books I can discover everything! Nor dare we run to one man's books or another's, or to one human voice or another. They have their helpfulness, as we shall see, but never for one moment should we depart from this

attitude: If I possess all the books in the world; if I hear all the best preachers that ever were or that will be; if I do everything that I can do, I still know nothing, unless God is pleased in His mercy to uncover His secret to me.

Now there is nothing new in that, but do let that sink into your heart, and let it govern your life. If Daniel had run off to those friends of his to ask their ideas, that they might be discussed, and be bringing together something that they possessed, that would be a justification for the children of God to do what they so often do, turn to books, turn to men, and think that if they have had the thing described they have it. Not so! You are still, with all your descriptions, right and true as they may be, as utterly devoid of revelation as was Daniel until God was pleased to open it to him.

I do want us to make sure of that. I want the Lord to say it with emphasis to our hearts, and then that He may come from the other side and say: When you are quite settled in your mind for ever that nothing at your disposal as on this earth, in you as a man, can ever give you to understand God's secret, then look to Me; I have many names, beautiful names, all descriptive of Myself; take hold of them; take hold of this one, that I am a revealer of secrets, I love to do it.

### Revelation and God's Heart

That is the atmosphere of the whole of this book. God wants to reveal, He yearns to reveal; and that is what we find in the New Testament. We have referred to three passages in the New Testament at the beginning of this meditation, because each one of them gives the emphatic declaration that it is God's good pleasure to reveal. He is longing, He is desiring and purposing to reveal. It is no grudging concession: Well, I suppose I must show them a little bit! This is a heart yearning—Oh, that I could show them more! Did you never read Paul's letters to the Corinthians? Did you never read that in Hebrews where he yearns, and says, "ye are yet carnal"; "I fed you with milk, not with meat..." The atmosphere is of yearning—Oh, if I could only give you more; you are dull of understanding! You can see something of the disappointment of the Apostle. He is disappointed that these people are not able to receive it. God yearns to reveal, He longs to make Himself known. You find that further reference in

Colossians, "To whom God was pleased to make known a secret which had been hid from the ages and generations, but now is manifested", as if God Himself in eagerness had been waiting through centuries—Oh, for the day when I can show them Christ. You have the heart of God there. The word in Matthew "willeth" gives rather the intellectual side, that He chooses; but the word used in Colossians is the heart one, He wants to do it. Both of them are true. God in His wisdom and understanding, because of our need and of His purpose, chooses, wills to reveal His Son; but, oh, there is more than an understanding in God, there is a great big heart of love. He wants to show us Christ.

So you find the Apostle Paul saying, "...it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me from my birth and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son..." How many years elapsed from Paul's birth and separation in the purpose of God until the day when God could reveal His Son? Quite a number. He says there came a certain time when it was God's good pleasure to reveal His secret. Does that mean that through years, out of some capricious motive, the Lord was saying, Not yet! Not yet! You must wait! We know that was not so. The Lord was saying: If only this man would let me; if only he would let me! And there came a day on the Damascus road when Saul said, "Lord, what wilt thou...", and then the inward revelation began. That is God's attitude.

God wants to reveal His Son to me, He longs to do it. It is God's pleasure, His desire to uncover to me something more of the wonder, the beauty, the glory, the power, the eternal riches of His dear Son. He is a revealer of secrets. There has come into our hearts some faint understanding of this fact that God in great intensity of desire is longing to reveal His Son, and we say, All right, Lord, we will set aside as much time as You like for this one purpose! But, oh, that He might be suffered to shine into our hearts to show us something more of Christ. It is God's good pleasure to show us more. There are some folk who regard it as a virtue that they have some simple elementary knowledge of the Lord, and that is quite enough for them; they go round preaching it for the rest of their lives. Of course, we ought to testify to and preach that which is our measure of attainment. We do not want to wait to know everything before we open our mouths, but let us not fall into that snare of

being content with a little. If you are quite happy, and feel that just to be a simple Christian is all right—well, do let us keep simple—but all the time the Lord is saying, If only they would let Me show them more instead of holding to what they have—and more than likely they will lose it soon and their message will be empty—if only day by day, hour by hour they would let Me show them more of Christ.

#### Revelation and God's Need

There is more in it than that. God needs to reveal His secret to us. There is a God in heaven. Yes, but there are circumstances and conditions here on earth, and those circumstances have to be faced with the challenge of His Person, and they have to be brought into the stream of His eternal purpose. How is He going to do it? Surely Daniel gives us the answer. There must be a link between the God of heaven and the earth upon which His purpose would be realised, and that link consists of those who know God's secrets. God needs what is often called a "vessel of testimony". I do not mind what you call it. He needs Daniels, those who know, who have illumination which is not their own, which others know is not their own. Again and again they said of Daniel: "In him is the spirit of the holy gods"; this is not what he learned of men, this is something other than that which is human! He stood among men as a testimony to the Lord. The Lord wants that.

The theme, if you like, of the book of Daniel is this, "The Heavens Rule". Be it in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar or Alexander, or of any other, it is the heavens that rule. Even in the days when God spoke directly, still there was the necessity for an interpreter. Daniel for years and years was a living testimony among those people to the fact that there is a God in heaven, and that He rules. You can do what you like with Daniel—and yet you cannot do what you like. Heaven rules this man by his own volition, and there is no power in earth or in hell that can disturb the rule of the heavens in that life. That is what God needs in this world at this time, those whose lives shall proclaim and manifest that there is only one throne in this universe, and that is God's throne. Heaven rules at every turn. God needs mouths to proclaim it, and lives to prove it, and He can only do that with those to whom He has uncovered His secret of Christ.

We have emphasized there more particularly the fact of witnessing, but even more than that God needs co-operation. We have no time to pursue any of these things now, but if we came later on to see this stone cut without hands that comes down from heaven as an eternal kingdom to fill the universe, we would find that, from another aspect, when that happens, there are saints of the Most High who are involved. The saints of the Most High take the kingdom. So that while from man's point of view it is just as it were a thunderbolt from heaven, from God's point of view He can come down from heaven because He has some in co-operation with Himself who belong to heaven. We cannot say more about that, except to impress upon you the fact that in God's purpose there is a need in His universe for those who know God's secret, and He waits for that to achieve His purpose.

#### Revelation of Christ Only Given to Meet Need

Now I do want to say one more thing, which is very important. As you read this story of Daniel's experience, did you notice in what circumstances, in what conditions he received his revelations? It was because of dire personal need in the first place. Daniel's life depended upon it. It was not a merely academic matter, it was a matter of personal heart experience, a matter of life and death. Though nothing is said on the other two occasions we can quite well believe, Nebuchadnezzar being what he was and his descendants likewise, that on each occasion Daniel's life was in peril. At any rate, Daniel's revelation was the result of his being placed in the crucible of fiery trial and deep experience.

You will find it was not less so in the matter of those other things. If you read Daniel ix, you will find a man whose heart is wrung. He is not just interested in prophecy—the Lord save us from that!—he is a man with a bursting heart. It is not so much his own personal need now, as the need of his people and the state of Jerusalem. He has made it his personal need. You cannot distinguish in that prayer between the rest of the people and himself. He makes no distinction: "...behold our desolations...", he cries. That is the man, and those are the circumstances in which a fresh revelation is given of the anointed one, the Messiah, "cut off but not for himself". You see the point. That is how revelation comes, not through sitting down in a study, which perhaps you wish you could do. You think if only

you had more time, if only you could give yourself more to study, you would have a greater spiritual life. Do not believe it. It is good to acquire all the knowledge we can about the Word of God, given the time and the opportunity to apply ourselves to it, but that in itself is not spiritual revelation. The Lord reveals Christ to us in this way, by taking hold of us and putting us into a position of need, of problem, of trial, and there, in those circumstances, He can show us something more of Christ. That is the only way. That is God's way, the way of experience; for revelation is something more than merely seeing objectively. The Apostle Paul puts it this way: He revealed His Son in me. Every bit of true knowledge that you have of Jesus Christ, God's Son, has been by way of a deep need being placed upon you, whether your own personal need or some other need with which you have become so identified that it becomes yours, and there in the fire you have proved something more of the Lord, and you have as your treasured possession spiritual knowledge and understanding of the Lord. That is the way. That is the only way.

That explains why the Lord deals with some of us as He does, in ways that on the surface seem to be the opposite of that which would be calculated to help us to know more of Christ. For Daniel it was not an easy circumstance in which to have a prayer meeting. It was not easy for him to feel calm and take on, as it were, a heavenly atmosphere and give the Lord a chance to show him something, when his life was at stake. Just for a moment there was respite, but everything was tense and urgent.

It is just at such a time that the Lord shows us more of Himself. You know the difference between one who comes to tell you something which is perfectly true and right, and someone who out of their heart gives you a knowledge of the Lord that they have received. It is true of us, whether we are preachers or whatever we are. We can only minister helpfulness to others, we can only be prophets in the measure in which in some deep experience we have learned something more of the Lord. You will remember that those in Laodicea were blind and were content. The two things go together. If you are content, complacent, with no particular needs; indeed, saying, I have need of nothing! then you are blind; but when you have some deep heart need, and you cannot get through, and it is a

matter of life or death to you, then you find your eyes are opened and you see in the Lord a plenitude of sufficiency that you never knew was there. It is always the way. That is why the Lord deals with us as He does.

You may say this: Well, of course, I quite understand the need for something in the initial sense of an emptying, and a sense of my own helplessness, but I have felt that the Christian life should be one of steady progress, so that every day it is more and more wonderful. Actually your experience, apart from outward trials, is that of emptying, brokenness, and then of finding the Lord, and going on, and then a new knowledge of your own need, your own helplessness, your own failure, till you think perhaps: Well, that was all wrong, I have not made a good start. There are children of God who are trying to start again all their lives, because they have not realised that the Lord leads us on like that. It is ever a fresh discovery of Christ. It does not mean that what was formerly was unreal, but the Lord wants to show you more. Only out of the depths of trial, difficulty and temptation, and perhaps failure, can you be shown something more of the excellencies of

Jesus Christ our Lord. It is all involved in this title of the Lord, "a revealer of secrets".

He will show His Christ to you and to me—He is doing it, praise His Name!—not in the study, not by our delving into the Scriptures and comparing one verse with another, though we need to do that sort of thing; but we are learning Christ, making new discoveries, first of all in our own need and then in His ability to meet that need. God wants to reveal His Son in you, and so if you in the trial and suffering count it all joy, think it not a strange thing. God is not dealing with you harshly. This is what He is doing, He is trying to show something more of His Son. "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you..." It is going to prove your faith, and to prove how much you are of faith, and to prove to you many other things, that there is something more that can meet your personal need. So shall we worship the One who, with all His other qualifications and titles, has this one, that He is a revealer of His own heart secret. He takes Christ and makes Him real to our hearts, that we might know God's secret in Christ.

H.F.

## The Lord's Testimony

No. 1.

### The Need of a Ministry of Recovery

READING: 2 Kings iv.

We are not going to take any particular verse, since it is the chapter as a whole which is before us. Verse 2 is a striking verse:

"And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me; what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil." I should not be surprised if, before we are through, we have something from the Lord about that question: "...tell me; what hast thou in the house?" As I have been thinking of this chapter as a characteristic page of the life and ministry of that wonderful servant of God, Elisha, I have been thinking of his ministry, which is doubtless familiar to you in its general

character, and it seems to me that in the four incidents that we have recorded in this fourth chapter of the second book of Kings we have his whole life and ministry in representation.

### The Ministry of Elijah and Elisha

Of course, we can never think of the life and ministry of Elisha without bringing into view also the ministry of his great predecessor, Elijah; for Elijah and Elisha, though entirely different men in character, in training, in disposition, in ministry, yet exercise one ministry. You cannot consider Elisha's life and ministry without seeing that it arose from, and was a continuation of, the ministry of his great predecessor. We shall have to think of the ministry

of Elijah if we are going to think at all of the ministry of Elisha, because the one sprang out of the other, the one was the continuation of the other, the one carried to completion the work begun by the other.

Their names are significant. If you have never noticed the meaning of the names you will be interested to know them. Elijah means "God is Jehovah". It was a very significant name, in view of the particular ministry to which he was called. Elijah was called of God in a time of national apostasy, when God's people in the midst of whom God dwelt had apostatised from Him, and had gone after Baal. The worship of Baal had become the national, organised religion. God brings a great servant of His on to the scene to deal with the situation. You remember his great cry on Mount Carmel, "If Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him". He stood there in the midst of that people, his very name being a testimony to them and a call to them. Elisha takes that up, and applies it in the meaning of his name. His name means "God is salvation". It is not the announcement of a fact so much as the application of a fact. Elijah simply stands there for a declaration of rigid truth, uncompromisingly—"God is Jehovah". There is no God but one, Jehovah, the God of Israel, He alone is God! Elisha takes that fact and applies it to given situations. Brought into all kinds of strange and difficult situations, he applies the great fact for which Elijah stood, and which Elijah proclaimed. In his application to given needs and circumstances he proves that God is salvation. So that there is no difference in their names and in their general characteristics, but it is one ministry.

Then you remember that, though Elijah lived and served in Israel for quite a time, there was one central point in his ministry, one great culmination toward which everything moved, and from which everything moved. You never think of Elijah without thinking of that dramatic scene on Mount Carmel when he confronted the four hundred prophets of Baal and demonstrated the fact to king and people alike that his name was a true name, "God is Jehovah", slaying the prophets of Baal and calling upon the people to turn from their idolatry and serve the living and true God. His was a rigid and forceful character, a dramatic life with a great dramatic incident set in the midst of it. He was a man who appeared and disappeared over long periods. The king

searched all the country round for him when he wanted him, but he could not be found. Elisha was so different. Elisha's ministry is spread over a period of some fifty years. He is a quiet man, and moves in and out among the people. Over all those fifty years he was available to every kind of need, always ready to give a sympathetic ear to the particular need presented to him. He is the recognised head of the school of the prophets, he is their revered master; among the people he is a kind of pastor-prophet exercising a certain pastoral ministry.

Two such utterly different characters you could hardly conceive, and yet their ministry is one ministry, and it is a ministry of the recovery of the true worship of God. Both men pursued the one object, lived for one supreme purpose, to bring the people of God back from their apostasy to the God from whom they had strayed.

We can hardly conceive the terrible state into which Israel had fallen in Ahab's days. Although the temple of God stood, yet the whole nation was called up to the worship of Baal, so that in all the millions of Israel there were only seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and that seven thousand was a hidden company, unknown even to Elijah. Things could hardly have been worse than they were, the worship of Baal had become an organised religion, and the whole nation had gone out after Baal.

But I want you to notice and to grasp this fact, that in spite of the great scene on Mount Carmel, Elijah's ministry seemed to be a great failure. It is one of the most striking things about the life of Elijah that, although he had demonstrated the fact that Jehovah was God, his ministry seemed to be a failure. Even after that great demonstration on Mount Carmel the nation did not return to God. Elijah, overcome by his heroic effort there, flees at the threat of Jezebel, and though he serves God for a period after this, there are no further great incidents in his life. He seems to be in eclipse; there seems to be no completion, his one effort appears to have been abortive. But it was not so. He had established before the people the great fact that God was Jehovah; he had erected the altar on Mount Carmel, and had offered there the sacrifice which was accepted by heaven, and that stood before the people as a great challenging fact from which they could never get away, and formed the background to all that followed in his life and in that of Elisha.

If you turn to 1 Kings xix. you will see how really true it is that the two ministries were one, and that Elisha comes in to take up and fulfil the unfinished task of Elijah. It is the story of Elijah at Mount Horeb after his flight. If you care to trace it out yourself you will find that those tasks which were committed to Elijah in relation to Elisha, Jehu and Hazael (see verses 15-18) were never fulfilled by him. It is true that he cast his mantle over Elisha and called him to be his successor, but he did not anoint Hazael nor Jehu. Both those tasks were performed by Elisha, not Elijah. In 2 Kings viii. 12-13 you will find that Elisha prophesies that Hazael shall be king over Syria, and in the next chapter in the first two verses you have the story of the anointing of Jehu on the instructions of Elisha. That is just by way of support to the statement one makes that Elijah's ministry was taken up and fulfilled by Elisha. Then chapter x. of the second book of Kings records the judgments of God that fell upon Israel through this man Jehu, and by means of which Baal worship as an organised religion was broken down in Israel and never recovered. Though Baal was worshipped for long years after that, the great system was smashed and broken under the judgments which came through Jehu and Hazael.

#### Present-day Conditions as Illustrated from II Kings iv

Now we come more immediately to the chapter with which we commenced. What have we in this chapter? We have a record of four incidents. They have impressed me very much. The first incident is that of the prophet's widow who was bankrupt, whose sons were in danger of being taken for bondmen by the creditor. A prophetic ministry overtaken first by bankruptcy and then by death, for the bankruptcy preceded the death. The widow and her sons would never have been left in such a state unless the prophet had become bankrupt before he died.

In the second incident you have a child, the gift of God, miraculously born as a result and reward of unusual devotion to the prophet of God, overtaken by death.

The third incident brings before us conditions of general famine, a dearth in the land, and the prophets—God's representatives in the land—seeking food, gathering food and finding the food that they gathered to be poisonous.

In the fourth incident there is food provided,

good food, but utterly inadequate in quantity, so much so that the servant says, Shall I set *this* before a hundred men? It is good as far as it goes, but what good is it for a hundred men?

There is the chapter briefly outlined. A prophetic ministry brought to bankruptcy; God's miraculous gift overtaken by death; famine conditions, and the very food gathered for the sustenance of God's prophets proving to be poisonous; finally, food of a right kind provided, but wholly inadequate. They are the conditions that we find presented to Elisha, and with which he is dealing.

I do not know how much the record strikes you. If you let your mind run over these stories and compare them with present day conditions, I wonder if it strikes a parallel. Is it necessary that one should pursue it? How strikingly these incidents illustrate present day conditions in the Christian Church. Is it not so? Let me be brief but specific.

#### (a) The Lack of Prophetic Ministry

The first incident deals with the question of prophetic ministry, the ministry of the prophet in a time of great and dire national need. Oh, the need to-day in the Christian Church for a prophetic ministry! What is a prophetic ministry? The prophet was the man who uncompromisingly stood for the revealed purpose of God in all its purity and in all its fulness, and a prophetic ministry is a ministry which reveals the purpose of God to the people of God, and calls them into that purpose in the name of God. Can you name a deeper, greater need than the need of prophetic ministry in the Christian Church to-day? We are told there are no prophets in the Church to-day. Perhaps there are not, but those who tell us that tell us also that the prophetic ministry has passed in the purpose of God. It is not true. If you turn to Paul's first letter to the Corinthians and read in chapters xii. and xiv. you will read that the Corinthian believers were exhorted in very strong terms to desire prophetic ministry above all other desires, and the last verse of chapter xii. tells them to desire earnestly the best gifts. In the first verse of chapter xiv. they are told to desire earnestly to prophesy. Then later we are told that prophecy is that which builds up the Church; it is that ministry of the spoken Word of God which in its issue secures the purpose of God, the building up, the edification of the

Church, the Body of Christ. If there is one need greater than another in the Christian Church to-day it is for a ministry which declares the whole counsel of God and by which the saints are conformed to Christ and are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit. Such ministry is a prophetic ministry.

Ministry which simply deals with the people of God as individuals, and meets their individual need, while it makes a contribution to the purpose of God, does not go the whole way. It is necessary that the people of God should be met individually in their need, but a ministry that declares the whole counsel of God ; that unveils that which God has revealed as to His purpose, and then calls upon the saints in the power of the Holy Ghost to realise that and to come into it in the Spirit ; which has as its issue, therefore, the building together of the people of God, and the constructing of them as a spiritual house, a habitation for God in the Spirit, that is a prophetic ministry in these days, and it is the supreme need of the Christian Church. How little there is of it, comparatively speaking ! This widow was the widow of a prophet ; she was bankrupt and the prophet was dead. We find very much arrest in the Christian Church to-day so far as this kind of ministry is concerned.

#### (b) The Prevalence of Spiritual Bankruptcy

Come over to the second incident. We should speak with great carefulness here, choosing our words with fear and trembling ; yet is it not true that what we find here also obtains very largely to-day. As we glance over the history of movements, shall we say, of the last hundred years, and view them with sympathy and as in the presence of God, and with spiritual discerning, is it not true to say that you can trace many instrumentalities that were raised up of God, undoubtedly works of God, brought into being miraculously, used of God, and then overtaken by spiritual bankruptcy and death. Undoubtedly God the Spirit raised up instrumentalities. They served a purpose for a time, God was with them, but they have faded and are fading, because spiritual death has come in. To-day only in a very small degree do they seem to be serving God's purpose, if at all. Some of you will be able to understand a great deal more than others, but it is true.

This child was a gift of God ; this child had

come to the woman at Shunem as a great boon from God, but the day came when the child was grown, and went out into the field, that he was smitten by the sun, and died upon his mother's knee. Many a fair gift of God has had an experience like that, where death creeps in and overtakes that which came straight from God, miraculously and wondrously.

#### (c) The Famine of the Hearing of the Word

The third incident presented famine conditions. I do not know what you feel like as you go about the country. If you have any opportunity of sampling the spiritual life of the children of God in a wide way at all, you will know it is perfectly true to say that famine conditions prevail in the Christian Church to-day. But here was something worse than a general dearth ; here was the prophetic school gathered together, needing food and taking food, but the very food that they took proving to be poison. Anything worse than that you can hardly imagine. Is that true to-day ? Go to your theological colleges and find out. It is hardly possible to put into language the tragedy of this thing to-day without seeming to use too strong language. There is nothing which more clearly demonstrates the subtle deceptive work of the Devil, the Deceiver, the Adversary, than the kind of food which is provided for those who aspire to be prophets of God to-day. Many a fair young life has gone into our theological colleges to-day and has come out wrecked spiritually, bankrupt. They have gone in with their hearts beating with fervour to serve the Lord, to become the voice of the Lord in the land, and have come out with all their zeal gone, all their faith quenched, and if they aspire to be servants of God they speak that which is not true, because they are taught that which is wrong, that which is poison.

#### The Inadequate Supply of True Ministry

The fourth incident shows that there was real food, food of the right kind, but so inadequate that the very servant of Elisha says, "What, should I set *this* before an hundred men ?" Oh, the utter inadequacy in our day of even that which is true.

We do not say these things for the sake of being critical, but here we have a picture which is a striking illustration of things which must be

recognised by us if we have spiritual discernment at all.

### **The Lord's Call to His Church**

What is the Lord's purpose in putting such a picture before us? That we might realise afresh the need for a true Elisha ministry, a ministry of recovery, so that once again through such a ministry the Church may continue to be the instrument through which the risen Christ carries on the work that He began on earth. I want you to get the full import of that statement, for that is the reason that the Church is on earth, that it might carry on and bring to completion—from one aspect—the work that Jesus our Lord began on earth. There was one sense, of course, in which He finished the work that God gave Him to do, the redemptive work, but there is another aspect indicated by the words which are familiar to us, the things "which Jesus began both to do and to teach". He went up to glory, He ascended to His Father's right hand, in order that His disciples, who were the nucleus of His Church, and His Church which came into being through the ministry of His disciples, might carry on the great work that He had begun; and inasmuch as the Church is failing to be His instrument there is need for a ministry of recovery, a true Elisha ministry upon the earth, to call the people of God back to their true calling, back to their true vocation, back to their true ministry; to show them the purpose of God, and to bring them into such adjustment to God that He can use them.

Wherein lay Elisha's power to deal with such conditions as these? If you trace his life through, you will find that he is continually being brought up against conditions like this, and dealing with them verily, turning them inside-out.

Take the first incident of this chapter. The prophet's widow comes to him in that very need, with no hope, and by the time Elisha has finished she has enough to last both her and her family for the rest of their lives. Wherein lay his power? Wherein lay his skill to deal effectively with all these varied conditions of need, and thus to complete the great task that his predecessor began, and bring it to completion.

### **Two Essential Qualifications**

I want you to note two things about Elisha. First of all he did not act as an individual man.

He did not come on the scene without a definite relationship to his predecessor. Elijah was his master. They were together and served together for quite a time before Elijah was translated to heaven, and quite deliberately and definitely he took up the work that Elijah had done and carried it on.

The second thing is this. He received, on seeing his master ascend, a double portion of his master's spirit. That is a firstborn's portion. You remember the story of Elijah's translation in chapter ii. of this book. Elijah had cast his mantle upon Elisha, to be his successor. Here he says, in effect: You ask for a double portion of my spirit; well, if you have the spiritual vision to see me when I am taken from you, then your request will be granted, but if not then it will not be granted. Elisha had obtained his request, and was carrying on the work of Elijah, and that in the power of the vision of Elijah's ascension into heaven, in the power of that firstborn-portion of his spirit that he received. That is the explanation of Elijah's power to deal effectively with all those conditions. Speaking as typically now, he was moving in the power of a vision of an ascended Lord and a descended Spirit.

Beloved, as the Lord brings you or me as His servants into any situation, we shall only be able to deal with that situation as we possess those features, as we move in the power of the vision of an ascended Lord. I doubt whether there is anything that is more needful for the people of God to-day than a vision of the risen and ascended Lord, and to have that continually before their gaze. What do we mean by a vision? We mean this, that always to us there is the consciousness that Jesus of Nazareth, who lived and died on the Cross has risen and ascended, and is reigning at God's right hand; and to move into every situation in the power of that truth. It is the first half of the secret of victory, the secret of spiritual effectiveness. If your thoughts are upon Jesus as a man here on earth; if you are continually moving in thought in the realm of the life of Jesus of Nazareth as a man here on earth, you are not through in your consciousness by the Holy Spirit that that One has passed through death, and in passing through death has proved Himself to be victor over death; has been raised up out of death and is risen, ascended, and seated at God's right hand, all authority having been committed unto Him.

There is no power in Christian service apart from the risen, ascended and enthroned Lord. If you have not that as a dominating consciousness, then give yourself no rest until by the Holy Spirit He has given it to you to move into every situation in the power of that great and glorious, triumphant fact. At least it is fifty-per-cent of the secret of victory; you can be victorious if that is your dominating consciousness. "If thou see me when I am taken from thee..." What is our consciousness? Is it of an absent Jesus, One who has gone from us? Or is our consciousness that of the Lord triumphant, risen, glorious, seated at God's right hand, and with us? The person who moves into situations with the sense of an absent Jesus, whether those situations be personal, family, or related to the larger testimony of Jesus, is paralysed, and cannot deal with such. The answer of the woman to Elisha's question, "What hast thou in the house?" was, "Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house". No power to deal with any situation, spiritual bankruptcy. Elisha could deal with that situation. He had seen Elijah go up to heaven, and the saint of God who moves to-day into situation after situation in the power of a Spirit-maintained vision of the Lord in glory is able to deal with things even as Elisha dealt with them, because issuing from the ascended Lord is the descending Spirit. The Holy Ghost was poured out when Christ ascended to glory, and the Holy Ghost is with us. Elisha received the double portion of Elijah's spirit, and the Spirit of God

is with us as the Spirit of Christ. That is the secret, that He is all-powerful to carry on the ministry, to bring the testimony to completion.

Listen to these familiar words from our Lord's own lips: "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believeth on me the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do (Who? He that believeth on Me!) because I go to the Father" (John xiv. 12). To be in adjustment to the ascended Lord, and in the power of the Spirit whom He has given, is to do the greater works. The greater works do follow wherever there is the maintained vision of the ascended Lord—"because I go to the Father". That is the secret of it.

"But ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses". The risen, ascended, glorified, enthroned Lord, whose Spirit is given to us as the power for effective ministry is the secret of everything. No paralysis there, no bankruptcy there, but everything fruitful and flourishing. Whatsoever our experience may be, it is as true as God's Word is true that if we move in the power of the great fact that Christ is there at the Father's right hand, and His Spirit is in us, we shall be able to fulfil an Elisha ministry, and in the end the great testimony for which Jesus went to Calvary will be complete, His Church will be called out, brought together and matured, so that He can come and take it to Himself as the instrument of the administration of the Kingdom of God. S.A.

## Spiritual Maturity

No. 1.

### The Foundation that is Laid

READING: Rom. viii. 19, 29; 1 Cor. iii. 1-3; 2 Cor. iii. 18; Gal. iii. 26-27; iv. 6, 19; Ephes. i. 5, 18-19; iii. 18-19; iv. 13; Phil. iii. 12-14; Col. i. 28; Heb. v. 12-14; vi. 1.

This selection of passages is quite sufficient to show that the dominating objective of the Lord for His people is full growth, the full measure of Christ. Every Apostolic letter has that object in view, and every one of these Apostolic letters deals with some factor related to full growth. If

that is true, then surely it is incumbent upon us as the Lord's people to have His goal before us, and to be found in the same spirit as was the Apostle who said, "...that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended of Christ Jesus". The force of that statement may not have come to our hearts. The Apostle has there said in very clear and precise language that when the Lord Jesus laid hold of him, it was for something more than that he should just become a

saved man. It was in relation to a goal with which there was bound up a prize, and unto that there was to be an attaining. He said that everything for him was regarded as of value only in so far as it would help him to reach that goal, and nothing was of value at all which in no way contributed to that end. So should the Lord's people be, at all times, on full stretch for the purpose for which they have been apprehended. Everywhere in the Word of God His thought for His people is set forth as being that they should come to a full measure, to full growth, to the measure of Christ.

#### **A Fact of Great Significance**

It seems to me that the New Testament assumes that increase, along the line of expansion; that is, the adding to the Church comes by spiritual increase in the Church along the line of spiritual growth amongst the Lord's people. I say, it seems to be assumed, for it is a very impressive thing that the New Testament is so very largely occupied with this one thing. The fact that all these letters—every one of them—were addressed to believers with one object, that of their spiritual growth, and so many of them embody the actual word "full growth" (often in the Authorised Version translated "perfection" or "perfect"), does not mean that the Church ceased to be an evangelising instrument. They were going on with their work in relation to the unsaved, but the fact is that very little is actually said about that, and what we have here as the record is all to do with the Church's own spiritual increase. That is tremendously significant, and its significance is of great importance to the Lord's people. It would almost seem that the Church has forgotten this. In a very considerable circle there is a great concern for the evangelism side of the Church's life and work—a concern which is right and proper, and should never be less than it is, perhaps always more—but so often and so largely the essential background of that work is overlooked, namely, an indispensable building-up and teaching ministry. The result is that the Church is seeking to move out to meet the world situation with inadequate spiritual resources, and is very largely weak in face of the difficulties, and the results are of such a character as hardly to be an expression of the real power of God and fulness of Christ. That by the way, however.

It is that you and I might come to recognise

this, that the Lord has set before us in His Word an overwhelming amount of evidence and proof that His dominating objective for His own is full growth, and that every child of God should have that always before him. We should be concerned about spiritual maturity, and should give it the place in our hearts, in our consideration, in our concern which it evidently occupies in the heart of the Lord Himself. We have referred to fragments in the letters of Paul, which bear directly upon this matter of spiritual full growth, showing that it is the Lord's will for His people. We have said that each of these Apostolic letters deals with some factor which is immediately related to that Divine object, full growth. We are not going to attempt to go through all the letters at this time, but we are going to make a beginning as the Lord enables. We are coming to feel something of what Paul felt when he wrote those words, "...admonishing every man and warning every man, that we may present every man perfect (full grown, complete) in Christ".

#### **Christ Our Righteousness**

Let us look for a moment at the letter to the Romans in this very connection. We remind ourselves of the words which are in chapter viii. verses 19 and 29. This letter to the Romans lays the foundation for all the Lord's work in His own people and in relation to this end which He has in view, and which is governing all that He has to say to them, and to do with them. This letter provides the ground upon which the Lord can go forward with His work in perfecting the saints. We ask, What is that ground? We know what the theme of the letter to the Romans is, the object for which the Apostle wrote it. We know that its great outstanding truth is that of righteousness by faith, or, as it is sometimes called, justification by faith. What, then, is the issue of such faith? In this letter faith is set forth as that through which we are brought to the ground of what Christ is in resurrection. He "rose again for our justification". Christ in resurrection provides the ground of our justification and our righteousness. In death He has dealt with all unrighteousness, and therefore with all that alienated and separated from God and meant condemnation, judgment and death. Having dealt with that in death, in resurrection the ground is clear of all that; sin has been met and dealt with, and all its consequences, right

to the end, and in resurrection God's way is open, and there is righteousness where there was unrighteousness, communion where there was alienation, fellowship where there was distance. Christ in resurrection is the ground of our righteousness, and faith in the Lord Jesus is here shown to be that by which we are brought on to the ground of what Christ is in resurrection, and so the relationship with God is established in Christ risen, and is established unshakably. That is the glorious issue of this chapter, as you observe.

We want to get the full force of the words at the end of chapter viii. Verses 35 to 39 must be taken in conjunction with verses 31 to 34. Now you see this unshakable ground, this inseparable union, this indestructible life is because of what the Lord Jesus has done in His death and resurrection, and of what He is in His Person at God's right hand. I think there may have been times when we have been rather hesitant in quoting these words at the end of Romans viii. We have had a little tremor within as we have essayed to say those words and follow up: "...neither death nor life...", wondering whether we were being a little overbold, a little over-confident; whether at some time we might not be put to the test and find that, after all, our use of the words was not unlike Peter's self-confident assertion—"I will follow thee even unto death"—we have had a catch in the declaration. I confess that has been true of me, but now I am glad to say that there is no need for hesitation. There is a ground that is settled and fixed, unshakable in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. That ground is the expression of the love of God in Christ Jesus for me; not my love for Him, not anything that I have done or can do, not anything that is in me or that I can produce, but it is all what He is, what He has done, what He has given, and what He has established in His own Person at the right hand of God. That is Divine love, and that has been made to rest upon you and upon me "whom he foreknew..." He has done it all in relation to us, the thing is finished, and there is not a power in God's universe that can alter it, that can change it, that can shake it. It is something which God has done. It is a manifestation of His own love in Christ, which nothing in the creation can touch, and it is bound up with God's elect: "therefore 'who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?'" This chapter

reaches the point where we have put faith in God on that ground. That faith brings us on to the ground of what Christ is as risen, and that means that there is not a being that can lay anything to our charge. What a position! You can find many faults in me; I may find some faults in you; we may see much that is yet of the imperfections that are ours, but you cannot bring me under condemnation and separate me from the ground of my justification. You can find all the faults that there are to be found, and can go on doing that for the rest of your life, but you cannot upset the ground of my justification before God, you cannot touch that position of my experience with Him. The Blood of Jesus Christ has settled and ratified that for ever. If you can tear Jesus Christ from His place at God's right hand, then you can destroy my ground of salvation, of justification, but you cannot do that; it is fixed in heaven in Him.

#### **To be Firmly Rooted in the Foundation Essential to Full Growth**

The Lord lays that as our foundation. It is a security which is ours through faith by the grace of God. That is the message of the letter to the Romans. The grace of God to us in Jesus Christ provides such a ground that no part of the creation can lay anything to our charge, can bring us under condemnation. There is no power in this universe that can disturb what God has done for us in Christ. The Word tells us to take our place in faith upon that. Do not say, Oh the trials, the difficulties, the adversities, the sufferings; life, death, principalities, and all these things! They do make such a difference to us. They come upon us; they affect us, and upset us, and we come to feel that we do not love the Lord as much as we did the other day, that we are not so much in fellowship with the Lord as we were once, and we feel that is the upsetting of things. It is nothing of the kind. You and I must come finally to the place where we recognise that God is unchangeable, without variation, and that in the work of His Cross our salvation will not move one hair's breadth, it is as surely established as His throne. On that ground our salvation rests, and faith must take hold of that. Then we are able to say, "If God be for us..." and He is for us like that. Oh, the wonder of that word, "...God...for us"! He delivered up His Son for us, and with Him gave us all things; through His Cross has justified us from

all our sins, our iniquities, and in His Son there sees us as without sin, perfected ! He says, Now, if only you will let your faith come and rest upon that, and will not move away from your faith on to your own ground of what you are in yourself, but will stay there, Satan's power is destroyed over your life, and there is nothing whatever in this universe that can prevent your reaching My end. Nothing that arises, be it life, or death, or things present, or things to come, or height, or depth, or principality, or any other creation—nothing in this universe can prevent you reaching My end if you will keep your feet there in faith. That is the foundation for God, and He can never get us anywhere until we have come to that position. You know how true that is, that if there is any question, any uncertainty, any variation in any one of us at any time, we stop dead, and God is arrested, the Spirit of the Lord can go no further. While we believe God He goes on, no matter what He has to deal with. It amounts to this : Are we going to believe God or not ? If we are not, then we may as well abandon everything, for everything depends upon that, upon whether we are going to believe God.

Now here is the foundation for faith. Full growth rests upon that foundation. You never make one bit of progress toward God's end until that foundation is settled. Upon the firm foundation of God stand. Do let us seek to get to this position. It is a word for believers, and more than ever perhaps a word for to-day, that we should come to the place where we recognise how altogether apart from variation God is. Of course, there are some people who do not vary a great deal, but there are others who know all the variations of this 'natural life ; the variations of

feelings, the variations of thoughts, the variations which come about by the circumstances around them. We find ourselves very largely influenced by how we are physically, or how circumstances are, or for some other reason ; in different moods, in different states, as we think spiritually. We vary, if not from day to day sometimes from hour to hour. God is not like that. God's work is not like that. What God has accomplished in His Son by the Cross and resurrection is not subject to influences of change ; it stands, it is fixed. God has taken that attitude ; He is not variable. If only we would come back and recognise that God is a God of infinite grace, that grace has been demonstrated to the uttermost, and it is unchanging ! If we go from it, that makes no difference to it. It is the same. We come back and find God just there where we left Him, He has not moved a little bit.

This is not said to justify weakness, but to bring to a certain settled position as to the grace of God. Everything is by His grace, because of His grace, the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. If we get settled there God can go on with His work. Full growth ? Yes, when you believe God fundamentally, when you trust God, and when your trust in God is on the ground of that perfect justification which He has granted, the removal of every obstacle in the way of His full purpose. The letter to the Romans tells of that. The foundation is laid in faith for all God's purpose, and after that you move on to the superstructure. The other letters have to do with factors in full growth when the foundation is laid.

T.A-S.

## “ The Love of Christ Constraineth ”

“ What was it that carried this sensitive man (Paul) with his difficult temperament and ailing body through it all ? He tells us about this as he tells us about everything else ; it was nothing else but the love of Christ. It is doubtful whether Paul made as many converts in his whole ministry as Wesley made in a year or two ;

certainly the great world took but little notice of him, and Christian literature in the centuries which followed, while it could not ignore him, proves that neither the Church of his own day nor that of succeeding generations really understood him.

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was indeed not Pauline ; it was a compromise, and it won the world by incorporating alien elements of which it has not yet rid itself.

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But all this was hidden from him ; his ambition was not to found so many Churches,

much less to turn the world upside down, or make Corinth a place fit for Christians to live in, but simply to ' share the sufferings of Christ ', that is, so to preach Christ that when he saw Him at last, he might not be too much ashamed.

It is strangely true that the men who have changed this world have been other-worldly men whose hearts were in Heaven."

Selected (italics ours).

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NO. 3, VOL. 16

## All Things in Christ

No. 7.

### The Heavenly Man as the Instrument of the Eternal Purpose

The Heavenly Man personally is presented to us by the Apostle John in a fuller way than by any other of the New Testament writers. Paul advances to the corporate Heavenly Man. That does not mean that Paul does not present the personal Heavenly Man, for he undoubtedly does, particularly in his letter to the Colossians; but he advances from the personal Heavenly Man to the corporate Heavenly Man, which is the Church, His Body.

May we repeat one thing. Christ, actually and literally, was with the Father before times eternal, and the Church, not actually and literally, but in foreknowledge and fore-ordination, was also with the Father and the Son before times eternal. The fullest unveiling of the Church, which comes to us through the Apostle Paul, reveals it as already complete, but we know it to be a fact that it was in no sense completed when Paul wrote. It was not finished numerically, and it was anything but finished spiritually and morally, yet he speaks of it as though it were the most complete, the most perfect thing in the universe. He is standing, as it were, at God's side, and God views the Church from the eternal standpoint, that is, as outside of time.

**The Restoration of Heavenly Relationships**  
Recognising, then, that Christ and the Church are revealed as being with the Father from all eternity, we next see that by reason of that which has taken place in the fall, and which was anticipated in the redemptive line of purpose, Christ comes into time, and is born in time in relation to redemption, and that redemption is said to be from "this present evil age." The Authorised Version renders it "world", but the change is important. It is not from a place that we are redeemed, but from an age, and it is perfectly clear what that age is. It embraces all the intermediary sections or dispensations. The present evil age runs from Adam to the new heavens and the new earth. There is a coming glorious age. To be redeemed out of this present evil age, means that the Church, which belongs to eternity and not to this age, is to be redeemed out of it. It shows how Christ, by redemption, brings back into the straight line of what is eternal and outside of time, into the eternal counsels and purposes of God concerning His Son. By the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, which is a redemption from this evil age, the Church is redeemed unto that other age, that eternal age. So the birth of Christ is related to

the redemption of the purchased possession, the redemption of the Church.

Coming to John, firstly with regard to Christ's entry into time, we find that John has three things to say about Christ.

(i) John sets Christ in eternity.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John i. 1). That is Christ outside of time.

(ii) He shows Christ's coming into time.

"And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us..." (John i. 14).

(iii) Christ is revealed as being also in heaven while here.

This third thing which is stated in John's Gospel is declared by the Lord Himself, and combines both of the other two things. The Son, who is here in the flesh, is at the same time in heaven. There is the uniting of the two spheres. While He is here, He is still in heaven; while He is in time, He is still in eternity. "No man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven" (John iii. 13). That is the Heavenly Man as presented to us by John; Christ on earth, and at the same time still in heaven.

Now, in Christ, that becomes true of the Church, and is true of every member of the Church. In Christ we are here, and at the same time in heaven. We are in time, but we are also in eternity. The question arises, how can this be? It is a statement which needs explaining.

This brings us to the point where eternal and heavenly relationship is resumed. That relationship was broken off, interrupted. In Christ, as representative Man, it is resumed, taken up again. With Him it has never been interrupted. The interruption had to do with man, but through union with Christ that relationship—howbeit in a fuller way—is resumed, or restored to man. What is the point at which this resumption takes place? It is what is known amongst us as being born anew, or from above. Its law and its main spring is eternal life.

### Israel and the Promises

Two things were evidently related in the Jewish mind. These were (i) The kingdom of heaven, and (ii) Eternal life. Nicodemus asked what he must do to enter the kingdom of heaven. Another ruler, probably of the same school as

Nicodemus, and perhaps of the same rank, asked this question: "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke x. 25). These things were evidently accepted by the Jews as a promise. The Lord Jesus recognised and referred to that expectation when He said, "Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life..." (John v. 39). There was a quest for eternal life, an expectation, a hope of eternal life, a persuasion that eternal life was a promise to be realised. These two things were linked together in their mind. Christ associates this hope with Himself and says concerning the testimony of the Scriptures, "...these are they which bear witness of me." To such as can receive it, He indicates that He Himself is the way or ladder into heaven, the necessary means of getting there. We are, of course, referring to John i. 51. Now read verse 47:

"Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"

Here is a pure Israelite. What can you say to a pure Israelite who is looking for the kingdom of heaven and eternal life, a man who is true, a man who is honest? The Lord has seen him under the fig tree, really pouring himself out in quest of the kingdom of heaven and eternal life, if what the Lord Jesus said to him is a clue to what was going on in his heart. He was of those who looked for the blessings of Israel.

Let us pause for a moment, and insert Psalm cxxxiii. here in brackets. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! ...for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." How does the blessing come? Whence is this hope, this expectation of the blessing? Our question takes us back to the promise made to Abraham: "...in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. xii, 3). These Israelites were looking for the blessing of Abraham. But note what is further said: "...in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Gen. xxi. 12). What does Isaac represent? Life from the dead, Divine life. The blessing of Abraham is life. Now note the words of the psalm: "...for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore". So you see that what they were in quest of was the blessing which had these two aspects, the kingdom of heaven, and eternal life.

In Nathanael we see an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile, a pure man in a right quest. The Lord says to a man like that, "Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Are you in quest for the kingdom of heaven? "Ye shall see the heaven opened..." Are you wanting to get through? You will need a ladder, a way, a means, a vehicle: "Ye shall see...the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

Nathanael knew exactly to what the Lord was referring. An Israelite indeed, in whom there was no Jacob, was Nathanael! Let us recall the incident to which the Lord referred. "And Jacob...lighted upon a certain place...and he took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said...I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest...And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said...How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Gen. xxviii. 10-17)—Bethel, the House of God: the House of God, the gate of heaven. The Lord Jesus appropriates that and says, in effect: 'I am the House of God, I am the gate of heaven. Thou shalt see heaven open through Me.' Do you want to know how to reach heaven? Two things have to be considered; one is the fact of union with Christ, the other is that which is bound up with union with Christ, namely, eternal life.

#### Man by Nature an Outlaw

Let us stay with that for a moment. "Ye shall see the heaven opened..." Such a statement implies that the heavens have been closed. That, again, carries with it the fact that for man eternal life has also been put behind a closed heaven. Even for Nathanael, even for Nicodemus, even for a pure-hearted Israelite that is true by nature. Their longing is for an opened heaven. They are stretched out for the kingdom of heaven, but it is closed.

We know quite well that to everyone by nature, heaven is a closed realm. But a closed heaven is not God's thought for us. We belong to heaven. Christ belongs to heaven. The Church belongs to heaven. Yet the very place to which we belong is closed to us. The place

with which we are related in the eternal counsels and purpose of God is closed to us by nature. That has its most terrible manifestation in those moments of the Cross, when the Lord Jesus, standing in the place of man in his sinful state, cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Heaven is closed to Me; the place to which I belong, My heaven, My home, is closed to Me! I am an outcast from heaven!

Such is the state of man by nature, shut out from heaven, the place for which he was made, the place which belongs to him in the purpose of God. The Lord says to Nathanael, "Ye shall see the heaven opened". There is far more meaning in the phrase we so often use, "an open heaven", than we have recognised. What is it to enjoy an open heaven? It is to 'be at home, in fellowship with the Lord; it is to have a heavenly life; it is to have all the heavenly resources at our disposal; all that heaven means is open to us, and we have come into that for which God brought us into being, which He intended to be ours from all eternity; that is an opened heaven. "Ye shall see the heaven opened..." Then the quest of the heart is satisfied, the promise realised. The principle of the opened heaven, or of the heavenly life, is what is called eternal life in Christ. Christ is the Heavenly Man, coming into time.

#### Christ and the Church

We have said once or twice that the Church is to be what the Heavenly Man was, and is, as to His being, as to the laws of His life, as to His ministry. Everything that is true about Him as the Heavenly Man has to become true of the Church. Thus, even as the Lord Jesus, as the Heavenly Man, was born here in time, so also is the Church, the corporate Heavenly Man, to have a birth here in time, and on the same principle as Christ was born.

How was Christ born? You will realise that we are leaving the question of Deity on one side. We are not touching that side at all. In the sense in which Christ was God incarnate, Immanuel, God with us, God manifest in the flesh, that is not true of us as members of the Church. That is understood. We are talking about the Heavenly Man, not of the Divine Son, not of Godhead. So that what is true of Him as the Heavenly Man as to His birth, has to be true of the whole Church in every part. Let us look at the birth of the Lord Jesus and mark how it is characterised by three things

**(i) The Word Presented**

We go back to Luke, for Luke enlarges upon what John says. John compasses it all in one statement: "And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us..." It is Luke who gives us the fullest description of the Word being made flesh, the birth of Christ. We will not read the whole story, but we mark first of all how that the angel went to Mary, and began to present Mary with a statement. He made his statement to her, and then waited. In her perplexity she asked a question. He answered her question, and again waited. Then came the response: "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke i. 38). First of all the word offered: that is the first step in His birth, the word presented, the statement made. Then the angel waited. What are you going to do with it? How are you going to react to it? The word presents a challenge, always a costly challenge. That word is going to lead outside of the world, and is to bring the liberty of the world. Mary weighs the cost while the angel waits. The battle is fought, the storm for a moment rages, and then it is over, and in calm deliberateness, she responds, "...be it unto me according to *thy word*."

Do you see what it means to be begotten of the word of God? The first step in this new birth, the first step into this heavenly life, is our attitude toward the presented word of God, and that will be found to govern every step in the heavenly life. Such is the nature of the first step, and it is equally that of every subsequent step. All the way through the Lord will be presenting us with His word, and with it a challenge, a cost, a price to be paid, and there will be conflict over it: Are we prepared to go that way? Are we prepared to accept that word? Are we prepared for what that word means, for what it involves? On the response to what is presented depends our knowledge of the heavenly life. From beginning to end it is like that.

That is why the Lord never first explains everything to unsaved people. Doctrine followed for believers, but was never given for unbelievers. Clear, concise statements were made to unbelievers. To them there was a presenting of facts, boldly and deliberately. 'This is God's will. This is God's word. This you must do. Explanation will come later. Now, heaven is going to remain closed, or is going to be opened; the question of your entry into a heavenly life is the balance as you decide what is to be

your response to God's word. You will be born of that word, if you respond to it, begotten by the word of truth'. So the first thing is the word offered, and then, after some difficulty and conflict, accepted, received, surrendered to: "...be it unto me according to thy word."

**(ii) The Word Germinating**

What is the next step? The Spirit makes the word to germinate within. The Spirit generates within by means of the word. That is the second thing to be noted in the case of Mary, the Spirit generating, or implanting. Not until the word has found a response can that word become a living thing within. That is why an unsaved person can never know the meaning of the Word of God. The meaning of any word of God demands the inward work of the Holy Spirit to make it live, to make it germinate, and response to it opens the way for the Spirit.

**(iii) The Word (Christ) formed within Initially and Progressively**

That is the third step. It is very simple when presented like that, but this is the way into heaven, into eternal life. Mark you, this is something other than of Mary, her race, and her nature. By the Holy Spirit there was a complete coming in between all that Mary was by nature and that Holy Thing. It is a very important matter, moreover, for us to recognise that in exactly the same way are we born anew. When Christ was born of Mary, or when Christ was (may we use the word?) generated in Mary, there took place in Mary something that was altogether above nature. Mary had a long natural lineage, and in that lineage there were all sorts of people, including several harlots. But when the Holy Spirit came in and formed Christ in her, He set all that aside and cut it off. That blood did not come into Christ. Remember that! He did not inherit aught of that, whatever it was, whether high or low, good or bad. The Holy Spirit cut it off, and Christ was something other than that, distinct: "...that holy thing...". You can never say that of anything that is inherited of the blood of Rahab, or of Ruth the Moabitess. It is something other.

Christ in us is something other than ourselves. That is what makes us heavenly. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. That is our natural stream, our natural history,

the whole course of our Adamic relationship, which cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. It is only what is of Christ that will inherit the kingdom of heaven. It is Christ in us who is to us the hope of glory, and the only hope of glory. This is something other than of Mary, and her race and nature, something other than of ourselves. This which is begotten of God is of the Holy Ghost. You and I ever need to discriminate between what is of Christ in us and what is of ourselves, and not to get these things mixed. Nothing that is not of Christ is going to find acceptance. Everything has to measure up to Christ, to pass through the sieve of Christ, and the sieve is a very fine one ; for everything has to go through the test of death, and death is a tremendous test. Is there anything that death can lay hold of ? If there is, it will lay hold of it. All that is subject to death will succumb to death, and this old creation is nothing else but that. Christ is not subject to death ; He cannot be holden of it, for there is nothing in Him upon which death can fasten. That is our hope of glory, Christ in us. This Holy Ghost dividing between Mary and Christ, between ourselves and Christ, this fundamental division made by the Holy Ghost, must be kept constantly in mind, for only as we do that can God reach His end. Mark you, God can reach His end far more rapidly where that discrimination is maintained, than He can where it is overlooked. That is the importance of believers being instructed of the Lord concerning that which is essential unto His purpose.

Christ was other than the rest of men in that respect. Even from childhood He had another consciousness, as we have occasion to note when He is at the age of twelve. Not finding Him in their company, His earthly parents sought Him, and found Him in the temple, and claimed Him as son : " Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us ? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing." To this He replied, " ...wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house ? " (Luke ii. 48-49). It is a reproof, but at the same time a disclosure of another consciousness. " Thy father and I... "—" ...my Father's house... " That is not Joseph's house. Here is the setting of one Father over against the other, and of the one above the other. It is a heavenly consciousness, an eternal consciousness, a mark that He is " other ", as begotten of the Holy Ghost.

When, begotten of the Holy Ghost, we come at once back into our eternal relationship with God

in the Son, a new consciousness springs up within us, a consciousness that was not there before. This " new man " which has been put on, has a new consciousness as to heavenly relationships.

All that is embraced in the words " eternal life ". We know that eternal life does not merely imply the fact of duration ; it means a kind of life. That eternal life, that life from above, that Divine life in Christ, carries with it all that relates to the Heavenly Man.

Consider the Heavenly Man personally again. " In him was life... " ; " For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself... " (John v. 26). In the Gospel by John, the Lord Jesus says much about Himself as the Heavenly Man, possessing heavenly life, and that heavenly life was the seat of the heavenly nature and the heavenly consciousness; it was through that heavenly life that He conducted Himself as He did. He was alive unto God by that life which He possessed, and this is seen in His being able to know God, to know the movements of God, the directions of God, the gestures of God, the restraints of God. It was all gathered up in that life. That is the principle of His life as of His birth. It is the principle of our birth, and alike the principle of our life as the corporate Heavenly Man.

#### **The Gift of the Holy Spirit**

That life is by the Holy Spirit. It is always related to a Person ; it is not an abstract, a mere element. It is inseparable from the Person, which Person is the Holy Spirit ; and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. When you come to the book of the Acts, you have a great deal disclosed about the gift of the Holy Spirit. If you look at it closely you will see that the coming of the Holy Spirit was invariably related to spiritual union with Christ. Pentecost marked the end of a physical relationship with the Lord Jesus as in the flesh, the end of that extraordinary period of His post-resurrection appearances. It is the beginning of an inward, spiritual relationship with Christ. We may mark the same feature at Caesarea ; they believed, and the Holy Spirit was given. At Samaria, again, hands were laid upon those who had believed, and the Holy Spirit was given. And one of the most interesting things in the book of the Acts is that incident at Ephesus. When Paul came to Ephesus, he found certain disciples, and discerned something unusual in their condition, or was it something lacking ? To them he says, " Did ye receive the

Holy Ghost when ye believed ? ” (Acts xix, 2. R.V.). That is the correct translation, not “since ye believed” as in the Authorised Version. That in itself assumes that believing implies the receiving of the Spirit. The two things go together. Paul could not quite understand this situation. It was something abnormal. Here were those who professed to believe in Christ, and who in a way had believed in Christ, but that which should go alongside of true faith was not there. Paul found himself confronted by a condition he had never met with before, and on his putting to them the question, “Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed ? ” they made answer, “Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Ghost was...” So Paul further inquires, “Into what then were ye baptized ? ” to which they replied, “Into John’s baptism.” Ah ! Now we have the clue. “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Jesus”. So they had been baptized into John’s baptism, unto an objective, future Christ ; not baptized into Christ, but baptized toward Christ. Those are two different baptisms altogether. Paul commanded them to be baptized into the Name of the Lord Jesus, laid his hands upon them, and the Holy Ghost was given. Those two things go together. Union with Christ is shown to involve the receiving of the Spirit. That is not intended by the Lord to be something later on in the spiritual life ; it should mark the commencement.

If in the book of the Acts there are particular elements which throw up the whole matter into such clear relief, such as accompanying signs, those signs were only the Lord’s way of emphasising for all the dispensation what it means, that union with Christ involves the receiving of the Holy Spirit. How do you know ? Well, He has shown it to this dispensation by bringing it out into clear relief in that way. He has laid it down so that no one can fail to see it. If you become occupied with the signs (tongues etc.), but miss their signification, you will fail to see that those outward marks, those demonstrations, were only allowed as accompaniments, in order to emphasise the basic truth, namely, that union with Christ was now established. The gift of the Holy Spirit was the seal and proof of this. On what ground ? By believing in Christ, by being baptized into Christ, eternal life is received in the Holy Spirit. And that life has heavenly

capacities, within it are the powers of the age to come ; and when in the ages to come its powers are fully released, we shall be endued with powers which far transcend our present powers. The age to come has been foreshadowed in tokens at the beginning. It may be that from time to time those powers are made manifest in the healing of the sick even now, but let us not fasten upon those tokens and make a doctrine of tokens and signs, begin to gather them up and systematise them, and make them the object of our quest. Let us remember that they are the tokens of something else, and you can have the “something else” apart from the tokens. When in truth you are baptized into Christ, you receive the Spirit of life in Christ, and in that life you are at once brought back into your heavenly relationship with the Heavenly Man ; you become part of the corporate Heavenly Man.

It is what Christ is in us by His Spirit that determines everything. It determines all the values, settles for ever the question of effectiveness, answers all the questions and problems. I wish we had had this understanding, this knowledge sooner. If only we could have this as the foundation of our life from the beginning, what a lot we should be saved from.

Ministry is the expression of life, and not the taking on of a uniform and a title. Once I thought that to be in the ministry was to go into a certain kind of work, to come out of business, and, well, be a minister ! So one got into the thing. Many, many are labouring and toiling in it, breaking their hearts, afraid to leave that order of things, lest they should be violating what they conceived to be a Divine call. Many others cannot get out of it because it is a means of livelihood, and they too are breaking their hearts. It is all false. Ministry is not a system like that. Ministry is the expression of life, and that is but saying in other words that it is the outworking of the indwelling of Christ. Disaster lies before the man or woman who ministers on any other ground than that. When the Lord gets a chance in us, and we really will trust Him on that ground, take our position there, He will show us that there is ministry enough for us ; we shall not have to go round looking for it. The real labour so often is to get us down to that ground, the delivering of us from this present evil age even in its conception of the ministry, unto the heavenly ministry.

The Lord Jesus is our pattern. You see the spontaneous ministry, the restful ministry of

that Heavenly Man. I covet that! It does not mean that we shall become careless, but it does deliver us from so much unnecessary strain.

That is how it should be. May the Lord bring us to it; the Heavenly Man with the heavenly life as the full heavenly resource.

T.A-S

## Life in the Spirit

No. 2.

### The Forty Days after the Resurrection

We are now to consider the forty days, to which we have already referred, the forty days after Christ's resurrection. In these we have a concrete setting forth of all that we have already said; that is, as to that which is spiritual and outside of this world as such. In His movements during the forty days, Christ set forth the meaning of spirituality, and the advent of the Holy Spirit established the Apostles and the Church upon that basis. It is important to recognise the connection between the two, that in the forty days the Lord Jesus was setting forth something, and the coming of the Holy Spirit was to establish the Apostles and the Church upon the basis of that. If we ask what that was, and is, comprehensively, we shall say it is a matter of how Christ is present and how Christ is known in this dispensation. "Forty" represents for us a phase of spiritual life which has to do with our education, as to the reality of the Lord's presence.

#### The New Order of Faith

In the narrative in the first chapter of the book of the Acts there is an upward movement of the Lord, and then a cloud intervening. That is the first thing. The intervening of that cloud when the Lord has been received up represents and constitutes an entirely new order. It is the order of faith, but faith which has as its background all that the forty days have contained. That is very simple to grasp.

You will call to mind the appearances and the disappearances, the taking of the disciples by surprise again and again in various places, at considerable distances apart, with remarkable proofs that they were having to do, not with a disembodied spirit, not just an apparition,

but a living Person, Himself. We recognise that it was all with a definite object. This was no mere playtime with the Lord; He was not playing tricks upon them. There was a solid, serious object in His movements, in His activities, in His appearances and their manner through forty days. Having all that as the background, then in their presence He ascends up into heaven and a cloud intervenes. The Holy Spirit does not use words just for artistic effect, He uses words with meaning; and if the Holy Spirit thinks it worth while to put that little phrase in, He is not just painting a pretty picture, and saying, There was a cloud. He is saying something more than that, with spiritual meaning. He is saying that now the order which has been reached is an order, not of sight, but of faith. That cloud speaks of a new order which has been introduced, the law of faith as the governing principle of the dispensation. Upon what ground? Upon all that the forty days have held; faith that believes that what has happened through the forty days is so real, is so true, is so solid that they can go forward on that basis; that, although they do not see Him, although a cloud has intervened, He is just as truly present and can be just as truly known now for the future as He has been during that time. That is what He was seeking to constitute during that period.

This cloud, bringing in the order of faith, was intended to bring them to the place where the order of the forty days became the normal order of their lives, the normal conditions of things.

#### The Presence and Knowledge of the Risen Lord

Were we to use our imagination (and I think it is permissible sometimes in these connections)

to try to put ourselves into the place of these apostles, how should we come back to the upper room. Remember these apostles had been in that upper room not so very long before with Him in the breaking of bread, in the Passover. He was there, and they saw Him. One of them was in such close touch with Him as to lean upon Him. They heard Him; there is no mistake about it; He was there on that Passover night. Now all these strange things have happened, the Cross, the resurrection, the forty days, and they come back to that same room. How do they come back? What are their feelings?

Now, you may have been with a beloved friend on the earth on a memorable occasion, when things were said and transacted between you which were outstanding in their nature, particularly impressive and significant. That friend maybe has since died, a short time elapsed, and that friend is no more with you in that way. You go back into the room for the first time after the departure and what is your feeling? Your feeling is that a death has taken place; there is a gap. Memory floods everything with what took place then, but the friend is no more; all that has gone, and a great sense of loss, of pain, of sorrow falls upon you; something of a tragic atmosphere is in that place. That is how it is naturally.

These disciples went back. How did they feel? Did they after all this go back into that room feeling as though a death had taken place, a friend had gone, the world was empty, everything was unreal, life was hollow? No, not in the least. They went back into that upper room conscious that He had gone, but that He might be there at any moment. He had gone, and yet He had not gone. He had died, but He was alive. They had lost Him, and yet they had Him. The effect of the forty days was to make them know that He was as much with them as ever. That was what the Lord was after, to create that state with them that, although He had died He was alive, and although He had ceased to speak in audible voice they could know Him, and could go on knowing Him. They did not come back into that upper room like men who had lost their Master, but as those who were going on with Him; it was not that He had ceased working, but He was going on working; not ceased speaking, but was going on speaking. We find them again in the upper room as in the presence of the Lord. He has brought them to that position by the forty days.

You see the object, and you see faith's basis for the dispensation; it is the nature of the Lord's presence, and how He can be known. That is spirituality. Upon that basis the Holy Spirit came to establish the Church; and if you and I, or any company of the Lord's people, really do come under the government of the Holy Spirit, that will be an upper room in the full sense of what is here; that is, the realisation of the Lord's presence and the Lord making Himself known to us. That is very simple, but that is the basis of spirituality, the nature of spirituality at the outset. It is that which constitutes the Church, and makes the Church spiritual. The spiritual nature of the Church is consequent upon the Lord's living presence, and the Lord making Himself known.

He made Himself known to them; He appeared unto them by the space of forty days. Having had that laid down in the forty days there comes the departure, and the cloud intervenes, and they see Him no more. Subsequently the Holy Spirit comes, and upon the basis of the forty days, as to what those forty days mean of the Lord's own living presence and the Lord's continuous making of Himself known, the Church is established. You can see the truth of that in the New Testament, and at all times since, when the Holy Spirit has something entirely under His hand. The Lord is there, and there is a continuation of the making of Himself known.

#### Adjustment to the Risen Lord as Man in the Throne of Heaven

Now we shall simply take fragments of the chapter.

“And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven...”

“Ye men of Galilee...”: “Two men... in white apparel”. Again, the Holy Spirit makes no mistake over words. The Holy Spirit could have said two angels, but He did not; the Holy Spirit said, “Ye men of Galilee...” And then, “Two men ... in white apparel”. You have the earthly men and the heavenly men, and the earthly men are put right by the heavenly men.

or the heavenly men adjust the earthly men to heavenly realities. "Ye men of Galilee". Now, to be called Galileans was a term of reproach, it was something used to signify contempt. There was something in the mind of others about the Galileans which regarded them as somewhat inferior. So that here we have earthly reproach and heavenly glory brought together by heavenly government. Here there are two men who were really angels: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. i. 14). That is government, the administration of heavenly things.

By these two men the heavenly government has come in to put right what is here amongst men of the earth, and the heavenly glory has come in to adjust men of earthly reproach to itself. The Scriptural meaning of two is testimony—"In the mouth of two witnesses"; "He sent them forth two by two". Wherever you find two you will find the Lord's minimum as to testimony, but the Lord's sufficiency for testimony.

Now let us consider what we have in these fragments. Two men from heaven are putting things right with the men who are to come under the power of the Holy Spirit to be heavenly men. They are being adjusted to heavenly realities, so as to become spiritual men. They stand stedfastly gazing up into heaven. What is their mind? What is in their faces? Perhaps it is a big question that is surging through their hearts, all sorts of emotions, hopes, fears: 'He is going': 'We are losing Him': 'We are being left'. It is as though that cloud were, after all, going to make the great divide between Christ in heaven and Christ on earth. The words of the two men must be taken as answering what was going on in them at that moment, as being an answer to their gaze and to what was behind their gaze in their hearts.

"... why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus..." The two men did not say—That Jesus that was, but—This Jesus that still is. In effect they said: 'He is just the same; though received up from you He is still Jesus'. Thus the disciples were adjusted by these heavenly men to the fact that this Jesus is alive in heaven, and that they must from this time go back (for this is clearly what they concluded from the words of the two men) and proceed on the basis that Jesus is not changed, but is still Jesus in heaven; He is coming back again, but He is still Jesus in heaven.

You may think this is pressing things and analysing very finely, but there is a good deal more in the background than there is time to indicate.

### The Instrument and Character of Testimony

Mark the fact that from the moment the Holy Spirit thrust them out into testimony you have these two features, that the Holy Ghost constituted two men again and again the instrument of testimony, and their testimony ever and always was '*Jesus of Nazareth*, whom God raised and exalted to His own right hand'. Where did they get that? How was it that the Lord ever saw to it that two of them represented His order? Paul and Barnabas were sent out together, and when there came a break-down, then Paul and someone else. The Lord sought to maintain a minimum of two for the testimony, and the testimony was always Jesus of Nazareth; not that was, but that is: "... Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged upon a tree. Him hath God exalted with his own right hand..." That was established by the two men from heaven. "This Jesus"—He is alive and He is in heaven exalted. Two men brought them into line with a heavenly testimony to the fact of the risen life and heavenly exaltation of Jesus of Nazareth for the dispensation.

This governs the dispensation. In two there is testimony, and the testimony is to the fact that *Jesus* is glorified at God's right hand. Now the Holy Spirit comes and constitutes the Church, and the believer, upon that basis, so that the Church and the believer become the embodiment of that truth, that Jesus is alive; not something merely to be announced as an objective fact, but to be represented in a vessel. 'How do you know He is alive? you have never seen Him'. 'It is by faith'. 'Oh, well, faith is surely an abstract thing; how do you prove it?' 'I am the embodiment of the fact'. 'Oh, that is egotism, that is setting yourself up to be something'. 'All right, I will live here on that basis, and we shall see'. The Lord will deal with you on that basis. He will break your natural life, He will break natural resources, bring them to an end, wind up natural knowledge and wisdom, until there is nothing left; and then He will do things on a basis which can take the strain, which can produce that work. That is the testimony, that Jesus is embodied in the believer and in the Church. That is God's

thought for His Church. What a long way the Church has departed from that. The Church was intended to be the testimony of Jesus embodied, worked out. It was like that at the beginning. God chose such as in themselves could not stand up to this world's wisdom, this world's power. They in themselves were altogether at a discount, and should they have had a history in this world, such as that of Saul of Tarsus, which made them something amongst men, the Lord when He got hold of them took all that from them, and brought them to the place where they despaired of life, and had the sentence of death in themselves, that they should not trust in themselves, but in God who raiseth the dead. He did it again, and again; and they were the testimony, the very embodiment of that testimony.

You see the departure. You see what God must have. That is spirituality. Spirituality is not being occupied with the high truths, advanced teaching. Spirituality is, by the Holy Spirit, the embodiment of Christ risen, and Christ glorified. Meet that, and you meet the indestructible.

That is what the Lord has His heart set upon in this dispensation. In ourselves we are nothing, and less than nothing. The Lord is breaking down, grinding to powder, emptying out, confounding us in our wisdom; we are coming to the place where all that does not avail, and we cannot proceed upon that basis. We try, and we cannot go on with it; we are at an end. Then the Lord is all the time coming in, being our life, our wisdom, but a wisdom which does not take shape in our brains, in such a way that we understand it, comprehend it. It is simply a working, and by the result you know that it is the wisdom of God. You cannot see how the Lord is doing it; you cannot understand the ways of the Lord even in yourself and through others, but in the end there are such results as prove that that was God and not you. How some of us have cried to the Lord to give us ability in certain directions; for administrative purposes, for example, and we found ourselves totally incapable of doing the Lord's work on the old basis of organisation, decision, judgment. All we have been able to do has been just to do what the Lord told us to do next, not knowing why He told us to do that. We went out not knowing whither we went, on that particular move, but we knew the Lord had indicated that way. What was the issue? Simply that we could

never have accomplished that by our wit and wisdom, but it was something which bore the stamp of God, and it will stand for eternity. It is a wisdom that is not of this world, not of ourselves.

We have simply lighted upon that point to indicate what we mean. This thing is comprehensive, it has many aspects. Two men from heaven adjust the other men of earth to heaven.

### The Understanding and Establishment of the Heavenly Relationships and Laws

Now see the outworking. The immediate result was that they acted with understanding. They returned to Jerusalem and went to the upper room and continued in prayer. They had perception of what they ought to do. Did they prove right? They certainly did. They were acting now under heavenly government in relation to heavenly movements. It was there that the Holy Spirit found them. It was there that the Holy Spirit lighted upon them, and commenced the new dispensation. They were in the right place for the Holy Spirit. They were moving with an understanding of how they ought to move, of what the next step was. That is spirituality in intelligence.

"Two men stood by them in white apparel". Stood by! Again, we need not feel that we are exaggerating words and phrases if we recognise that there is a value in that very small clause. Take up the occurrences of that phrase "stood by". For instance, look at it in 2 Tim. iv. 17. "Notwithstanding the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me..." What was the standing by for? It was to support whoever was concerned in a new position. They had come into a strange position, something altogether new they had never been in that position before; they had no history along that line; nothing to fall back upon, no experience to appeal to. The book of the Acts is a book of spiritual principles, and the Lord shows in remarkable, supernatural, extraordinary ways that those principles are established. It is unnecessary throughout the dispensation for the Lord to associate with the principles the same demonstrations. He has done that at the beginning for the establishment of those principles. For instance, there is a principle violated by Ananias and Sapphira. That principle is the absolute sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Because of the violation of that principle when it is first laid

down, the Lord brings alongside of the laying down of the principle a most conspicuous establishment of it, and Ananias and Sapphira are slain. Many men and women have done exactly the same thing through this dispensation, and have never been smitten in the same way, never died on the spot. Does that mean that the principle is weakened with God, that He has changed His attitude toward it? Not at all. You can never violate a principle without suffering in the realm of your spiritual life, and most likely in your physical life. Paul refers to this in his letter to the Corinthians: "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep". People were in bodily sickness, and there were deaths taking place at Corinth, resultant from the violation of a spiritual principle. We can take it that, whether instantly we violate the principle the Lord steps in with judgment and smites, or whether He stands back in patience, His attitude toward the principle is exactly the same.

Take another example. The accompaniment of the Holy Spirit being given was the gift of tongues. It was the establishment of a principle. That does not mean that right through the dispensation the presence of the Holy Spirit must invariably be accompanied by tongues. The Lord gave what was phenomenal to establish His principle, that the presence of the Holy Spirit means that you are lifted above the level of nature, that you are put into a new realm where you have new capacities, powers for doing what you cannot do by nature. If, for instance, it is the gift of a heavenly tongue, understood by men of all different tongues on the earth, what does it suggest? It suggests that when we reach the end of God's work in a new creation we shall all speak one tongue, and shall all understand one another; or, to put it the other way, the curse which fell upon men through sin, the consequence of which is division, and confusion, will have gone for ever. This is the earnest of the Spirit. The Lord has established that principle at the beginning by extraordinary associations, to show that He lays down that principle most definitely. We are not to look always for the association every time, but we are to recognise the law and see that we do not violate the principle that is in view at that point.

We have somewhat diverged in order to illustrate that the Lord, represented in these two men, stood by to establish something that

was quite fresh, to support in a new position. These two men came alongside to get these disciples established on a heavenly basis, the basis of Christ alive and exalted.

These two men said: "This Jesus". Why did they not say, This Lord, This Son of God? They could have said that with absolute truth. Again, the Holy Spirit describes the two messengers as two men, not two angels, not two celestial beings. That might have been said quite truly. Do you see the basis? It is setting forth so clearly the fact that God has instituted and constituted for the dispensation a Man in the glory as the Head of a new race, and it is our union with Him as the Man in the glory which is the order of this dispensation. God has a new Man, and He is bringing men into conformity to that new Man. That Man is God: but He is Man.

The dispensation is to get men adjusted to the Man, and so two men come from heaven to adjust men of the earth to a Man in heaven. The Holy Spirit has come to constitute men of earth according to the Man in heaven; to bring men of earth under the government of the Man in heaven, and to make men of earth like the Man in heaven. The Apostle Paul brings that out clearly in his letters. His whole object is to present every man perfect in Christ. Christ in heaven is governing, but not in an official sense. His government is spiritual, and when you and I say that we are being governed by spiritual considerations, it is in that same sense that Christ is governing. He is the perfect expression of God's thought; therefore that perfect expression of God's thought has to govern us. What is God's thought? It is not an abstract thing in our mentality. God's thought is a Person. What is God's will? God's will is a Person. Look at the Lord Jesus and you see God's mind to the full, God's will to the full, perfect. To be constituted according to Christ is to be constituted according to God's thought and God's will; and the Holy Spirit is not bringing truths to us, He is bringing Christ to us, and bringing us under Christ; conforming us in a spiritual way to that Man who is the full expression of the thought of God.

That is so for the individual believer, but in the full sense it is for the Church, the one "new man", to come to the full measure of the stature of a man in Christ. God is after manhood as in Christ in glory taking precedence over the manhood that is here. The testimony is to a

heavenly Man in men here, not in words, but in the expression of that Man in heaven. He said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me". What is a witness? A witness is not one who gives out information. Try that in any court of law, and see if it will be accepted. If you are called as a witness in a court of law and begin to give information that you have received, you will very quickly be told that it is no use telling what you have heard, you must tell what you know, and that if you do not know, and cannot tell what you know, you must give place. A witness is one who is at first hand the embodiment of the truth.

This is a testimony to the heavenly Man reaching from the ascension to the return of the Lord, marking the dispensation, and that is spirituality. The Holy Spirit has come to constitute us according to Christ on the basis of His resur-

rection and His heavenly life, so that there is expressed by us the fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus by means of His risen life in us. Spirituality is that you and I are marked by the risen life of the Lord.

We have said that this is a crisis and a process. The crisis is that of being born again; the process is that of the increase of that life, and our coming more and more to live by the risen life of the Lord, and less by our own; and then, with that intelligence concerning Christ, the knowledge of Christ growing. What a tremendous fulness there is in Christ in heaven! We shall ever go on learning what Christ is as expressive of Divine thought in a Man. Spirituality is to be progressively taking Christ as to what He is according to God, and making Him our life.

T.A-S.

## The Kingdom of the God of Heaven

No. 2.

### The King of Heaven

READING: Daniel vii. 14; iv. 37.

We are to consider another title of God that is brought before us by these verses that we have read, the King of heaven. Daniel is a book full of kings and would-be kings, big ones and little ones, historic ones and obscure ones. There are plenty of kings and kingdoms mentioned here, but towering above them all is the only throne that really matters, the throne of the King of heaven. Away from the earth, above it, independent of it, He has His position, Monarch, Ruler of the universe, the King of heaven.

Nevertheless, as we have already noticed, that kingdom and that throne are not without relationship with this earth; indeed, the relationship is of the nearest, and therefore among men, and among these other kings and their kingdoms, the Lord has His own throne, a part of His kingdom, His representatives, if you like, His ambassadors, here in the earth. So when we speak of the King of heaven, we not only look off to God in all the remoteness and glory of His majesty, but we are called upon to recognise

that this title has a most important bearing upon those who stand for Him among men here on this earth. They are meant to be a part of that kingdom, in closest relationship with that King.

### The Kingdom a Pre-eminent Note of the Gospel

I want first of all that we should have it clearly established in our minds that this is not just some passing phase of Jewish history; this is the eternal purpose of God, this is God's secret. He is King of heaven, but He vests His kingdom, as we have seen, in a Man, a Son of Man, the Son of Man. He is pleased to do that, and He waits for the establishment of that kingdom in its fullest manifestation, for all that relates to His kingdom in the Man, the God-Man, has all to be realised and brought to fulness. That requires that the reason for which Christ became Man should be realised; that is, that other men, sinners like you and me, should be brought into fellowship with Him in the administration of His kingdom.

Let us glance through the New Testament, that we may realise that this kingdom of heaven (for that is what is involved in this title) is not an isolated and detached thing, but rather the basis of His work, both preparatory to, and in, the redeeming work of His Son.

Let us look first of all at the Gospel by Matthew. That is the Gospel of the kingdom of the heavens, and you know how again and again throughout the book the thought of kingdom appears. If you will look again you will also discover that it is the Gospel which is occupied from many angles with the thought of things heavenly. I know there are some who, in their desire rightly to divide the Word of truth, have detached that from bearing any relationship to those who are the Lord's redeemed, but I want to suggest to you that it is a striking thing that though, of course, the Church comes into view in all the Gospels in different ways, Matthew, the Gospel of the kingdom of the heavens, is the one where the Church is most definitely mentioned; where the Lord, after speaking of the very matter that was before us in our last meditation, and giving revelation to a human heart, said: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church..." And that is not the only reference in that Gospel.

You turn to the book of the Acts, a book alive with that which represents our desire and expectation of the Lord's working in these our days, and in chapter xiv. you will find the Apostle Paul encouraging tried children of God, those who indeed had but recently believed on the Name, and in verse 22 of that chapter we read of him, along with Barnabas, "confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God".

I think, were we to pursue it, we should find that almost every letter of the Apostle Paul brings this matter of the kingdom into view. Look at the earliest and the latest. 1 Thessalonians is commonly taken to have been the Apostle Paul's first letter. 1 Thess. ii. 12 reads: "to the end that ye should walk worthily of God, who calleth you into his own kingdom and glory". You will recognise that means more than that the Lord is calling either them or us to be just present, as it were, within the sphere of the kingdom, just one of those peoples and nations that we read of in Daniel that come under His beneficent rule. It is far more than that. The nations in the widest sense will know

in that great day the blessedness of being governed by the Lord, and for those who are born again there is no question at all that they will ever get outside of the scope of that; but there is something more here. The Lord is calling the redeemed, calling those who have believed on His name. It is, as the Apostle terms it in another place, "the heavenly calling". It is a heavenly vision. Now what is the call? It is to His own kingdom and glory.

We could look at other passages—2 Thessalonians speaks of suffering in relation to that—but we will pass right on to the Apostle's last letter. 2 Timothy iv. 18: "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be the glory for ever and ever." This is the last word of the Apostle Paul. Nothing was written by him after this that we know of. That is the expectation of the Apostle Paul, and he realises that to the last there is needed a mighty activity of God in deliverance that he may not miss that to which he has been called.

If we look at Peter's letters we find the same thing. 2 Peter i. 10-11: "Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble, for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". The Apostles are not distinct from one another in this matter.

If you turn back to Hebrews xii. 22, you will find similar matter. The heavenlies come into view again in verse 28. "Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe".

It is hardly necessary to turn to the book of the Revelation, but we will have in mind one reference there. Rev. i. 6: "and he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever."

I feel we need something of the weight of the Lord's own emphasis, for if the matter comes up again and again in almost every letter, surely there is an urgent call; and if we find such a word used as a call from God, then surely we need to pay the more earnest heed to it. Here is a kingdom, a heavenly kingdom, that matters everything to God, and everything to this world, of hope for the future, of blessing, of glory. Everything is made to depend upon this

one fact, that from heaven there should come to bear upon this earth, not merely now in some over-ruling way, but in a full weight of government, a kingdom which is essentially, right through to the core, not earthly but heavenly, not of man but of God. Yet, though it is not earthly, the Lord is taking from the earth those who shall compose it; and, though it is not of man, it is men and women that God is seeking to bring into it.

### The Essential Character of the Kingdom

It is that which is the emphasis upon my own heart. We should aspire to be with the Lord in His work, respond to that call to His own kingdom and glory. What is the essential condition for one to be there? What is the Lord seeking in our hearts that it may be possible for us to be there? When the Kingdom comes down and is set up as foretold, who will be in the closest relationship with the Son of Man who is its centre and administrator? Will it be those who know all about it? Will it be those who have taken certain titles and names, and accepted certain doctrines? No! Who will they be? Those who, like Him, have a nature and a character which is so heavenly that they are morally and spiritually fitted to govern. So the great inclusive feature and characteristic of those who are in the work of the heavens in this most utter sense is that they are heavenly. I want to divide that up very simply, as we find it in the book of Daniel, for typically Daniel and his fellows stand before us as God's testimony in the earth to a heavenly kingdom, a witness by lip and life to men, and, more than that, as definitely working with God in His kingdom, an instrument for the bringing of it in, and the establishing of it. These are the men, and if we describe them in one word it is that they are heavenly men.

Let me say first of all that Daniel is an excellent example of a heavenly man, in that he was not what we would call in full time service. That is not a condition for heavenliness at all. He is in Babylon. He has to work for his living. Indeed, he is put into a place of considerable responsibility, and there he must have been handling a lot of matters and concerns that, as far as could be seen by him or anybody else, were purely earthly. Nevertheless he stands before us as the great example of a heavenly man. You may think that if you have to be in the kitchen washing up greasy saucepans you

can never be heavenly. You think, as one who has to work every day and go to an office, that if only you could get away from that there would be a chance of your being heavenly. Do not believe it. The Lord does in His wisdom release people from other matters that they might devote themselves more definitely to His service, but at no time is heavenliness merely in the realm of some kind of isolation from the things of this world.

### Primary Features of Heavenliness

#### (a) Purity

The first feature of heavenliness is purity, clarity, freedom from mixture. The heavens, ideally, are clear. That which comes from the heavens or is seen in the heavens is clear. When in the last book of the Bible we are given in some symbolic form the most beautiful picture of God's city, one of the outstanding features of it is its clarity. It is like unto glass, or to pure gold; everything is transparent, and clear. That freedom from mixture, that clearness, that transparent purity is one of the constituents of heavenliness. So we read Daniel i. for heavenliness comes into view right at the beginning, and, as I see it, the battle rages right through the book over this question. God seeks that His instrument should be heavenly, and to be heavenly it must, among other things, be pure, there must be no mixture. Satan in every way available to him is out if possible to defile that purity, to tarnish that gold, and render opaque that transparency.

#### Purity in the Inner Life

It is most important to find where the matter first arose with Daniel. It comes in several times with him and his companions, but the first realm in which there must be purity is that of the personal life. Chapter i. deals with Daniel's own personal life, his own personal relationship in his inward, private life, and that is where we must begin. Not once nor twice have there been those who have been fired with the message of the necessity for distinctiveness in the things of God and have made a move in some outward way, while in themselves they are a mass of contradictions, and a horrible mixture in their own personal and private lives. Of course they have helped nobody, neither themselves nor anybody else; they have not given a clear testimony, they have begun altogether at the wrong end. I am glad Daniel did not do that.

God's instrument must not do that. Begin at the right end, and the right end is that of our own personal, individual life with God. That is the beginning. I want in the name of the Lord to suggest that you let the Lord speak to your heart. Are there matters of contradiction in your life, first of all. Of course Daniel did not come to perfection as a boy and a young man, nor will you and I, and this matter of sifting out the mixture, dividing asunder between soul and spirit, is a life-long task in our walk with God. But you find what Daniel did—and what you and I can do—in that he purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself. It is a matter, a determination as in the presence of God that any defilements shall cease to be, and that temptations or tendencies to defilement should be resolutely debarred from his life. It is a heart attitude. The Lord will deal with all that is mixture as we are able to bear it. Again and again He works to bring out that which is objectionable to Himself, a contradiction, that which you have been holding to, undiscovered, unknown, unsuspected. One of the values of fellowship, as I have proved it, and see it to be, is that in the realm of fellowship some of those things which otherwise would never come out are brought to the surface.

That is a lifelong work, but let us come back to Daniel's decision. Here is the beginning of heavenliness. If you have not come to this point you have not begun. You cannot with truth call Him King of heaven until you have purposed in your heart that you will not defile yourself. I am so glad that these titles of the Lord come right down to us to-day in the smallest details of our lives, and are not just something that we consider. What a beautiful task it would be to write a book on the titles of the Lord in Daniel! But the thing is to realise that these titles touch you to-day, and every day, and if you want to take the Word of God upon your lips in truth, and say, He is King of heaven, well then, heavenliness means purity, means that there must be no mixture. The Word of God from beginning to end is ever and again emphasising that fact, that God hates mixture.

Further, let us make up our minds to this, that faithfulness to God and freedom from mixture is gain and not loss. It must be or God is mocked. Perhaps you are fighting your battle and are being persistently persecuted by this

challenge from Satan, that God is asking you to give up the king's meat, that lovely wine, and you will get thin and be a disgrace, and you will be so unfruitful! That is Satan's lie. These poor folk thought it would be a cost, because they did not know better, but Daniel who had Divine revelation knew that he could not lose by being faithful to God. You may lose certain earthly things, but if you find a spiritual parallel to this earthly matter you will be "fairer" and "fatter" if you are true to God.

### Purity in Worship

The matter comes up again in chapter iii. in the case of Daniel's three fellow-countrymen. This time matters are brought out into the open, and in the realm of worship Satan would have mixture. Surely that is the hidden side of the story of those three young men. The burning fiery furnace was meant to force them into a place of compromise, and had they done that their lives would have been spared and it might have seemed that the cruelty of the enemy had been frustrated. Nevertheless Satan would have been victorious, and God's testimony would have been marred, had those three men done what was asked of them. It was a very simple matter, a merely nominal acknowledgment of this colossus of man's pride. Now things are out in the open, in the more public realm, and the question of worship arises. Will you yield just a little, only a little? Will you defile the quality of your testimony? You cannot call God the King of heaven any more if you do. Of course, it was only a gesture that was required of them, and everything made so easy for them and so hard to resist. Remember this, that if you are in that position, any kind of mixture in that realm debars you from rightly calling upon God as the King of heaven. You are in compromise, you are in mixture. God is calling you to His heavenly kingdom, and there is no mixture there.

### Purity in Service

Then you pass on to chapter vi. and the matter has become deeper still, in relation to the Lord's work, the Lord's testimony in the earth. Chapter vi. follows chapter ix. in point of time. Daniel had got through over the matter of Jerusalem. He has prayed and has the answer. Jerusalem is to be restored and the Lord's

assurance is given. 'Now Daniel you are praying toward Jerusalem, you are giving thanks about Jerusalem, about the Lord's interests here on the earth, the Lord's work; you have a place of influence for the Lord; now will you compromise in some way? If you do your life will be spared and you will be able to exert all your influence and continue your work for the Lord. If you do not, then you will face the lions den and that will be the end of your usefulness to God!' You see the subtlety of it all. I do not believe by this time of his life Daniel cared for his own personal well-being, if ever he did, but you will know perhaps that the most subtle and most painful of all the wiles of Satan in trying to deter our quest for holiness, and our determination to be pure and true before the Lord nearly always revolves around the question of our usefulness in the Lord's work. 'If you take this other position, that you will be true to God at any cost with no compromise, no mixture, well, look at the chances you are losing!' No! Look rather at the opportunity for the Lord if you take such a stand.

Daniel was essentially a heavenly man, and would have no compromise. As for the den of lions, that was the Lord's matter; his duty and his responsibility was to keep clear and clean. I pray that the Lord will apply that to our hearts. God is King of heaven, and that means in every realm of life and service there must be heavenly purity, heavenly clarity, and a hatred and loathing of any kind of compromise or mixture. That is God's prophetic word to His people, and in these days there is a kingdom at stake, a place in the kingdom at stake. God calls you to a heavenly kingdom. That means eternal usefulness, that means a place of opportunity for the Lord and for others such as in these days we can never have, but one of the great necessities for heavenliness is clarity and purity in every realm and at every turn.

So the book finishes on that note. "Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white ..." Of others it is said that they "shall fall, to refine them, and to purify, and to make them white". That is God's desire, that is God's purpose, that is the end of all that anguish and persecution and trial that the saints of God have to endure. God's last word in the book of Revelation concerning His heavenly kingdom is that those who would be in it should be clean and pure, and apart from that which is filthy and abominable and unclean.

### (b) Humility

Then there is the matter of humility. You remember that when our Lord Jesus came preaching concerning the Kingdom, He said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". Now concerning Himself, who came from that throne and who has as Man resumed His position and is the Head of that heavenly kingdom, not much is said by way of description. The Lord did not say a great deal about His being this or that, but it is very interesting to note that He did say "I am meek and lowly in heart". That is God's King. God's King is a heavenly King, and one of the great features of His heavenliness, that which would seem to be altogether opposed to heavenliness but which is the very inner heart of heavenliness, is a lowly and meek spirit. You remember that when John the Baptist was announcing the kingdom and its coming, using prophetic words to do so he spoke of preparing a way for the Lord, in terms such as these: "Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low..." (Luke iii. 5). That is the condition for the kingdom, that is the preparation. He goes before the face of the Lord to prepare a way, and his cry is that those mountains and those hills, the big things and the smaller things, every kind of eminence has to come down and be brought low.

So we have this long story of Nebuchadnezzar and God's dealings with him, surely to teach Daniel as much as to teach Nebuchadnezzar, and to teach us, that this might stand in the book of the kingdom, that the King of heaven demands in those who would be related to Him the complete laying aside and forsaking of every kind of pride. "Those that walk in pride he is able to abase".

Daniel needed that lesson, and you and I need it. It is not merely the case that God is able to abase some proud world ruler, but this is His word to us concerning Himself as the King of heaven. Would you be related to Him in that capacity? Would you know Him thus? Then there must be purged from you every kind of pride, self-conceit, self-seeking. How deep that goes! How utter that is! Here again, it perhaps takes the Lord our lifetime to teach us that lesson. If we can only see it, and work with Him, then we are doing what Peter said, giving diligence to make our calling and election sure. So often the saints of God have heard that He has made them kings, spiritually ascendent,

and they have become inflated and the Devil has laughed. He does not mind how much you humiliate him, how much you shout and withstand him, so long as in your heart there lurks some atom of pride, for that is where his kingdom is ; and how can you call upon God as the King of heaven, if His enemy's kingdom is there. You see the emphasis and the need for it.

So, mark you, when we come into the atmosphere of chapter vii., and the Lord is bringing in His eternal kingdom, we find that it is the saints who are to possess the kingdom. Let us note again what is said of them.

"...judgement was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (verse 22).

"I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them" (verse 21).

"And he shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High ; and he shall think to change the times and the law ; and they shall be given into his hand..." (verse 25).

These are the overcomers, and they are not such as are impressing people with the scope of their own achievements, the tremendous personality of their own characters. You see what is happening to them. Men are wiping their feet on them, and God is allowing it. That is a part of God's way to this heavenliness that He is after. Why does God allow so much injustice ? Why does God allow so much that He could so quickly take from us ? Why does He allow us often to be put at a discount ? Why does He permit things which put us altogether in a bad light, and where we have no way of justification ; where we expect Him to vindicate us, and He does not ? Why is it that when with all our hearts we seek to be faithful to Him there are so many of the marks of weakness upon us, whether as individuals or as a people. Is that the fulness of the Spirit ? Is that the testimony of Jesus ? Can those people proclaim God as the King of heaven ? God has them in hand, and one thing He is most meticulously careful to avoid is the allowance of anything that will permit pride to come in. So you and I, instead of murmuring and complaining, and wishing God would take us out into what we call that "wealthy place", might rather take note of the goodness of God in humbling us.

Those are the features of the last days. The

saints of God are at a discount, they are crushed, broken ; men do what they like with them, and the Lord allows it. The time will come for reckoning, but meanwhile you see what the Lord is doing. In His grace and mercy He is purging from us any tendency to pride or inflation, not suffering us even a measure of self-justification ; for that, after all, is only self. But it is hard to be misunderstood ; it is hard not to be able to explain yourself ; it is hard to wait for a future day for vindication, to live as it were under a cloud. Yet the Lord allows some of His children to pass through that, not only in the eyes of those with whom they may be opposed, with whom there may be a great difference, but even in the eyes of those who may be dearest, closest. They cannot explain themselves in certain ways, they are unable to justify themselves. It seems a painful thing at times, it seems cruelty on God's part to permit it. But that is the goodness of God. He is trying to make us a heavenly people, and He will do everything to keep us from the snare of Satan's pride : "...lest being puffed up he fall into the snare of the devil" (1 Tim. iii. 6). The Lord deals with us like that in many ways, to bring us to a place of greater usefulness. Painful though the discipline may be at times, it is a comfort amid all the pain to realise that God is the King of heaven and He is making us heavenly.

### (c) Faith

That brings us to the third constituent, which is faith, or, if you like, faithfulness ; you cannot very well distinguish between the two. Thus in chapter i. we see that Daniel stakes everything on God. There is the position of faith. It is perfectly safe to trust God, and perfectly safe to have all one's resources in God : and that is heavenliness. Heavenliness does not draw its resources from earth, but from heaven. Faith is required for such an attitude, maintained faith, faith tried seven times ; but faith will be justified.

Then we come to the circumstances of this book. Oh, how the Lord seeks faith in His children. These three young men were facing the burning fiery furnace, and the declaration is made that God will deliver, and God does not deliver, and they go into the burning fiery furnace heated seven times. Why did God permit that ? Of course, it is easy for us to make reply, because we know the end of the story. But

put yourself in that position. Why is God allowing this? Because these must be heavenly men, and heavenly men must have implicit faith in God. Theirs is not to seek deliverance by earthly means. I wonder if Daniel could have helped them had they appealed to him. But there was one appeal, and one only, and that to God. It is so in the first chapter concerning resources. It is so in the second chapter concerning revelation. It is so in the third chapter concerning the matter of deliverance. Everything resolves itself into faith's obedience. The one who is proved in every circumstance and in the face of every contradiction to be trusting God, that one is entitled to call God the King of heaven.

Do you think there are ever doubts in the hosts of heaven as to whether God will triumph? Do you think there are ever any questions in the smallest circumstances or in the largest issue as to God's triumph? Never! They are all sure of God. That is why revelation is given to faith. God has a purpose in revealing His Son, that faith should rise up in obedience. Daniel did that.

In chapter ix. Daniel came to a place of real trust in God concerning Jerusalem, so real that he not only prayed but gave thanks. That is the position to which Daniel came concerning Jerusalem; the thing was done, so far as he was concerned. In spirit he was in that position, full of praise to God.

Then comes the issue, that trick that brought him into the danger of the lions den. Now, Daniel, where is your rejoicing? The open hatred and cruelty of all who are against him are nothing; he has seen God, he has seen God's purpose, and his heart is fixed. That is heavenliness, and that is what you and I are going to need, even more than we need it to-day. Things are becoming far worse than ever we have known, and God would warn us beforehand, He would prepare us and He would say: 'Be a Daniel if you would have a part in that heavenly kingdom; go through to the end, and never doubt Me. Things will contradict Me, or seem to do so; everything will suggest that something has gone wrong, that your faith has been misplaced, that I am not the King of heaven; but if at the end you are still found knowing Me

as the King of heaven, then that is the qualification'. Such are they who shall be caught up. "And they overcame...because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death". These are they who in the face of every contradiction never waver, but are found affirming that God is the King of heaven and that He will establish a universal dominion here among men, and that proud thing shall fall to the ground and every obstacle and barrier in His way shall be swept aside as though it were nothing. We shall stand in that day with Him because of His worthiness and His grace. Can you say that by faith? That is heavenliness if you can. God is King of heaven.

While on the one hand we seek to respond to Him and provide Him with the conditions for bringing us there, on the other hand we are going to stand from the very beginning on the fact that this is God's grace, God's purpose, and that He has the power to do it; we trust Him and we walk with Him. Yes, the saints of the Most High shall possess the kingdom. But we mark again what is said first of all. "And he shall speak words against the Most High...and he shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand *until*..." Faith says, Yes, only until—You and I will go on trusting UNTIL—because we know what the end of all this is to be. Let us seek to have this stand for ourselves, and let us seek to pray such faith into the suffering saints of God in these days, that God shall not be without His heavenly people in the day when the colossus of man's pride is surely seen among us, that which is risen up from the earth. Everything in the book of Daniel that is against God comes up from the earth. And to-day this great massive thing is up, and everything says to us that God is failing, things are going wrong; but the heart that trusts God endures.

We expect conditions to grow blacker. We look, not for immediate release, but rather to go into the furnace heated seven times, into the lions den; but we go in with this title proclaimed from lips that trust Him: God is the King of heaven, and He will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom. To Him be the glory.

H.F.

# The Lord's Testimony

No. 2.

## The Pot of Oil

**READING:** 2 Kings iv. 1-7; Ephes. i. 13-14; v. 18; Col. i. 25-27; John vii. 37-39.

Let us gather up those references. First of all, having believed on Jesus we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (Ephes. i. 13). That is not something that you have to wait for, or ask for, or plead for, it is something which is yours, if you have faith in the Lord Jesus. If you have believed into Him, God says that you are sealed with the Holy Spirit; that is, the Holy Spirit of God is given to you as a seal that you are God's property. You say, I do not feel much of the Spirit's motions within me. Never mind what you feel, the first thing is to believe God. We are spiritually bankrupt, we have nothing, unless we believe God. The foundation of everything is to believe God. Nothing comes to us in the Christian life unless we believe God. If we believe God, it only remains to discover what we have. We have believed into Jesus Christ, and therefore, on the basis of God's Word, we have the Holy Spirit as a seal. That is to say, God has given to us His own Spirit as a seal that we are His property. Our wisdom is to believe it and commit ourselves to all its implications. The implications are very many, and widespread, and exceedingly blessed.

Then, if God has given us His Spirit as seal, our responsibility is to see that the Spirit of God has right of way in us, so that we can come to the next stage and be filled with the Spirit (Ephes. v. 18). That is a definite injunction.

The result of that is that we shall know something of the indwelling Christ (Col. i. 27); Christ formed in us; Christ taking shape in us by the Holy Spirit dwelling within; Christ the very centre and core of our being.

The result of that, in turn, is a blessed liberation, a blessed outflow. "He that believeth into me...out of his inner man shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit..." (John vii. 38-39). That is to say, not only will your own need, great, deep as it

may be, be satisfied, but it will be so satisfied that you will be able to be a minister of supply everywhere you go; others will come to you because out from you, from that inward place where the Spirit has taken up His abode, there are flowing, flowing and ever flowing, rivers of living water. That may not be our experience, but it is the Word of God.

We now come back again to this second book of Kings, chapter iv. and the incident that we find recorded there. We are seeking to understand something of the secret of Elisha's ministry, a ministry in the Spirit; for if Elisha stands for anything, he stands for the ministry of the Spirit in and through the people of God, the Spirit given because Christ was glorified.

### Recovery of Living Testimony

The question at issue is prophetic ministry. This woman who came to Elisha in her great and dire need was the widow of a prophet. She was the wife of one of the sons of the prophets. In reading this story we have to bear that great fact in mind, for it is a foundation fact, that we are dealing with prophetic ministry, we are dealing with something which touches the testimony of God among His people. It is not merely a case of need, it is not an individual case, it is something that vitally touches the testimony of God among His people.

This is a story of a complete transformation; poverty, bankruptcy, bondage giving place to wealth, fulness of supply, liberty and joy. That transformation was in relation to God's testimony among His people. It is an extraordinary change of things. The woman comes to the prophet in her need, and says, in effect: 'Thou knowest that thy servant, my husband, feared the Lord, but he is dead, his ministry is at an end, and he has left family affairs in such an awful tangle that it is a question as to whether my two sons will not be carried away into bondage'. That is the situation; a tragic, dreadful,

distressing situation. What can any man do with such a situation as that? Well, Elisha is able to deal with it. Power resting upon Elisha, a double portion of Elijah's spirit, operates with tremendous power in this case. The means he takes are exceedingly simple, but they are mightily effective; for the end of the story is that the widow is not only able to pay all her husband's debts, but has enough left to live upon for the rest of her life, and her children with her. Oh that we could see such transformation in connection with the testimony of Jesus in the earth to-day! Oh that there was such a ministry available to the people of God! Oh that there were Elishas to-day that could do that kind of thing in relation to the larger issues of the testimony of Jesus in the earth!

We are not going to deal with those larger issues, but we are going to deal with our own need. Some of us are very conscious that our spiritual state corresponds to this poor woman's state. Instead of liberty we know bondage; instead of wealth we know poverty; instead of being able to supply the needs of others we are in dire and desperate need ourselves. If that be the consciousness of your heart, I want you to pay good heed to this story, for it tells the way of deliverance. It is not only a historic record, it is an illustration of Divine purpose. It tells, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear, the way of deliverance for everything; the way for a similar transformation, the way for a similar victory, the emergence from a state of bankruptcy and spiritual bondage into wealth, fulness of supply, holy living, and corresponding joy.

What was the secret? How was deliverance wrought? Has the story any lesson for us? I believe it has. First of all, who was this woman? All the Scripture tells us is that she was the wife, now the widow, of one of the sons of the prophets. That is to say, she was vitally related to the testimony of God in Israel. Much of Elisha's ministry related to the school of the prophets that we read of in his day, and all of it to the central question of the recovery of God's people from their apostasy, and the re-establishment of the true worship of God. The testimony of God in Israel, and therefore in the earth, was involved. In reading the story of the apostasy of Israel and of the ministries God gave for their recovery, we need always to remember that God was working in His people with a world purpose in view. It was God's purpose for Israel that they should enthrone His testimony before the whole

world, and should be the exhibition of a God-governed people, and He would order the whole national life in order that the nations of the world might see in concrete form the fact of the Divine government. All the agony of God in relation to the departure of His people was not only for His own possession in them, but because He had chosen them to be His witness, His testimony, the embodiment of Himself in the earth. You cannot understand the language of the prophets unless you see that. For instance, take the great prophecy of Hosea. We see this, first of all, that God takes Hosea, His chosen messenger, into some terrible personal, tragic situations, in order that He might draw him into fellowship with Himself and make him in his personal and family life to understand the agony of God's heart in relation to His people. Then, having constituted by that means a competent messenger to bring to His people the story of His undying love, He sends Hosea with the message of His love to His people. All through the strange and mystic sentences and prophecies of Hosea you find the breaking heart of God expressed.

So it is always, but not merely for Israel as a people; the testimony in the world is at stake. Because of the breakdown, the failure, the apostasy, the sin of God's people, God's testimony is in ruins, and the prophets were the people commissioned of God to recover His testimony in His people.

### The Fruits of Compromise

I noted with some interest that Josephus, in his book "The Antiquities of the Jews", states quite definitely that this woman was the wife of the prophet Obadiah, who came into contact with Elijah; the Obadiah who was the steward of Ahab's household and who stood for the Lord in the court of Ahab, and sought to bear witness for the Lord in that corrupt court. Moreover, Josephus says that these debts that had been incurred were the result of his ministry to the prophets of God. If you turn to 1 Kings xviii. 7-9, you will see the story, that when Elijah is going to stand for the second time before Ahab he meets Obadiah, and he commissions him to go to Ahab and say that Elijah is there to see him. Obadiah, man of God as he was, shrinks from the task imposed upon him and says, in effect: 'If I go to tell Ahab, Behold, Elijah is here! the Spirit of the Lord will have carried you away before he gets that message.' There

was a tremendous contrast between Elijah and Obadiah. Both of them were men of God, but the one man was bold, unshrinking, rigid, terrible, the other, shrinking, timid, unable to function.

If Josephus is correct, and this woman was the wife of Obadiah, then it is another terrible reminder of the awful peril that is associated with compromise in the things of God. To read the story of the meeting of those two men is perhaps a sufficient reminder, but if it be true that this was his widow and these were his sons, then it reinforces the lesson; for here is a man who had tried to serve the Lord, tried to preserve the interests of God in His prophets. He hid many of the Lord's prophets and fed them in a cave when Jezebel sought to exterminate the people of God. He really tried to preserve God's interests, but he did it while all the time he was compromised with an evil system. That cannot be done without disaster. You cannot compromise in the things of God and still serve God, without great loss. And if it be true that this was his widow, and these were his sons, then it is a terrible reminder and lesson to us all that if we would stand for God in a day of apostasy we must stand clear of the evil "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty". It is not only the way of influence, not only the way of power, which is the clean cut from evil. but the way of suffering. Stand clear of the evil system.

The lesson is written large in the Word of God. I need not remind you of Abraham and Lot. Lot sought to serve God in Sodom; he was a magistrate, if you please, in Sodom. That was an awful contradiction. He was genuine, and perfectly sincere. The Word of God says that he vexed his soul every day with their unlawful conversations and deeds. Many a saint of God is vexed in the world as he traffics with it and seeks to serve God while still compromised with this world system. It cannot be done without great peril. The man who serves God is the man who, like Abraham, is separate from it and dwelling upon the hills with God. Abraham is the man who decides the fate of Sodom, not Lot who is there in the midst of it. Lot is powerless, he is paralysed.

In Israel's day, who is the man who decides Israel's fate? It is Elijah, the man who stands before Ahab and declares the Word of God un-

compromisingly. The man who is content to enjoy the amenities of Ahab's court, and still serve the Lord, is the man who shrinks and is afraid, and, if this story is true, who contracts debts and is bankrupt, and his family is left in a state of poverty.

Now note the conditions which were to be dealt with. All possessions were gone, the family was in complete insolvency, and in imminent peril of bondage. The woman comes to the prophet, and she tells him the sad story, and Elisha's question and her reply are exceedingly significant. Elisha asks, "What shall I do for thee?" and immediately puts the further question, "Tell me, what hast thou in the house?"

### The Pot of Oil

It was that question which led me to a consideration of this chapter. When it is a question of the Shunamite in the next story and her devotion to the prophet of God, he says to her, "What shall I do for thee. Shall I speak for you to the king?" But he makes no suggestion to this woman of going to any outside source to solve her question. His question is very direct, very pointed. She, in her simplicity and her distress, tells the truth so far as she knows it: "Thy handmaid hath not anything". 'Everything has gone; I am left with nothing, stripped; everything gone, save a pot of oil'. Oh, blessed salvation! But what is a pot of oil? Look at the situation. She is bankrupt, with nothing left, everything gone, and the creditors come to take the two sons into bondage, as they had a right to do under Levitical law; and the sole possession of the woman is a pot of oil. Elijah does not start to commiserate with her. He says in effect: 'A pot of oil? The situation is saved!' All is well if you have a pot of oil! Get hold of that. It is the salvation of the situation. If you have a pot of oil all is well. The word that is translated "a pot of oil", is a word that has this significance, a flask of oil sufficient for an anointing. What the woman said, in effect, was this: 'Everything has gone, I have just got left that single flask of oil containing sufficient for an anointing.' Whether she meant the anointing that sometimes takes place after the bath, or whether she was thinking of the anointing of the body for burial I do not know. Whatever it was, she had just that flask of oil which was kept for that specific purpose; it was related to anointing. Elisha immediately responds, His unhesitating reaction is very striking. 'Oh'

he said in effect, 'that is all right; you borrow empty vessels, as many as you can, bring them into the house, shut the door upon thee and thy two sons, and then work with that anointing oil; pour it out into the vessels that you have borrowed'. She did so in the simplicity of faith. She poured into the vessels, and the first vessel was filled, the second vessel, and she went on pouring and pouring. Behind that closed door the secret work was done, until all the vessels were filled, and then she came to the prophet and told him she had done what he had told her to do. The prophet then told her to go and sell the oil, and she would find she had enough to pay all her debts and to live on for the rest of her days, and her children with her. Strange story, is it not? But there was a wonderful spiritual significance in that story.

Let us try to put that into other words. What Elisha says in effect is this: 'If you have sufficient oil for anointing, all that you need do is to shut yourself in with God and discover in His presence the wealth which is in your possession.' What is the lesson? It is recovery by way of discovery; and that is always the way of recovery. Bankrupt soul, paralysed soul, burdened soul, miserable soul, what you need to do is to discover what you have. That is all, if you are a believer in Christ. If you are not a believer in Christ then indeed you are bankrupt. If you have not sufficient oil for an anointing, you have not any oil at all; but if you are a believer in Christ all you have to do is to discover what you have and wealth is yours beyond your dreams. Your experience may be the experience of this woman. You may feel that you have nothing, you may feel that your language truly is, "Thine handmaid hath nothing in the house". Oh, hear the word of the prophet. You have that pot of oil, you are sealed with God's Holy Spirit, and that is the secret of everything.

Let us try to put it in another way. Recovery in the testimony of Jesus, God's testimony upon earth, whether it be an individual, or an assembly, or in the Church as a whole, recovery is by the way of discovery of the value for all life and ministry of that which is possessed, but is unrecognised and undeveloped. The discovery and development of that which we have from God is the secret of recovery, the secret of the transformation from poverty to wealth, from bondage to liberty, from misery to joy, from being bound up to that overflowing of the river of God which

Listen! What hast thou in the house? That is the Old Testament language. Let the New Testament answer. Turn to chapter viii. of the Epistle to the Romans and read verse 32:

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?" In Christ "all things"; with Christ "all things". Have you Christ? Have you the Holy Spirit? Then you have everything that God can give you potentially. You tell me that you are bankrupt. Nay! Nay! God has given you spiritual riches beyond apprehension. Your business is to discover what you have, to discover and develop that which God has given you in His Son, and in His Spirit: "...how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?" When God gave His Son He gave everything, and when God gave His Son to you He gave everything to you. Have you Christ? Then you have Him in whom all the treasures of God are hidden. Having Him, in Him, united with Him all things are yours. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all," has given us all things in Him.

Try to split that up. You have eternal life. It is the life of the ages. It is the life that can never know death. It is the life of God. It consists in a knowledge of God and of Christ, and because it consists in the knowledge of God and of Christ, it is the life that in its very nature is, and must be, eternal. That is yours if you are in Christ.

Then, as we saw in the passages that form the background of our meditation, if we have God's Holy Spirit with us as the seal, that Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father, and the Spirit of His Son. As Paul puts it in writing to the Galatians, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth (that word "sent forth" implies sent forth on a mission; it is the word from which we get our word "apostle") the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying, Abba, Father." Does that strike your heart as something exceedingly wonderful? It is wonderful beyond all telling. Oh, the riches of it! Oh, the glory of it, that to me in my bankrupt state, as I am in myself, the Spirit of God's Son is sent forth on a mission to bring me to the place where I recognise and glory in the Fatherhood of God! If God is my Father, meeting my need and supplying everything that I need, am I bankrupt? The Spirit is there as the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son: that Christ indwells that

Christ is formed in our hearts ; and He dwells in our hearts by faith. I am perfectly aware that these are familiar texts, perhaps familiar truths in their terms ; but to get into the heart of them, and to get them into your heart is to come into wealth, to come into glory, to come into joy, to come into blessing, to come into the flowing river, to come into the realm of satisfied means. It is true. That is the glory of it. You may not recognise it. It may all be there unrecognised and undeveloped, and therefore you are not enjoying it. You are like a man with a million pounds in the bank, who does not break into it, but lives in poverty. There are illimitable riches placed potentially in you, but you must first of all recognise them, and then develop them and enjoy them. The tragedy is that it is possible to have all that truth and yet to go on in the state represented by this woman.

### The Shut Door

When this woman came to the prophet of God he soon gave her the way of release. What is the way of release ? First of all it is the way of the shut door. This treasure cannot be developed in the public eye, cannot be developed with the crowd looking on ; it cannot be developed without concentrated heart-purpose. The meeting of this need had to be behind closed doors. Your deep need will not be met save as you get behind closed doors and work with God in relation to what God has given you. What proportion of your day do you spend behind a closed door, where no eye can see but God ? How much time do you give to God day by day for the meditation upon His Word and prayer ? You say, Very little ! I do not wonder you are bankrupt. I do not wonder you do not enjoy your possessions. I do not wonder that Christ within is unrecognised, undiscovered. It takes time to discover what we have in Christ. It takes time and it takes work. It means that we must have a secret life with God. If you want to know what spiritual wealth is, if you want to discover what God in His infinite grace has given to you, let me plead with you to give time to God every day, and work with God in relation to what God has given. Ask Him to discover to you by His Holy Spirit what He has placed within you as a spiritual deposit. As the wonder and the glory of it begins to break upon you, you will know something of the emergence out of that state of spiritual bankruptcy into something of the glory and joy

of the Spirit's life and ministry within. The shut door was the first thing.

### Empty Vessels

Then it was the empty vessels next ; the shut door, and the filling of the vessels behind the shut door. Empty vessels. Here is the crux of the problem. The fact is most of us are too full to have any room for the Spirit. We are too full of earthly things, too full of earthly ambitions ; the chambers of our soul are filled with other things and God cannot fill them with His Spirit. Empty vessels ! In the story, we read that so long as the sons brought empty vessels the oil flowed, and it is always so. The Lord never stays until the last vessel is filled. If you are bankrupt stand with God for the application of the Cross to all that you are as natural men or women in this world.

Many people believe it is possible to go into a meeting and to wait before God, and to pray to God and ask God there and then to fill them with His Spirit ; and they are expecting some emotional experience that they can go and talk about for the rest of their lives. The experience that comes along that line is not a true spiritual experience. God must empty us before He can fill us, and if we are filled with our own thoughts and ambitions, plans and hopes, and all earthly things, God the Almighty, God the Omnipotent cannot fill a full vessel. He must empty us first, and that is the application of the Cross. What do we mean by the application of the Cross ? It means recognising what Christ did for us and as us when He died. Not only did He die for us, but He died as us, that from God's standpoint when Christ died we died, and the application of the Cross is the work of the Holy Spirit of God making that true in our experience. There is a tremendous difference between having knowledge of the doctrines of the Word and having the doctrines of the Word wrought out in our experience. I make bold to say, without hesitation, that the root trouble in the Christian Church to-day, is that the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ has not been made a dynamic reality in the lives of the majority of God's people. There has not been the consent to the Holy Spirit to apply the Cross for the ruling out of all that they are by nature ; and that is the great hindrance to fulness.

### Facing the Cost

I am going to ask a definite question. Have

you ever spent a solid half hour in the presence of God asking God that He would make the Cross a reality in your experience, in order that you might obey His Divine injunction, "Be, filled with the Spirit" ? I make bold to say this, that if you have spent one half hour you have found it inadequate and you have formed the habit of going again and again to the Lord that He might work more deeply still ; for when we begin to work with God in relation to His Word and begin to empty the chambers of our soul (or the Holy Spirit does it with our consent), so that we can bring these empty vessels behind the closed door to the Lord, we begin to be appalled at the amount of crucifying work yet to be done.

I remember a good many years ago now, when the Cross was first presented to me in this aspect of it, the experimental application of the Cross, almost the first article I read on the subject was one written by Mrs. Penn-Lewis entitled, "How Deep Shall the Cross Go". If you have been thinking this is very elementary, perhaps the Lord has something to say to you on this point. Are we willing for the utmost work of the Cross ? Are we willing that God should not stay His hand until every vessel has been emptied that it might be filled ; or have we, all unknowingly, settled the matter and said, Thus far, and no further ! God wants us to be Spirit-filled men of God. His need in the earth is tremendous. It is not a question of our blessing, or our enjoyment, it is a question of God's testimony, a question of the Church, of the coming of Christ, of the coming of the Kingdom of God upon earth, of the solving of this world's need, the curing of its agony. That is why God would seek to do a fresh work, a work of thorough emptying, in order that He might do a work of glorious filling. Filled with the Divine deposit ; that is, the Divine deposit that is there continually growing, enlarging, expanding, until the whole being is filled full unto all the fulness of God.

Remember that of the holy anointing oil, typical of the Holy Spirit, with which the priests were anointed, two things are said. Exodus xiii. 32 gives instructions for the preparation of the oil, and its use. First of all, it must not be counterfeited. The actual instruction is that there must be none made like unto it. It was a thing rigidly kept secret for the service of the sanctuary. There is a tremendous amount of imitation to-day. The second thing is that upon man's flesh it was not to be poured. God will

not give His Holy Spirit for the gratification of our flesh. He will not give His Holy Spirit for the gratification of our flesh, even in Christian service. We desire the Holy Spirit that we might be used. We desire the Holy Spirit that we may be possessed of power. We desire the Holy Spirit that we might shine on the platform. We would not put it in that gross way. Really it is not that we want to shine, but we want to be effective, we want to win souls, we want to be able to exercise power to bring in the Kingdom of God ! But if we searched our hearts deeply in the light of the Holy Spirit we should very speedily come to the conviction that self has a great deal to do with it. Oh, the subtilty of this thing ! How deep have been some of our discoveries, when we thought we were wholly crucified, when we thought we were seeking nothing but the glory of Christ, and God has come in and tested us. He has put us on one side and given another brother the ministry. Nobody in the congregation has been able to discern it, but as we have sat there, there has been a rebellion in our own hearts, to our own amazement. The Cross had not gone deep enough, we had by no means arrived at utter selflessness. That is a very advanced thing in Christian service. This hateful flesh of ours is a deep and subtle thing. It has to go if we are really to serve the purpose of God in fulness. Every bit of flesh has to meet the circumcising knife of the Cross. There can be no genuine work of the Spirit in any way save as the Cross meets us. The anointing oil must not be used for human glory, it must be secretly reserved for the service of the sanctuary in relation to the worship of the Lord, and the purpose of God ; and if you desire to be filled with the Spirit, if you desire to have this secret work with God behind the closed door, whereby the chambers of your soul are emptied that you may be filled with the Spirit, then your purpose must be the purpose of God, your will must be the will of God, you must seek that which is for the glory of Christ ; for remember that the Holy Spirit is God, most infinitely holy. God must fill the life, and, God Himself filling the life is enough for every need, every demand, every requirement. We can be filled to overflowing if we will, for God has given us His Spirit.

Get behind that closed door. You may have been hitherto in the experience of this woman, feeling you were spiritually bankrupt. Remember God's word, and if you have oil sufficient for

an anointing, if you have the Holy Spirit, you have sufficient for every need. Begin the process which shall lead you to the fulness of His Spirit, and the fulness of His purpose. Let us seek unto our God in the secret place, behind that closed

door, that we may discover and develop our possessions. So shall we glorify Him, and so shall the living waters flow out from our inner man to refresh all those with whom we come into contact and serve the purpose of God. S.A

## Spiritual Maturity

No. 2.

### Spirituality

**READING :** 1 Corinthians ii

We now pass to the first letter to the Corinthians, and you will notice that the point in the letter marked by chapter iii. begins with the definite statement that the trouble at Corinth, the inclusive trouble, was spiritual immaturity. They were babes, when it was time they had passed out of babyhood. That was the trouble at Corinth.

#### The Spiritual Man Constituted of God

So the whole letter deals with the causes of too long delayed maturity, and with that which is the basic factor for such people with regard to spiritual growth. We can at once state what this factor is. It is the key to this whole letter, and is "spirituality". Being the key to this letter, it is, therefore, in all these circumstances, the key to full growth. Spirituality is, of course, set over against carnality. Spirituality is essential to full growth. The second chapter is full both of the fact and of the necessity. If we ask what spirituality is, that chapter will answer the question by telling us that it is a life wholly governed, taught, illumined, and led by the Holy Spirit; but not as from without. This is just where we need to recognise a difference. Here it is not a matter of the Holy Spirit as an objective person or power coming along and, so to speak, putting His hand upon us and telling us things and turning us about, and giving us direction of that kind. What the Apostle clearly shows in this part of his letter is that it is the kind of person we are. He speaks in this chapter of two kinds of beings, the one whom he calls the natural, or the soulical man, the other the

spiritual man; one, the man who is governed by his own soul in every way, the other who is governed by the Holy Spirit through his spirit, and thereby becomes a spiritual man as over against the soulical man. So that the spiritual man here is a kind of person, and that kind of person has particular and peculiar kinds of capacities, powers, abilities. He has faculties which are not possessed by the other kind of man, the soulical man, the natural man, and he is, therefore, endowed with capacities which take you far beyond the highest range of the natural man in apprehension, in knowledge, in understanding, as well as in accomplishment.

That point must be made perfectly clear, because some people have a kind of mentality that to be wholly Spirit-governed means that the Holy Spirit in some way does all the turning about and governing, and directing, almost objectively, as from the outside. The spiritual man is not here represented as being in that position at all, but rather as having been constituted a kind of being in whom the Holy Spirit is. He is constituted a spiritual man of spiritual intelligence, who is able, by spiritual faculties and endowments, to come into a wonderful knowledge of, and fellowship with, God Himself. That is spirituality, and that is the very heart of full growth.

It is wonderful how the chronological order of these letters is entirely upset in favour of a spiritual order. In Romans you have the foundation of righteousness by faith; then comes 1 Corinthians, and it is as though you got right to the heart of the Person concerned, and having set Him in a position, you begin to

constitute something in Him, to build up in Him. So that you find that it is a matter now of having been placed in Christ by faith; Christ is in you, and that is the beginning of everything, if Christ is to be fully formed. And that is the meaning of spirituality.

It is seen in this letter, on the contrary, that carnality is a mark of immaturity, and, more than that, it is a positive hindrance to spiritual progress. With that you move through the letter and you see the many marks of carnality which are marks of immaturity. We might note some of them, and this will help us to come to an understanding of what spirituality really is.

### Six Marks of Carnality as Seen in 1 Corinthians

#### (i) Leaning to Natural Wisdom

Here in chapters i. and ii. especially you see that carnality is a leaning toward, and being governed by, what is natural, what is of account according to man's own natural estimate. These Corinthians evidently had a great admiration for human wisdom. They were in a centre of human wisdom, and their national life was marked with much of this admiration for the wisdom of men. They were much occupied naturally in philosophical pursuits and speculations, and so it was a part of their very nature. It was Corinthian to be always leaning toward the superiority of human wisdom, and the Corinthian believers were evidently indulging in that kind of thing. We are still very greatly influenced by the strength, the power of human wisdom—and, of course, that carries power with it! With the Corinthians knowledge was power. That was their philosophy of life. The more human knowledge you have, the more you come into a place of ascendancy in this world. It is a thing which puts you in a position of advantage. Human knowledge is a real vantage ground for success in this world.

The Apostle strikes some very hard blows at that natural and, at the same time, carnal thing. It is natural, but when it comes into the life of a believer it is a carnal thing. The carnal is something more positive than the natural. We are what we are by nature, but when you begin to take up what we are by nature in the realm of what we are by grace, and make something of nature in the realm of grace, then you have become carnal: and that is evil. So these two chapters are very largely occupied with a tremendous unveiling of the utter foolishness of the

very thing in which these believers were glorying, and the utter weakness of it all. Knowledge? Power? Getting an advantage in this world? Very well! The world in its wisdom, and in the wisdom which it called its power, crucified the Lord of glory. What do you think of that? They did it blindly. That is ignorance!

We are not going to pursue that line further. We indicate it, because it shows us a state of mind. It was the apprising of values according to natural and worldly standards, and they were influenced by that, and that for them was carnality, and therefore immaturity. That very thing was the hindrance to their spiritual growth. Now, apart from the thing itself, the principle is this, that a leaning toward that which is natural, and, in so leaning toward it, making it a factor in our lives as the children of God, is a mark of spiritual infancy, babyhood, immaturity; but more, it is a positive hindrance to anything else. You may say it is hardly necessary to stress that amongst the people of God to-day, but I am not so sure. You know, as well as I do, that this is one of the failings of the human heart in principle. We may be perfectly convinced that the Corinthians were all wrong and that Paul was perfectly right, that it was utter foolishness in this wise world to crucify the Lord Jesus, an altogether false idea of wisdom, of knowledge, and of strength: well, we may be quite convinced of that, and it may be that we might not fall quite in that way, but in principle this thing is found in all of us.

There is a tremendous amount of trying to win a way for the Gospel, for Christ, for the Christian life by being even with the world in some way. A young man, for example, thinks that if he has something of a sportsman's training, and his achievements in the sporting world are known, that he can use that as an advantage to win men for Christ. So he does it, and he plays that off to try and win the respect, the esteem, the hearing, the ear of men, and in a way he is all the time going on to their ground and thinking that he is going to win converts in that way. Now it is this same thing in principle. If men can only be won along such lines they are not worth winning; you will not get the right thing. The only ground upon which a man may be really saved is upon the ground of such a need in his own heart, and recognised by him, that he will come to Christ as a matter of life and death. If he has to be won by your putting up something which appeals to him on his own ground, there will be

a permanent weakness in his Christian life. Let us be careful that even in our eagerness we do not compromise a little, do not step over on to natural ground, which for us would be sheer carnality. That is Corinthian ground ; it does not get beyond babyhood, the standards of men, the world's values of things ; wisdom, and power, and such like.

That was the first thing in this whole matter of spirituality. Spirituality has nothing to do with that. What does Paul really mean ? What does he say, in effect ? He says : After all, you may go down to men, with all your worldly wisdom, and try to win them for Christ, but the natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God ; he is labouring under an absolute ban. Before a man can understand the things of the Spirit of God he has to be born again, and be a spiritual man in the very beginnings of his new life. He must have something that no man outside of Christ has. You are in a hopeless position if you try to get down there on to his ground : "...we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God ; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God" (1 Cor. ii. 12). These Corinthians had the spirit of the world, and were trying to be Christians with the spirit of the world ; therefore they were limited in their knowledge, their understanding, their apprehension, and remained like little babes who had never yet come to any kind of personal knowledge. All that they had was what they had been told.

#### (ii) Selectiveness on Natural Grounds

The next phase of this carnality is seen in chapter iii. and chapter iv. There you have selectiveness on natural grounds. It is another phase or form of the leaning toward what is natural. One says, I am of Paul ; and another says, I am of Apollos ; and another says, I am of Peter ; and another says, I am of Christ. The Apostle deals drastically with it in these two chapters. Carnality is set forth as that kind of thing where you lean toward your own natural likes and dislikes amongst men, amongst teachings. I like Paul as a man ! I like Apollos as a man ! I like Paul's line of teaching ! I like Apollos's wonderful eloquence ! I like Peter's line ! They were, according to their natural likes, selective on natural grounds, dividing up the Lord's servants and the Lord's Body. Who will be bold enough to say that he himself has never fallen into that failure ? It is quite natural

to have such likes and dislikes. It very often means that we have to put something to death in us to listen to some people, to have anything to do with them. We have to take ourselves in hand, and say : I must seek if there is not something there that is of the Lord, and for the time being shut my eyes to the other that offends. It is quite natural to say : I like so-and-so, and I would go anywhere to hear so-and-so, but as for the other man I cannot get on with him at all. That is carnality. " For whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and walk after the manner of men ? For when one saith, I... "—Oh, we need not go further ! That is the heart of the matter, " I ". It ought to be " Not I, but Christ ". Is there anything of Christ here in these men ? That is what we should be after. The vessel may trouble me, may sometimes give me bad times, but my natural inclinations are not the point in question at all in such a matter ; that is carnality for me. It is all right for some people who do not profess to be the Lord's, but for me it is carnality, a bringing of the natural into the realm of the spiritual, and making it a governing thing. Spirituality means that I am after whatever is of Christ, no matter in what vessel it is brought to me. Again and again it is clearly to be seen in the Word of God that, had men taken account of the means by which God came to them, they would have lost the blessing, and some were dangerously near that, and some did lose it.

Israel lost the blessing for that very reason. They were offended with the Man Christ Jesus. " Is not this the carpenter ?... " Had He been some glorious potentate from heaven they would have received the message ! Let us be careful. God tests us very often as to the reality of our hearts, as to whether they are set upon Himself, by bringing us a great blessing wrapped up in a very unacceptable wrapping.

Spirituality is the opposite of leaning toward natural selectiveness, likes and dislikes. If you and I desire to go on to full growth, this is one of the things that has to be recognised and dealt with. It is a case of just setting aside our natural life in the interests of the spiritual. Such an opportunity is with us every day. Spirituality is determined by how far we are ready to be led.

#### (iii) Lack of Moral Sensibility

We pass on to chapter v. It is a terrible chapter. Carnality is here shown to us in a defectiveness of moral sensibility. We are not

going to stay with it, and yet we should not just ignore it. Spirituality must work out in real moral sensibility, sensitiveness, in such a way that there is a mighty reaction in us from those tendencies of nature that are downward in the moral sense. We are not talking about not being tempted. Every one is tempted. The very fact that we carry with us a nature which is not wholly purged from the roots and fibres of sin and the fall, constitutes a ground upon which temptation comes to us. There is no sin in temptation. At times there may be some weakening ; we may be more open for various reasons to weakness than at other times, but the point is this, that spirituality represents in us a revolt and a reaction that in the presence of moral weakness turns round, reacts against that. That is the work of the Spirit of God in us, making us spiritual. At Corinth there was not only the one who defaulted (we are not going to judge that one), but what the Apostle was troubled about was that the assembly had not sufficient moral sensitiveness to deal with that thing, and he had to write them a strong letter to pull them up sharply upon moral grounds, to cleanse the assembly. They did not do it until Paul practically made them do it. There was a low and inadequate moral sensitiveness about the assembly ; there was not a sufficient measure of spiritualty to react violently to that thing, and say : We are defiled, we must put this away ; we must purge ourselves ; we must stand before God without judgment in this matter. They did not do it ; they tolerated it, they let it go.

We are not applying this in any assembly way just now, but are just saying that spirituality means a strong reaction to the encouragement of anything unclean. I do not know how necessary it might be to say a thing like that. There are various forms of low moral sense, but in a spiritual person, and in a spiritual assembly there will be something which reacts against that, in conversation, in talk, in looseness of any kind. Spirituality lifts on to a much higher level. That again, then, is carnality, and no individual life and no assembly of the Lord's people can grow to the fulness of Christ without that spiritual sensitiveness which feels bad in the presence of anything morally loose.

#### (iv) A Spirit of Variance

We are not going to take up this next point at length, but we notice that Paul in chapter

vi. comes to that kind of carnality which shows itself in wronging one another, and then trying to obtain one's rights by lawsuits. He commences by speaking of the lawsuits in verse 1., but he gets behind that as he goes on and says that they are robbing one another. Any kind of suit before the world, or in the Church, ought to be rendered unnecessary by the getting rid of this wronging of one another. What a low level amongst the Lord's people is revealed when they rob one another.

There are more ways than one of robbing the Lord's people, but it is the principle that is in view, the failing to recognise the rights of the Lord's children. If it is wrong for a child of God to stand up for his rights, and to fight for them, it is equally wrong that the rights of the Lord's people should be ignored or set at naught. There is an honouring of one another, and that of which Paul speaks elsewhere, a looking of everyone, not upon his own things, but upon the things of others ; that is, taking into account that others also have a right to be honoured, to be respected, to be given a place. It seems that the spirit here at Corinth was that of the individual seeking to have the advantage, even at the expense of another believer. It is the spirit of the thing that is the trouble behind it all. Spirituality would be just the opposite of this, that even if one were wronged one would not fight for one's rights, especially before the world. Spirituality would mean, in an assembly and amongst the Lord's people, and on the part of each individual, a mutual recognition and holding in honour because—as Paul leads this whole thing out, as we shall see in a moment—we are members one of another, members of the Body.

I like the wisdom of the Holy Spirit through His servant Paul, as this whole matter is headed up to chapter xii. Just imagine one member of the Body going to law against another member of the same Body ! What sense would there be in one hand fighting the other hand, or in my fist assailing any other part of my body ! That is perhaps a crude way of putting it, but Paul now applies the point in that way and says : You are all members of one Body, and you are all inter-dependent, you cannot do without another, and that member that will go to law with another is but robbing himself. It is so foolish, so senseless, so weak ! All such things are evidence of a poor level of spiritual life. Spirituality will show itself in recognising the

value of every member, and, rather than in doing a member harm, in respecting and honouring that member, because of the necessity for that one. We need one another, and therefore it is the utmost childishness in a spiritual sense to be at variance with one another. Spiritual maturity will never condone that course. If we did but know it, our attitude toward another child of God comes back upon ourselves, and becomes our attitude toward ourselves. That is how God orders it, because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit who governs and balances the whole Body.

I think there is no realm in which the laws of God operate more immediately and directly than in the Body of Christ. "He that soweth unto his... flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap everlasting life". "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap". Within the Church of God those laws operate in a very immediate and direct way. Spirituality takes all that into account and says: I am not going to injure my own spiritual growth by doing harm to another member of Christ; I am not going to be robbed of God's end for me by failure to recognise that another also should be helped toward that end.

#### (v) Failure to Discern the Body

In chapters x. and xi. we come to the failure to discriminate (discern) the Lord's Body. It is all wrapped up in the long discussion of things offered to idols, and that point where one thing ends and another thing begins. The Lord's Table in the apostolic days was not like our Table of the Lord. We gather to the Lord's Table and there is something quite distinct, quite by itself; there is no mistaking what that represents. In apostolic times they took their meal together, and at a certain point in their meal time they stopped and worshipped, and for the purpose took of the same food as they had been eating and drinking; they turned their ordinary meal into a corporate worshipping of the Lord. The Apostle here says, You may come in hungry to your meal, and sit down and eat heartily, and just overstep the hne, and in so doing confuse the two things and make that which represents the Lord's body and the Lord's blood a part of your feasting to the gratification of your own appetite. We are not in the same position to fall quite into the same snare, but

there is a principle bound up with it upon which the Lord through His apostle puts His finger.

Terrible things resulted from that in the Corinthian Church: for this cause many were sick, and not a few died. There was this other element, as we have noted, that a good deal of what they were eating and drinking in the ordinary way had already been offered in the shambles, and had already been offered to heathen gods, and they were not discriminating. But the principle underlying is this, that this loaf, this cup speak of two things. Firstly, they speak of the covenant relationship with the Lord, in which everything in our lives is for the Lord, and in which the Lord is everything to us; we have gone out, and Christ has come in, and for us Christ is the centre and the sphere, the sole object of our lives. They also speak of this, that Christ's Body, the Church, has taken its place in our interest as that upon which the love of Christ is set, even unto death. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for it." It is "the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood". Again, it is written, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing..." The attitude of the believers toward the Church is to be the attitude of Christ toward the Church. Spirituality is that which, on the one hand, gives Christ His place over all that is personal, and enables us to subordinate everything to His interests. There was a failure in this respect at Corinth, and a yielding to personal gratification, instead of glorying in the Lord. Spirituality is just the opposite of that, and so spirituality is a mark of growth. We shall never come to full growth spiritually if we are just going to be governed by our natural appetites.

Then, on the other hand, spirituality is marked by love of all the Lord's people. At Corinth, again, there was failure to recognise Christ's love for His Church. Their attitude one toward another was therefore anything but that of Christ for His own, and so they did not discern the one Body as represented at the Table. Paul says, "The loaf which we break, is it not our common participation in the body of Christ? Seeing that we, who are many, are one loaf, one body: for we all partake of the one loaf."

The Lord's Table is the Body in representation. We must recognise that Christ's object of love and devotion is His Church, and have the same love and devotion to His people and for His people as He had. Let us put that quite simply. A truly large spiritual life is marked by a great devotion to the Lord's people, to the Body of Christ, as over against an undue measure of individualism.

#### (vi) The Coveting of Spiritual Gifts for Personal Ends

The last feature of carnality which we will note is that which comes up in chapter xii. in connection with spiritual gifts. It is strange that this matter should come up into the realm of carnality and spiritual immaturity, and yet it does. I do not see how we can get away from the fact, if we honestly read this chapter, that the Apostle was dealing with this very matter of spiritual gifts from the same standpoint as he was dealing with the other things at Corinth. What was the trouble? It is one which perhaps we think we need not fear. The first part of chapter xii. indicates where the trouble was. We cannot stay with verses 1-3, to consider them in detail, but there is a great deal there that it would be very much to our good to recognise. On the face of it there is this: these Corinthians before they came to the Lord were pagans to this degree that they were occupied with spiritism, and in spiritism (often termed "spiritualism") there is a definite system of counterfeit Holy Ghost activity. Spiritism as we know it to-day can produce speaking in tongues, and all the other things, such as powers, miracles, and so on. The whole system here is counterfeited in spiritism. I believe that spiritism is going to be the great ally of Antichrist, the counterfeit of Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and thereby many will be carried away. The paganism of these Corinthians is seen in their being carried away to these dumb idols, and in connection with idol worship there were spirit manifestations, and they came under a false Holy Spirit (if we may use that term). The Greek is striking there, and it is perfectly in keeping with the thought of coming under a spiritual power, so that you act and speak as under control. The Apostle is here using it concerning people who are under the control of a power. If you are under the control of an evil spirit you will not say, "Jesus is Lord". The evil spirit will not say that.

The point is this, that there was not amongst these people at Corinth a clear discrimination between spiritism and the Holy Spirit. Here you have come to the heart of the trouble. They had been in the false thing, and had now come into the true thing, and were not discriminating. Why were they not discriminating? Because they were so taken up with experiences, manifestations, demonstrations, sensations, that which is apparent evidence of something. That is the danger. The danger is of wanting an experience, wanting a proof, wanting evidence, wanting to feel something, wanting to have a sensation. That is carnality, and you will mix the Holy Spirit up with spiritism if you are not careful along that line, and multitudes are doing it. The Devil is getting his advantage along that line in many people. They think it is the Holy Spirit when it is a false thing, simply because they want something. That is why the Apostle goes so steadily at this matter. He says in effect: 'Be careful; do not put things in their wrong place; do not give importance to things which are not so important as you think they are. Speaking in tongues is not so important as you are making it out to be. It is one of the least of the gifts.'

Do you see the point? You have to recognise the meaning of those first three verses in chapter xii. It was failure to discriminate between the true Holy Ghost and the false.

Then as to the rest of the chapter, we see from verse 12 to verse 27 that they were not recognising the relatedness of gifts. That is the safeguard, to recognise that. There are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, real, genuine, and true; we are not going to put them aside because of false gifts. At the same time we have to watch the balance, we have to have spiritual understanding, spiritual wisdom in this matter. The Corinthians were taking the things as personal, in a detached and individual way, and making something of them because it was a wonderful and marvellous experience: and with them it all ended there. Why did Paul write the whole of that section on the Body of Christ, and why did he come into it so livingly? "There are diversities of gifts, *but* (now comes the check—everyone is glorying in that phase of the diversity that has come to them) the same Spirit..." "There are diversities of ministrations, but the same Lord". "There are diversities of workings, but the same God who worketh all things in all". You need to weigh every fragment—it is "the

same God who worketh all things" in all the members, in all the Body—"To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to *profit withal*". Then when you have enumerated the gifts you come to this statement: "For as the body is one...so also is the Christ." The article is used there. You have got to the heart of things. Spiritual gifts? Yes! What for? For me to glory in, to be gratified by, to talk about *my* experience? Ah, this is the test. Is the whole Body profiting? Is the one Lord being glorified? Is this whole matter related and working out to mutual increase? This is a corporate matter, not an individual matter at all. If you detach it and take it out of its relatedness, you divide its end, which end is the building up of the whole Body and the mutual increase. What is the result at Corinth? They have made this whole thing an individual, personal matter, unrelated, in which they themselves glory. They came perilously near to a most awful sin in failing to discriminate between spiritism and the Holy Ghost, all by reason of their desire, their love for something that brought a sense of satisfaction to themselves, pleasure to themselves, gratification to themselves. That is carnality. That is immaturity.

All that may be in a measure instructive or enlightening, but you see how strongly this letter comes down upon the need for real spirituality, and what spirituality is. Spirituality does not hold anything of the Lord's for itself, and never makes anything from the Lord the ground of its own pleasure and gratification, and personal, individual, unrelated glorying. Spirituality holds everything in relation to all saints, unto the increase of Christ. It sees no value in anything apart from that. So the Apostle goes on with his great corrective.

Two things stand out when you have taken the whole of this letter.

#### **The Natural Man Wholly Put Away in the Cross**

First of all right at the beginning the Cross sets aside the natural man absolutely. "I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified". Paul acted upon the principle of the Cross when he said, "I was with you in weakness and much... trembling..." There was nothing in Paul naturally, had he desired to come on to that ground, that would have enabled him to be amongst them in anything other than of weak-

ness and fear and much trembling. But he was acting on the principle of the Cross. He says it was deliberately done in order that their faith might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. What they needed to know was the difference between natural power, wisdom, and all that is of nature, and the true power of God in the Holy Ghost. The Cross sets aside the whole life of nature, and that opens the way for spirituality and full growth.

#### **The Essence of Spirituality is Love**

Secondly, when all has been said, the essence of spirituality is love (chapter xiii.). "Though I speak with the tongues of men (terrestrial voices) and of angels (tongues not known amongst men, heavenly language), and have not love"—I am a most spiritual person? Not at all!—I have made a great deal of progress in spiritual life? Not at all! I am what? "I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal." So much, then, for an entire want of spirituality, even though you may have tongues. Paul writes the word "nothing" over a great many things that we naturally would think were very important; faith to remove mountains, the giving of the body to be burned, and so on—he writes "nothing" over every one of them. Not that they are of no account in themselves; these things are of account in their place, and in their connection, but if they are without love they are "nothing". The essence of spirituality is not the gifts, it is the grace. We are not going to choose between gifts and graces, between gifts and love. That is not the point of all. The Apostle does not intend us to take this attitude: Oh well, give me love, I do not want gifts. I let go of all the gifts if you will only give me the love. Paul is trying to make it clear that these things in themselves can be held carnally. Really to reach the end for which God gives them they must be held spiritually, and the essence of spirituality is love. It covers everything.

We go back to the beginning now, and start again: Wisdom, strength, divisions, schisms, lusts, all of them go out when love comes in. So he closes thus: "The grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." That is what you Corinthians need. Undoubtedly the Apostle summed it all up in what we call the 'Benediction'.

T.A.S.

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JULY-AUGUST, 1938

NO. 4, VOL. 16

## All Things in Christ

No. 8.

### The Heavenly Man as the Source and Sphere of Corporate Unity

READING: Ephes. iv. 1-16; 30-32; Psalm cxxxiii.

Here we have a Psalm which, on the one hand, presents an imperfect or partial entering into the spirit of the blessing of which it speaks, and, on the other hand, a prophecy; a type and prophecy of the full blessing to come, and a present but imperfect enjoyment of the meaning of the blessing. As a type and prophecy of the full blessing to come, it indicates the basis of the blessing, and the wonderful beneficent elements of the blessing. Read the Psalm backward and you will at once see what the basis is: "...there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." Where was the blessing given? "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"—"...there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore". Between the first and the last verses the beneficent influence and effect of the blessing is seen, which blessing is based upon two things. One of these is brought to our notice in the preceding Psalm. You will recognise that these are "Psalms of Ascents". That, again, speaks of the partial enjoyment of the meaning

of the blessing. The people are going up to Zion they are in caravan, in procession, coming up from the distant parts with their eyes and their hearts all toward Zion in expectation, in hope; Zion the city of their solemnities; Zion the joy of all the earth; Zion the unifying centre of all their life; Zion in the ways of which they were but which was also in their hearts as a way—"...in whose heart are the high ways to Zion." (Ps. lxxxiv. 5).

#### The Unifying Centre

Now you see Zion is there as a great unifying factor. People from all directions are coming in procession. Some have joined the caravan at various places as it has moved on from its most distant point, and they find that although they may never have met before on earth; although they may only just have come into touch with one another for the first time in their lives; although their paths may lie far apart in ordinary life, their sphere of life and service be divided and separate, Zion makes them a unity. Immediately the thoughts of Zion are in their hearts, immediately they think of Zion and

move toward Zion, all scatteredness, separate-ness, divisiveness passes out, and they are as one man. Zion has unified them.

Now let us mark what is brought before us in Psalm cxxxii.

“Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of *my* house, nor go up into *my* bed ; I will not give sleep to *mine* eyes, or slumber to *mine* eyelids ; until I find out a place for the Lord, a tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob...Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place ; thou, and the ark of thy strength...This is my resting place for ever : here will I dwell ; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision : I will satisfy her poor with bread.” (Ps. cxxxii. 3-8, 14-15.)

The first factor in the basis of the blessing is God's satisfaction, God finding His satisfaction : “Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place...” Here we have the Lord coming to rest in His House. This is not to be interpreted mentally in a literal way. It is a case of the Lord having a ground of perfect satisfaction, the Lord having things according to His own mind, His own heart, the Lord just finding what He has been seeking all the time : “This is my resting place for ever...” The Lord has been provided with that which answers to His own heart's desire, and it is therefore possible to say to Him, “Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place...”

David's concern was that the Lord should be satisfied first of all. You will notice from the passage we have quoted, that he sets aside all that is his own. With David, the Lord takes first place.

### Christ—God's All and Ours

Let us carry that over to the New Testament for interpretation, for it is there that we shall find the spiritual meaning. We are meditating upon “ALL THINGS IN CHRIST”, and amongst these things, and by no means least, is God's satisfaction, God's coming to rest in His Tabernacle. That is what was in point when the Spirit, descending in the form of a dove, lighted upon the Lord Jesus. The dove returning to her rest in the Ark typified the Spirit coming to rest in Christ, the satisfaction of God : “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. iii. 17). I find My rest, I am perfectly satisfied, here I have all My desire. So the Spirit as a dove, the symbol of peace and rest,

lighted upon Him. The Lord Jesus answers to all the desire of God's heart, and in Him God enters into His rest.

When you and I set aside all our interests, and focus and concentrate all our concern upon the Lord Jesus, so that He has first place, has all, we have provided God with His rest in our lives, thus paving the way for the blessing. “There the Lord commanded the blessing...” Where ? Firstly, where He found His rest, His satisfaction, His joy. The Lord does not bless you and me as our natural selves. The Lord will not bless my flesh, nor your flesh. The blessing of the Lord comes to rest upon His Son as within us : “...the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you...” (1 John ii. 27). Remember that the blessing of the Lord, the anointing, the precious ointment, is upon the Head. It comes down to us only as from the Head, by way of the Head, and it is when Christ by His Spirit has come to rest in us that the blessing rests there. The blessing rests upon Him in us, and that is why it abides. Thank God, it abides. This, if we do but recognise it, is one of the chief blessings of our life in union with the Lord. We in ourselves do not abide for five minutes ! We can be as changeable as the weather. In the morning we may be one man, and in the afternoon another, and in the evening quite another. We may be as many different people in the course of the week as there are days. At one time we feel splendid spiritually and think we shall never, never be down again, but it is not long before we are right down. We vary like that ; we become familiar with every movement that this human life is capable of knowing. If we live in that soul-life of constantly changing moods, oh, what a distressing life it is. But the anointing which you have received abideth. Why is this ? Because it abides upon Him, not upon us, and He is “the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever”. There is no changing on the part of the Lord Jesus in us. With Him, there is no variableness, neither shadow cast by turning. Oh, the changes that sweep over our lives because of the changeableness of this human life ; but there He is in us ever the same. We may have a thousand moods in as many hours, but He never changes, He is always the same. The anointing abides upon Him in us. Oh, that we would live in Christ, live in the anointing, live in that unvarying fact of God in Christ, unchangeable. He does not love us in the morning and turn against

us in the afternoon. However we may feel it to be so, such is not the case. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love". Our moods would lead us to conclude that to-day the Lord loves us, and to-morrow that He is against us; to-day that the Lord is with us, to-morrow that He has departed from us. That is our infirmity. That is of ourselves, and not of the Lord. The Lord is not us, in that way. The Lord is not our moods, our feelings, our sensations, or our lack of sensations. The Lord is the same always, the same faithful, unchangeable God, and the anointing abideth. It does not come and go. It does not rise and fall. It is not in and out, up and down, one day this and the next day that; it abides.

The enjoyment of that is only possible when Christ is the focal point of our lives. God comes to rest in His Son, and finds His satisfaction there. You must come there in order to find God's rest, and then the blessing is there. The Lord commands the blessing in the place where He has His rest, that is, in the Lord Jesus. But then Christ is in you: "...thou, and the ark of thy strength." That is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

### Christ as God's Rest in the Heart

So then, the first aspect of the basis of the blessing is that of our knowing God's rest in His Son, Jesus Christ, in our own lives. He Himself put it in language which had to be more or less symbolic, or parabolic. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. xi. 29). "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Verse 28). We know what that means in the spirit. When we were children we may have thought it to be a word for labouring men in life's labours and toil, but we have come to know that this labouring and being heavy laden has mainly to do with these changeable moods of ours. We are labouring against the current, the tide, the stress of our own instability, our own uncertainty, our own oft-doubting and questioning, our feelings: and it is a labour when you live in that realm! The Lord Jesus says, "...I will give you rest." How will He do this? Well, He will come into you, take up His abode in you as the seat and centre of the deepest satisfaction, and you will need have no more question. Are you straining and struggling over the question

of whether the Lord is satisfied with you? You had better cease from it, because He never will be. If you are looking and longing for that day when the Lord is going to be perfectly satisfied with you, you are looking for a very distant day. If you are hoping that some day the Lord will be very pleased with you, and then you will be very happy, that day is not coming this side of glory. What we have to realise—and it is a truth so often repeated, and yet not grasped enough by our hearts—is that the Lord is never going to be satisfied with us as in ourselves, but He is already perfectly satisfied with His Son whom He has given to dwell in our hearts as the seat of His satisfaction, and we are accepted in the Beloved. Then the blessing comes. We see how the blessing works out.

### Dwelling Together in Unity

Now we come to the second aspect of the basis of the blessing.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm cxxxiii. 1.)

We have seen it in the illustration, the foreshadowing, namely, of Zion uniting all hearts, making all one, drawing away from everything personal, everything sectional. Now when the heart is centred upon the Lord Jesus, we have the greatest power and dynamic against division, against separateness, against everything that keeps us apart, and when the Lord Jesus is our central, supreme object, and it is toward Him that our hearts go out, then we come into a unity. You cannot have personal interests and at the same time care for the interests of the Lord. David makes that perfectly clear. "The tabernacle of *my* house," that is one thing; and if I consider that, then I shall not be set upon a house for the Lord; if I am set upon that, then I shall not find a place for the Lord's rest. If I am seeking to satisfy *my* desire, giving sleep to *my* eyes, and slumber to *my* eyelids, then the Lord's interests will take a second place. But when I set myself aside, with all that is personal, and I am centred upon the Lord, and when all the others do that too, we shall find our perfect uniting centre in Christ. That is what it is to dwell in unity.

Now Ephesians iv. is the great New Testament exposition of Psalm cxxxiii. "*There is one body...*" Read the passage without the italicized words: "...Giving diligence to keep

the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...one body, and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all" (Verses 3-6). Oneness in Christ as a Body fitly framed together is what is portrayed. How is this perfect unity reached? By all that is individual and personal being left, by the Lord being the focal centre, and by our giving diligence to maintain the unity in that way; keeping all personal things out, and keeping Christ and His interests always in view: "...till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man..." (Verse 13). Dwelling together in unity in that way, is the result of His being the sole and central object of all our concerns. This is not visionary, imaginative, merely idealistic, it is very practical. You and I will discover that there are working elements of divisiveness, things creeping in amongst us to set us apart. The enemy is always seeking to do that, and the things that rise up to get in between the Lord's people and put up a barrier are countless; a sense of strain and of distance, for example, of discord and of unrelatedness. Sometimes they are more of an abstract character; that is, you can never lay your hand upon them and explain them, and say what they are; it is just a sense of something. Sometimes it is more positive, a distinct and definite misunderstanding, a misinterpretation of something said or done, something laid hold of; and of course, it is always exaggerated by the enemy.

How is that kind of thing to be dealt with in order to keep the unity of the Spirit? Rightly, adequately on this basis alone, by our saying: 'This is not to the Lord's interests; this can never be of value to the Lord; this can never be to His glory and satisfaction; this can only mean injury to the Lord.' What I may feel in the matter is not the vital consideration. I may even be the wronged party, but am I going to feel wronged and hurt? Am I going to stand on my dignity? Am I going to shut myself up and go away, because I have been wronged? That is how nature would have it, but I must take this attitude: 'The Lord stands to lose, the Lord's Name stands to suffer, the Lord's interests are involved in this; I must get on top of this; I must get the better of this; I must shake this thing off and not allow it to affect my attitude, my conduct, my feelings toward this brother or

sister! There must be the putting aside of that which *we* feel, and even of our rights for the Lord's sake, and a getting on top of this enemy effort to injure the Lord's testimony. That is giving diligence to keep the unity. That is the power of a victory over divisiveness, and is the victory for unity, and *there* the Lord commands the blessing. That is the way of eternal life. The other way is manifestly the way of death, and that is what the enemy is after. Until that difference is cleared up, all is death, all is withered and blighted. Life is by unity, and unity can only adequately be found in Christ being in His place as the One for whom we let go everything that is personal. We might not do it for the sake of anyone else. We might never do it for the sake of the person in view. We do it for His sake, and the enemy is defeated. There the Lord commands the blessing.

Such, then, is the twofold aspect of the basis of the blessing. Firstly, God's ground of satisfaction and rest must be equally our own, namely, His Son; and, secondly, we must dwell together therein.

Take the great illustration in the second chapter of the book of the Acts. Here is the greatest exhibition of the working of this truth that the world has ever seen. "But Peter, standing up *with* the eleven..." There are brethren together in unity! The Lord also has entered into His rest. By the Cross the Father has found His satisfaction in the Son; the Lord has entered into His heavenly Tabernacle. All is rest now in heaven: God is satisfied, the reconciling work has been done in the Blood of the Cross, peace has been made, and God has entered into His rest in the perfect work of redemption. Now the eyes of all the apostles are on the Lord Jesus, and as they stand up He is in full view. Peter has left all those personal things behind. They have all left the personal things now, and their whole object is Christ. Standing up now, their testimony is all to Christ, and they are one, united in Him; and there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore, such blessing as was like the precious ointment coming down from the head to the skirts of the garment.

The figure is perfect, as a figure. There is the Head, the Lord Jesus, and the Father has commanded the blessing in the pouring of the eternal Spirit upon the Head. Now as all these members are ranged under the Head, centred in the Head,

held together in the Head, the blessing comes down to the skirts of His garment, and it is "...like the dew of Hermon that cometh down upon the mountains of Zion..." That is the effect of the blessing, that is the effect of life for evermore. What is the dew of Hermon? If you had lived in that country, you would know the value of the dew of Hermon. It is a parched and shrivelled land, with everything dry and becoming barren, and then the dew of Hermon comes down and everything revives, everything is refreshed, everything lifts up its head and lives again. It is the beneficent result of the blessing; life, freshness, hope, reviving, fruitfulness. There the Lord commanded the blessing.

Do you see the way of life, the way of fruitfulness, of reviving, of refreshing, the way of blessing? Two things are basic. These are our coming to the place of God's rest in His Son, and our letting go of everything that is of ourselves in the interests of His Son, and finding our all in Him. Thus are we drawn together by our mutual love for the Lord. Oh that we had more of the expression of this. I think that is why the Lord is bringing the matter before us; not for the message to be merely as a blessed prospect, a word that has a happy ring about it and that gives us a certain amount of uplift while it is being spoken, but for it to be a strong call from the Lord. Do we want the blessing? Do we want life for evermore, life more abundant? Do we

want refreshing, and fruitfulness, and reviving, and uplift? Do we want that others also should get the blessing through us? Look at Pentecost. Pentecost is the outworking of Psalm cxxxiii; for there brethren were dwelling together in unity, centred upon the Lord, and in the Lord, and the Lord commanded the blessing.

There is nothing very profound in this, but it is of no less importance on that account. It is yet another way of bringing the Lord Jesus into view, of showing Him as the centre, as supreme. But, oh, it is a call from the Lord, a serious and solemn call from the Lord to our hearts. The way of fruitfulness, the way of blessing, the way of freshness, the way of joy is to be in this way that is under the blessing of the Lord, because we have found our rest where He has found His, in the Lord Jesus; because the object of our hearts, for which we have set aside all lesser objects, all personal interests, is the object of His own, even His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. There the Lord commands the blessing, even life for evermore.

May He be able to do that with us. Oh, that it might be said in days to come as never hitherto: "... *there* the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore", because of these two great governing realities, both of which are centred in the Lord Jesus.

T.A-S.

## Life in the Spirit

No. 3.

Christ Within

READING: Acts i. 10-11; Ephes. iv. 13;  
ii. 15-16; Col. iii. 10-11; Ephes. iv. 24;  
Gal. iii. 27.

### The Perfecting of the Son of Man

The Lord Jesus in His sufferings was perfected as Son of Man. He was perfect, without sin, and yet we are told that He was perfected through sufferings. In His case the question of sin does not arise, and is not the side of truth

that comes into view in the perfecting of the Son of Man. This has to do with the fact that, being without sin, He voluntarily gave Himself up to live a life of dependence upon God; not upon Himself in any way, not to do His own human will, not to live according to His own human judgments, not to follow His own human desires, or feelings; not in any matter whatever to live or move or speak or have His being apart from the Father. On that basis He was sub-

jected in a brief space of time to every kind of testing and trial to which any being can be subjected. We know nothing, comparatively speaking, of what He did endure as to temptation, as to trial. Even from the record of His life, where certain trials and temptations and sufferings come into view, you and I can never judge of the depth and poignancy of His travail. If the offerings in the first six chapters of the book of Leviticus are really typical of Christ, then you have practically every kind of offering subjected to fire in one way or another. Thus, not only in His Cross as the whole burnt offering, but equally in the sense of the meal offering His pure, holy, sinless human life was tested by the fire. It was in these fires, in life and in death, that He was tried, on the basis of His dependence upon the Father, His obedience to the Father, His refusal to move in any respect apart from the Father, to accept anything out of the Father's time or will.

The last and terrible test in the garden and on the Cross was the full measure of pressure to break Him down if He could be broken down, and in this way He was perfected—perfect, but perfected.

That humanity, that life which has been lived, utterly satisfying God, and utterly defeating every power and attempt of hell, is taken to glory, to God's right hand. There at God's right hand He is set forth as that perfected humanity, not only sinless, but developed to its full extent, its full capacity, through trial. Concerning that, the Spirit says to us through the Scriptures that we, through new birth and possessing the Spirit through faith, are now partakers of that very life. Let us not think of the humanity merely in terms of the physical, but of a perfect manhood, a perfect nature, which has satisfied God wholly, and is given to us by the Holy Spirit to be the truest, most inward reality of our life. It is Christ ministered to us, and when we take of the loaf we are testifying to the fact that now it is not on the basis of what we are by nature, but on the basis of what Jesus is in glory, that we are living our lives, that we choose to live our lives. Then we in turn are tried, tested as to whether we will live on the basis of Christ, God's perfect Man, or whether we will forsake that ground and return to our own ground and live in any way on the ground of self. It is that which is the innermost truth of Paul's great statement: "I

have been crucified with Christ..." That means that all that "I" stands for has been put away, and it is no longer I but Christ.

### The Issue of Pentecost

That brings us really to the meaning of Pentecost, or the meaning of the Holy Spirit. We ask again, what is the meaning of the Holy Spirit? It is just this, that His it is to present Christ to us in terms of Lordship and Saviourhood. The Lord calls upon men to recognise that He has put Jesus Christ in the place of absolute Lordship, and so men have to bow to Christ before they can know salvation. The danger is that we should put it the other way round, and get inadequate results; for so often Christ is presented as Saviour first, and men come to Him as Saviour because they want to get out of all the misery and inconvenience which sin has brought upon them. That is really to desire salvation for their own sakes, and so an inadequate result is known. If it is kept in the Divine order, Jesus Christ is to be recognised as Lord first, and that means absolute surrender to Him; not what you are to get for yourself in the first place, but what He is to have, His rights in the life. On that basis of bowing utterly to His Lordship there is an open way into all the blessings of His Saviourhood. That is the New Testament order. The first thing the Holy Spirit does is to present Christ to us in terms of Lordship and Saviourhood.

### Christ Revealed as Within

The second thing is to reveal Christ in us through faith. When Christ is presented to us, then is the challenge to faith. The whole question of obedience, of faith expressing itself in obedience, is raised. It may be instantaneous, and the same thing may seem to be simultaneous. It seems that in the case of Paul it was simultaneous, or almost so, because the appearing of Christ to him was equally the presenting of Christ to him. It was looked back upon by him and spoken of as also the revealing of God's Son in him. They are two aspects of one thing. They may be almost simultaneous, but they may not be. They are movements of the Spirit, and first is the presenting of that challenge to faith, and obedience. On that basis there is again a movement of the Holy Spirit and the revelation of Christ in us, through faith. This means the great thing. So far as we are con-

cerned everything depends upon this state in the movement of the Spirit, because this means the coming into us of that which is "altogether other" than we are, and the coming in to us of that in terms of Lordship. This revealing of God's Son in us by the Holy Spirit does not mean just the lighting up of Christ in our hearts, not merely that inside there is a light by which we see Christ, it means the imparting of Christ. It means that Christ is revealed as in us; not only revealed in us, but revealed as in us. Christ has now become subjective, whereas before He was objective. It is something "altogether other" than we are. It takes a lifetime to discover how altogether other Christ is from what we are. He has now by the Spirit been introduced into us, and that in terms of Lordship, because the Holy Spirit means by this that we have to bow right down before Him.

That is where the conflict begins. That is where all our Christian experience begins. That is the basis of our discipline, our training, our chastening. Spiritual history is wrought out upon that ground, of Christ, so utterly other than we are, getting ascendancy over us in every detail, in every sense. That is where spiritual intelligence comes, and that is what spirituality is. It is recognising, perceiving, discerning Christ as so much other than we are, and then following that intelligence and working it out, or working according to it. The advent of the Holy Spirit means the Lordship of Christ, but that is pre-eminently practical. It is not just saying, Yes, we recognise Christ as God's Son, as Lord, as on the throne, and we bow to Him as such, but the Holy Spirit comes along and begins to apply that all the way through our lives at every point, and almost every day. We can have a series of challenges upon the question of the Lordship of Jesus Christ over our minds, our wills, our hearts, our ways; that reaction of the Holy Spirit in us to our action, where we move and the Holy Spirit counter-moves, and we know that we have moved wrongly. Every such reaction of the Holy Spirit is bringing home the fact that, with Him, Christ revealed within is in terms of Lordship, and we learn so to bow to Him in His utter difference from ourselves.

#### Entering into God's Rest

This has several phases. The first is the question of our coming into God's rest and ceasing from ourselves. You can see how this

issue is raised immediately by the Holy Spirit. If all that is intended by this introduction of Christ as so different from ourselves is to be realised, we must cease from ourselves, and we must cease from our own works. That means, on the other hand, that we must enter into God's rest. It means that the Cross has to be accepted and passed in fact, just as Jordan had to be passed through by Israel in fact, and then Jordan became a practical working principle for the rest of their lives. Nevertheless, Jordan had to be established as a fact in their consciousness, in their recognition, as basic to all the future, and we have to have the Cross settled as basic in like manner, which is the way into God's rest.

We see Israel passing over into the land which was represented as God's rest for them. Of the former generation the Lord said: "I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest"; and they perished in the wilderness. The generation which did pass over are represented as having entered into God's rest typically, symbolically. What kind of rest was it? It was a rest of continuous battles, fightings, subduings, mighty activities.

The principle of the rest is established at the outset in Jericho. God let them know the nature of His rest by just causing them to march round Jericho day after day, and allowing them to do nothing else. There is nothing very arduous about that. Then on the seventh day they had to do it seven times. Thereupon the whole obstruction collapsed. It was not their doing. In faith they entered into God's rest, and God did what remained to be done. That was the principle upon which the conquest of the land was to take place.

If you and I are coming into all that is bound up with God's heavenly Man having been introduced into us by the Holy Spirit, we shall find that God's rest is basic to that. What is God's rest? It is our accepting as a fact the finished work of the Cross, the end of God's works in Christ. If we have never got that settled the result will be that there will be no progress, no growth. Ceasing from ourselves and being wholly occupied with Christ is God's rest. If we are going to be taken up continually with the question of our own salvation, our own sanctification, our own spiritual life, our own work for the Lord, the value of our lives to the Lord here on this earth; in any way, in any sense occupied with ourselves, even though it may be in a

spiritual way ; in spiritual interests and spiritual concerns taken up with ourselves, so that we are always watching our own spiritual progress, and development, just how much we are counting, how much work we are doing, we shall not grow. It takes many of the Lord's people a long time to come to the end of this which is, after all, the first stage of things with the Lord. We must get it settled as basic to everything, that Christ is made unto us righteousness, sanctification, redemption, wisdom from God. The question of our salvation is settled when we believe. It is not something given to us in ourselves, as though we had to keep it and look after it and watch over it, lest we lose our salvation. Salvation is in Christ Jesus, and He is now, through the Cross and the resurrection, beyond the reach of any destructive power, and holds our treasure, our salvation in Himself. Faith in Him settles once for all the question of our salvation. All we are asked to do is to direct our faith to the Lord Jesus as our salvation.

The matter of sanctification is the same. He is made unto us sanctification. We are to be occupied with the Lord Jesus, and forsake our own ground, and then the sanctifying work will be done. The Lord has undertaken it. Our responsibility begins and ends with reposing faith in Christ, even for sanctification. The Lord will do the rest.

Am I to take upon my own shoulders the whole matter of my usefulness to the Lord, my vocation, my service, my ministry ? No, never ! How many of the children of God have been beaten, and broken, and buffeted about by the question of ministry and usefulness to the Lord. That is not our affair in the first instance. What is to be done with our lives depends entirely upon our walking with the Lord. We have altogether false ideas of ministry. We have set ministry before our eyes as some kind of order of things, something into which we get, something that we take up, and ministry is nothing of the kind. Ministry is the spontaneous outgoing of Christ in us, and the more there is of Christ to go out through us, the greater will be our ministry. Let us get away from mechanical ideas of service for the Lord. The Holy Spirit, Who has introduced Christ into us, is going to construct everything upon the basis of Christ in us.

This is entering into His rest. The works were finished from the foundation of the world, the works " afore prepared that we should walk in

them ". How can we walk in works foreordained, of which we have no knowledge ? Walk in the Spirit, and you will find yourself in the works foreordained. Rest in the finished work of Christ. It touches our salvation, it touches our sanctification, and it touches our vocation. Be wholly set upon Christ. To follow Him as the Holy Spirit makes Him known to us, that is to enter into rest.

### Continuing in the Spirit

Joshua is a type of the energies of the Holy Spirit and not of Christ, as has so often been said. The land is the type of Christ, the fulness of Christ, the treasures that are in Christ. Christ is the land, flowing with milk and honey. It is by the energies of the Holy Spirit that we are to come into that ; and it was as the people obeyed fully, and were subject to Joshua, that they came into possession of the fulnesses, and became a triumphant people. Our business is just to be sure that we have the Spirit, and that we are moving by the Spirit, and ceasing from ourselves. The rest is His responsibility.

We tarry with this matter, to press it in the simplest ways. Have you any reason at all to believe that the Lord Jesus has come into your life ? Have there ever been any evidences of that ? What are those evidences ? Are not those evidences things altogether apart from yourself ; that is, they are not things which you have produced, which have come from you, but rather, as you would say in your more mature spiritual phraseology, things which the Lord has shown, and the Lord has done ? Have you any evidence like that ? If so, why should you not just go on to the fulness of that ? Did you start that ? Did that originate with you ? Not at all. Then, if the Lord has taken the initiative in any one thing in your life, why should He not take the initiative in the remainder. How was it He was able to do it in that one thing ? Because you trusted Him for it. Did you bring about your salvation ? No, He did it. Did you trust the Lord in any other detail, and did He not undertake ? Why should not the Lord keep your whole life on that basis ? That is but going on in the way of the Lord.

You may be struggling and straining and agonising and getting into despair, and wondering if you will ever get into things, reach this high realm of things. Perhaps you have almost decided that you never will. Perhaps you are

thinking of the wings of the dove, that would fly away and be at—what? Rest? No! You will never get rest by flying away. The trouble is that you have not recognised the basic fact that the Holy Spirit has brought Christ to dwell within you, and if you will cease from your own works and refuse definitely to take up the battle again for yourself, but believe that the Lord is going to do the rest as you commit yourself to the hands of the Holy Spirit, the Lord will do the rest. I can tell you of no other way. I know of no other way. It is a matter of stepping from our own ground through the Cross, and taking the ground of Christ as risen, as ascended, and for that to be made good in us on the ground of the Cross by the Holy Spirit. It is then that things change.

### Rest Essential to Growth

It is essential that we enter into God's rest on all matters. The matter of our usefulness to the Lord troubles us, and troubles many of the Lord's people. We have to abandon that concern as it becomes a personal concern. We will have a prayerful concern that we shall not fail the Lord, but if it is a matter of getting into service which at the moment is not before us, and we are going to worry ourselves about our life work, then that is not our responsibility at all. We have to settle down to the fact that if the Lord wants to do anything with us, if we are rightly adjusted, if we are at His disposal, if He has a clear way in us, He will Himself take responsibility for our usefulness to Him, whether it be little or great. It would be better for us to be tucked away in some quiet corner of the world where we were serving the Lord a hundred per cent, though within a seemingly limited sphere, than for us to be out in some great thing, where we were full of activities but only about ten per cent of it was really the Lord's work. To enter into God's rest is basic to growth.

That which follows is the operation of the Spirit of sonship. The operation of the Spirit of sonship never begins, is never taken up, until we have entered into God's rest. Hebrews iv. speaks of God's rest. Then in chapters v. (from verse 12) and vi. we have such words as these: 'Of whom (Melchizedek) we have many things to say, but ye cannot receive them... When by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that someone teach you the first principles of Christ—you have to be dealt

with as babes. Let us cease to speak of the first principles, and let us go on to full growth; not laying again a foundation...' Then the foundation things are mentioned by name. The writer is saying, in effect: 'You are occupied with these first things all the time, but, after all, they are foundations. They are all principles, but, after all, they are *first* principles. While you stay there, turning over these questions again and again, occupied with first principles, you remain babes, and you cannot go on to full growth. Settle the first principles once for all, get the foundation laid, and go on to full growth'. What does that mean? Oh, enter into God's rest over these matters, and then go on to development, to growth. Let these things which are basic to your spiritual establishment and development be settled. You cannot grow until you are in rest. The Spirit of sonship, the Spirit of full growth, cannot proceed until we have come on to the ground of God's rest, and that is the ground where Christ is all, and in all.

Take the illustration which the Apostle gives in the letter to the Galatians. You remember the whole course of his argument in that letter. He gives a contrast between the infant and slave, and the son. The child is under tutors, that is, in infancy. A bondsman is one who is in the position of ignorance; he does not know, he is not told, not taken into confidence. He and the infant are in a similar position to the spiritually immature; they are in ignorance, they are in a state of infancy, they cannot be entrusted with knowledge, with secrets, because they are in that position. On the other hand there is the son, and Paul puts the son over against the slave and the infant. The son comes into everything, he knows. So there is the contrast between these. The infancy and the slavery are related to the law. That is the argument. What is the result? Sooner or later the absence of that inward knowledge will bring about a break-down. You can see it at work, whether it be Jewish law or Christian law. There is a great deal of Christian legalism. Impose that upon anybody, and mark the issue. Take the matter of bringing up children in a family, by Christian parents. If we bring up our children under law, be it Christian law (that is, imposing Christianity upon them as a system, as laws, as so many things which they must observe and do), what happens? When they come of age they depart from the law, and they go away from Christian-

ity. Some of us know that in our own cases, and we know it in the case of many Christian parents heart-broken over their children. They have brought them up rigidly in Christianity, in their own Christianity, they imposed it on them, and when the child grew up he or she departed. What is the matter? There is all the difference between being under law, whether it be Jewish or Christian, and being in the position where Christ is known in the heart. One is infancy, the other is growth, or maturity, or sonship. There is no safety, no certainty, no security, unless Christ has really been implanted within by the Holy Spirit. The law never does that. We are not saying that there is no such thing as backsliding, even in those in whom the Lord is resident. That is probably the main point of the letter to the Galatians, that they received the Spirit, not by the works of the law, but by the obedience of faith. Paul is saying to them: 'Now, remember, if you go back to law you are

departing from Christ'. That is a very much more serious thing than just departing from a system, and from an outward profession.

So you see that sonship is, in principle, Christ within by the Spirit, that which is "altogether other" than ourselves. By Christ within we grow. On no other ground can we do so.

You see what has happened. The Holy Spirit within has brought Man according to God's mind to dwell within us, different from what we are; and then there has to be the yielding, surrendering, handing up of everything to Him, so that we know that what we are is something altogether different from what He is. Then we gradually cease to be that, and what Christ is, is spread over our minds, our hearts, our wills, our ways, our everything, and we are in that way being conformed to the image of God's Son. That is the end of the operation of the Spirit of sonship.

T.A.S.

## The Need of the Hour

As we take account of the situation to-day we feel more and more deeply convinced that the greatest need of the hour is for men of vision and courage.

But we use the word "vision" in the specific sense in which it is used in the Bible and not in the general sense of enterprise. That is, what is needed above all else is men who have had a Divine revelation by the Holy Spirit in their own hearts as to God's purpose in this dispensation, and the particular Divine emphasis for the present hour.

There can be much enthusiasm and zeal put behind a more or less generally conceived idea of what needs to be done, with a resultant activity and "movement". The opposite of this, and that which we are seeing to be so much more needed is a burdening of the hearts of "chosen vessels" with God's own most-pressing concern at this time, resulting in an all-consuming passion which will accept all the cost of its realisation.

There are many earnest and devoted servants

of God who are seeking to be faithful in the work to which they feel God has called them. There are passionate preachers, and men on full stretch for the furtherance of "the Kingdom of God." What we are saying is no overlooking of this and of much more, neither is it an undervaluing of the great amount of devoted and sacrificial service to the Lord. Nevertheless we press our point. There are very few men in our day of whom it can be truly said, "That man has had a revelation from God."

There is all the difference between being saved and then going into Christian service with the resultant studying of the Bible, the preparation of sermons, addresses, lessons; collecting material, mastering themes and subjects; etc., etc., and giving this out as required or as opportunity affords—there is all the difference between this and an open heaven, an anointing, a revelation by the Holy Spirit. It is the difference between our labouring to get, in order to meet a constantly recurring demand, and the Holy Spirit continually revealing Christ in us. This is a

general difference, but it is a very great one, and it may represent all the difference between bondage and liberty, between limitation and fulness, even between life and death in ministry. But this is not our particular point. The need of the hour is not only for a higher spiritual level of ministry in general, it is for men with a specific revelation which will meet the situation as it is *now*.

No one who knows anything about the present conditions will disagree with the statement that the Church is in tragic need of men with a message, but our point is that what is needed is the knowledge of what *the* message is for the time. *That* message must come from God to men chosen for the purpose. This is not a ministry which can be taken up. Usually for such ministry there is a long and deep history with God, a history full of mystery and suffering. Many phases are passed through, all in the permissive will of God, or in His directive will, inasmuch as they are intended to educate and give experience, but the course is never that of the established and settled kind, and so big changes may be called for, each of which comes by a new spiritual crisis.

No one can do anything in the making of such vessels, however much they may be concerned for them. This is God's work alone, and they have to be left in His hands. We may sometimes almost despair as we look in vain for such, but there may be many more under the Lord's hand than we have any idea of, and He will produce them in His time. We do urge this need upon the consideration and prayers of the Lord's people to-day.

But what about the courage? Men of vision and courage! Yes, and more courage will be required here than in any other realm of which we know.

A specific revelation will—to begin with—set a distance between such as have it and such as have not that specific revelation. This will give rise to many possibilities. Even the best servants of God who have not so seen will probably stand back. It will mean loneliness, and going

on alone perhaps for quite a time. It will mean ostracism, misunderstanding, misrepresentation, suspicion, closed doors (so far as man can close them).

Then, no revelation from God is ever just verbal truth, it always involves practical issues. These practical issues will appear like the crystallising of the truth, so that those who obey it will become marked people. This raises a new set of opposing elements. If God has given a revelation concerning His purpose in Christ which is of such vital importance as to have called for all this special history and preparation, we must realise that it is of very great moment to Satan's interests, and he will leave nothing unused to make its course impossible.

Let it be understood that in the line of a revelation and ministry such as Paul's the only way of its fulfilment is that of Paul's abandonment and courage. Listen to him again:—

“Circumcised the eighth day,  
Of the stock of Israel,  
Of the tribe of Benjamin,  
A Hebrew of the Hebrews,  
As touching the law, a Pharisee,  
As touching zeal, persecuting the Church,  
As touching the righteousness which is in  
the law, found blameless.  
Howbeit, what things were gain to me,  
these have I counted loss for Christ”.

(Phil. iii. 5-7).

Here is birth, religious training, tradition, denomination, status, prestige, family, friends, reputation, all touched by his new revelation. He let them go as it became necessary in the fulfilment of his received heavenly vision.

And this was not all, for even in the Apostolic circle Paul very largely stood alone.

If the greatest need of the hour is that of men of vision, along with it will go the need for willingness to pay the price. But there is another side, and that is God's side, and the compensations are great.

It is a great thing to be in possession of an open heaven and of a mandate from God.

T.A-S.

# The Kingdom of the God of Heaven

No. 3.

## Jehovah My God

READING: Daniel ix.

In the course of this chapter the title, Lord, appears many times, and while there are many occasions in the Old Testament where this title is found, and where it bears this meaning, there is another use of the English word, distinguished in our Bibles by always appearing in large capitals, which refers to a personal name, the name Jehovah. It is to this latter use we now refer.

The Lord has been stressing with us different aspects of His Name, and this title of Jehovah appears seven times in chapter ix. Take verse 4. as an example:—

“ And I prayed unto *Jehovah my God...* ”

In Matthew i. 21 we read:—

“ ...thou shalt call his name *Jesus...he... shall save his people from their sins* ”.

In Psalm lxxv. 1 we read:—

“ ...*thy name is near...* ”

Of all the names and titles to be found in this book of Daniel—and they are many and varied and significant—here is one of the most precious. I am not going to try to prove to you that the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Jesus of the New Testament. We will take that for granted, and trust the Lord to witness to it in our hearts that it is so. “ And I prayed unto Jehovah my God... ”; “ ...thou shalt call his name Jesus... ”; “ ...thy name is near... ”

Regarded from some aspects Daniel is a painful book. I wonder how some of us would have felt had we seen some of the visions that had fallen to Daniel's lot. Think of that image. It was a symbol of world empires, a great succession of the world-wide combinations of men's government, and then, when at its height and fulness, the whole thing is dashed to fragments, no place left for it. What an awful picture of desolation and destruction! Such a thought is common to these visions. There is desolation, there is

destruction, there is the overflowing flood, there is the judgment of God from heaven. The nations pass before us in a kind of procession. With all their pride and all their achievement they fall to the dust, and are crushed so small that no remnants of them can be found, and the matter is summed up thus in one sad and solemn word toward the end of the book: “ He shall come to his end and none shall help him ”.

What is the matter? Well, put in brief, the trouble with all these nations, and all these great ones and little ones of the earth, the whole mighty host of them, is that while they can call God by certain names they do not know Him as Jehovah. There is no reference to that Name in any other part of the book. Nebuchadnezzar may call Him “ the king of heaven ”, but he does not know Him as Jehovah.

### Mere Outward Relationship is Devoid of Life

There are multitudes of people on this earth to-day who have some kind of nodding acquaintance with the Divinity and the names they use are many. They use the name Jesus, but they do not know the inner spiritual, essential reality of that most precious of all words: “ ...thou shalt call his name Jesus, for it is he that shall save his people from their sins ”. That is the trouble with these nations, that is the explanation of the destruction and the horrible and awful and pitiful end of it all, the failure, the ruin, the desolation. They never knew the covenant-keeping God.

You may go to Churches or meetings; you may have a nodding acquaintance with God; you may call yourself a Christian, and may be accepted by others as a Christian; you may, indeed, measure yourself up against others to your own advantage and know that, while in their own estimation they are ahead of you, you are better than they in your own life; yet it may be true of you that you cannot say in that

deep and true and real way : For me His Name is Jesus, for He saves me from my sin. If you cannot say that, let me warn you. If you look at the book of Daniel, or any other book of the Bible that tells of the awful end of being without covenant relationship with God, you will see, the tragic reality of being without God. There are not many references to the resurrection in the Old Testament, but you will find that mention is made of it in Daniel xii. When God saves He does an eternal work. There are some who will wake in glory, but there are some who will wake—oh, the desolation in the passing of those soft and subtle delusions—to everlasting condemnation. Why is this ? Because they never could say, Jehovah my God ; Jesus, my Jesus, is Saviour.

You may think it to be just a matter of words, but it is not so. It is a matter of deep heart reality, as some of us know to the depths of our being. Better than we know our own names, better than all the knowledge of contemporary events and circumstances, we know that Jesus is our Saviour. Equally too do you know if it be not so with you. You cannot deceive yourself in that respect. You can pass it off ; perhaps have an uncomfortable time in a meeting, and then shake it off, but you know in your heart whether you can say as Daniel said, " Jehovah my God ".

This is not an achievement or an attainment. It is not that you are worse than we are. It is not that we are saying that after years of training and self-discipline we have reached that. Not at all. One of the saddest chapters in Daniel is the one where this Name shows forth best. Never has there been done anything to another nation as to this nation, never has another city suffered as this city, and amid all the ruin and the shame and reproach and misery wringing the heart of Daniel till he hardly knows how to sob out his confession, he is saying " Jehovah my God ". Seven times it occurs—that is the perfect number—and though desolation, and ruin, and misery, and failure be heaping themselves upon a soul, it is all right so long as out of it all such a one can lift up head and heart, and say, Jesus my Saviour. Shame ? Yes ! Confession ? Yes ! That is all a part of laying hold of the Name. Until you are overwhelmed with the sadness and bitterness of it all, until you are convinced of the folly and futility of all man's efforts, until you are ashamed of yourself, you never come into the deepest truths, know none

of the sweetness of the power of the Name of the saving God. I want to plead, if pleading will help, that you should not miss what the Lord brings to you.

In our first meditation we were talking about the Lord as a revealer of secrets, One who loves to reveal Himself. In our following meditation we were talking about Him as the King of heaven, a King with heaven to offer. Now we are talking about Him in a Name which may be just a name to us, but there is a wealth and depth of meaning behind it, and it is all in this realm of a faithful, gracious, merciful, pardoning Saviour. If you can get hold of that Name of the Lord that is your salvation. It is something more than teaching, something more than theology, something more than Bible study ; this is heart experience. To know the Name of the Lord is salvation, and His Name is near, not far, not remote, but right at hand. " Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved ".

Jehovah to us is in some measure a mystic Name, and we are not by any means sure of all that it means, but one thing is certain about it, and that is that it holds within itself the idea of self-existence. God is not dependent upon anybody. He had no beginning. He can never have an end. He does not change. Something of that is in the Name, and the inference is that when a person calls upon His Name, He Himself must do everything. He does not share things with other people. He is different, He is above, He is altogether sufficient in Himself. Thus when Daniel calls to Jehovah he is, in effect, saying what he actually puts into words : ' We of ourselves are hopeless and helpless ; if there is to be any salvation here, it will have to be wholly of Thee from beginning to end '. That is what, from another angle, we call mercy, and that is how Jehovah deals with people, and that is how Jesus the Saviour saves, always and only on the basis of mercy. He does not accept merit. He does not accept offers of service. He does not accept promises of obedience. You may have heard that He does, but He does not. The man that calls Jehovah his God is the man that is saying as Daniel says : " To us belongeth confusion of face " (we are a hopeless, miserable lot of failures, deep-dyed sinners, there is no help nor hope in ourselves).

Have you got to that place ? Matthew says, " ...he...shall save his people from their sins ".

Why is that the people of God know so little of the saving value of the Name of their Saviour? Because they have not yet come to realise, not only the futility and hopelessness of every effort of man and movement of their own souls to fulfil the law of God, but above and beyond that the innate sinfulness of it all, even of every attempt. Sin is deeply rooted in the heart.

The wonder of it is that this Name calls us to salvation, to the unchanging God. He, Jehovah, offers Himself, and what He is saying, in effect, is this: 'You have wandered, you have strayed, you have failed, you have refused. I sent My prophets; you heard, and yet you refused. My Word came to you again and again, and yet you did not respond, and in spite of all that, I have never changed, I am still here. If you have left Me, you will find Me where you left Me. I am still there'. That is a part of His very nature, Jehovah the covenant-God, who does not give up, who does not lose heart, who does not take offence, but waits that He may be gracious. He is the Father of the prodigal. It is a beautiful human picture of a Divine reality. The prodigal is far away, a foul and evil and rebellious son, breaking his father's heart. When at last he realises something of the folly of his behaviour and the misery of his condition; when he does move, he finds the father just where he left him. And so it is with Jehovah. "I am the Lord (I am Jehovah) I change not; *therefore* ye sons of Jacob are not consumed". Oh, the marvel! The unchangeable nature of God guarantees His mercy even to the most reprobate of sons.

### The Ground of All Saving Grace

#### (a) The Love of God

Now there are two matters that come before us as the very basis and explanation of all this. Firstly, when the Lord appears to Daniel after all this confession—and, mind you, Daniel is not speaking merely on behalf of others but for himself—He addresses this word to him through His angelic minister:—

"At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment went forth, and I am come to tell thee; for thou art greatly beloved ... " (Daniel ix. 23).

The margin gives for those last words "thou art very precious". If that does not melt the heart of a wandering son then nothing will, not all the judgments, not all the denunciations. Surely nothing is so calculated to break down a rebel

heart than, when one comes in all his misery and sin and vileness and confession, that the Lord should say to him, Thou art very precious. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus..." Jesus says to sinners, to the worst, Thou art very precious. Have you thought of that in your wandering, in your rebelliousness? Child of God, in the remoteness of your position, the wilfulness, the selfishness of your own heart, you think the Lord is angry with you—and He has very good reason to be—nevertheless, when your heart turns to the Lord however deeply stained that sin, this is the word that comes from the lips of the Saviour, Thou art very precious. Love is behind all this. Child of God never, never doubt the love of God to His own covenant people; He is, eternally and unchangeably, love.

#### (b) The Blood of Jesus Christ

There is another explanation of His saving power which appears in this chapter. It is the Blood of the Cross: "the anointed one shall be cut off". Now that was the result of love, and is the basis of all God's dealings. That is what makes it possible for Him to be a pardoning God, that is what makes Jesus to be our Saviour from sin. You have no hope, nor have I, and never will have, now or in eternity, apart from that cutting off of Christ on the Cross. Have no doubt about that. Meet God on any other basis and you will be burned up with the fires of judgment. Plead anything else and He cannot receive you. There is one basis, and only one, for your meeting God, and for all of us ever to be in living relationship with our God. The theme of the prophets, as also the song of eternity, is the Lamb that was slain. Would to God that I had the tongue of men and of angels to tell all that wonderful and glorious death upon the Cross. But, oh, it is all in the Name of Jesus. When we read this, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus", here is infinite and eternal love, here is unfailing steadfastness, and here is precious poured-out Blood, an offering, a sacrifice of eternal efficacy. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus".

Can you call Him Jesus like that? Can you say, as in effect Daniel was saying: 'My Saviour, Jehovah, my God, I lay claim to Thy mercy, to Thy salvation. To Thee belong mercies and forgiveness'. Can you say that? Oh, that we might make new discoveries of the glories and wonders and nearness of the Name.

Now I want to draw your attention to verse 24 of chapter ix, where some of the effects, the results of calling upon the Name appear. I know this is surrounded with a Jewish atmosphere, I know there is history and prophecy involved in all that is written here. I make no attempt to deal with it on that line, but there is enshrined within all the history, and all the prophecy, a spiritual reality for the people of God, and that it is that matters to us. Let us see something of the practical value of the Name to those who call upon it.

“Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins...”

“Thou shalt call his name Jesus,...he...shall save his people...”

### The Forgiveness of Sins

The first part of that salvation in its elementary form is this, the forgiveness of sins. That is in the Name. That means a great deal more than we have thought, very much more than the simple first coming to the Lord Jesus. Is there one who will say that, when once he had come to Jesus, all his sins were at an end and he has not been troubled from that day to this with any thought of sin? Most of us are all too conscious that, though by His grace we can truly say sin does not have dominion over us, we have increasing need of a Saviour from sin. Now it is in the Name. Here is a Name that you may take hold of this very hour and say: In Him I have the forgiveness of sins; I am free, I am clean, I am delivered. Oh, the wonder of it. Is that elementary to you? It is profound and advanced to me, I must confess. But, oh, like a child one can lay hold of, and call upon, that Name. Oh, the blessedness, the glory, the sweetness of being delivered from sin, this sin that makes hell. Do not think of hell merely as a place with some conditions imposed from without to make people uncomfortable when they go in there. Rather is this the case, that when a soul is under the power of sin, when its life is occupied in committing sin, that is an atmosphere which developed to its fullest degree will bring untold and interminable misery. Sin makes misery, sin makes hell. The glory of the Name of Jesus is that for all that are in Him there is no hell, there is no condemnation, there is no misery; in Him we are free.

Lay hold of that Name, tried child of God. It may be your sins trouble you—I hope they do! But it is a terrible thing to be continually weighed down under a sense of failure, and of inbred sin, an evil thing that may well lead in many a heart almost to despair. If you are such an one I would say to you, Here is a Name that is your way out, your deliverance, your balm, your strength; have the Name of Jesus, and you have deliverance from sin. That is God’s answer to Daniel in his cry and in his humiliating of himself. Daniel calls upon the Name: ‘Jehovah my God, is there not a covenant?’ God says, Yes, there is, and the very foundation of the covenant is this, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more”. Praise God!

There is reconciliation in the Name. The word suggests there has been a parting, a quarrel and divergence; two friends are separated, blood relations are divided, there is a feud, there is enmity; and then somehow or other that is all broken down, and the two who once were enemies come back, and taste something of the sweetness and blessedness of renewed fellowship. Actually, of course, with the individual soul that is not so, for from the very birth we are estranged from God, and ours is not, as was Adam’s, a departing from God in that sense. Nevertheless there is an aspect of our relationship with God in which this enmity, this suspicion will arise even in the saints of God, when He lays upon them something that appears to be unjust and unreasonable, and that, just when they were going along beautifully and loving the Lord with all their heart and soul and strength. Oh, how suspicious the natural heart is of God, even the Christian heart apart from God’s grace and the renewal of His Spirit: the Apostle tells us the carnal mind is enmity against God. It is humbling to discover that there is something in our heart that will turn against God, if we will let it. The marvel of the Name is that it brings about reconciliation with God. It is one of the great, deep notes of the Gospel.

Is God remote to you? Is your consciousness of God that you are afar off from Him? Let me tell you that if you lay hold of the value of this blessed, and wonderful, and saving Name, in it you are so close to God that you can be no closer. Reconciliation is by the Blood, in the Name.

The men who appear upon the pages of this prophecy of Daniel were those who had to pass

through very bitter experiences, and were allowed of God to enter for a time into that which seemed to deny, not only His power and love, but even His very existence. But I note that with the three it was there in those fires that they found a new companionship with the Lord. He walked with them. Was it not because they held to the Name? They would rather be in the fire with Christ than be spared it and lose that nearness. Are you there? I want to tell you that if you will come in a living way to lay hold of the Name you may go through furnaces heated seven times, you may go into that which shouts at you that God is not, and there you may have the sweetest sense of being near to His heart. That is reconciliation. It is something more than a mere judicial statement that now we are reckoned as being no longer enemies of God. It is a deep heart experience.

I want to encourage you. Tried one, failing one, I want you to believe that in Christ, as you call upon His Name and lay hold of it, you are as near as near can be. There is no enmity, there is no judgment, there is no condemnation from God's side, and in Christ that evil heart of yours and mine, which would be at strife and warfare with God, in Christ that too has died, and we have a new heart to walk in His commandments, to love them and to do them. You may not feel like that, and that is the whole point of what the Lord is saying. We have to come off the ground of our feelings, we have to leave the whole realm of things as we know them, and step into the good of what He reveals Himself to be in Christ. 'This is true, and my heart is a lie: this is the word of God, this is Christ who comes to me as my Saviour, and I hold Him and believe that He is all that He says He is to me.'

#### Everlasting Righteousness

Then you notice the next thing is the bringing in of an everlasting righteousness. That is salvation; for sin is hell, everlasting righteousness is salvation. I am quite aware that in some senses this awaits the coming of the Lord, but this is not some dream, some kind of transport of our own feelings, but the blessed, miraculous, unthinkable wonder of walking righteously in a world of sin. If you have known anything of that, stop for a moment and wonder at it. Remember the proneness, nay, the eagerness with which our heart pursues sin, and then just stop and see the way in which day by day you

walk in obedience to the Lord in truth and righteousness. "Jehovah my God"! That Name is a pledge of everlasting righteousness. I am sure that rejoiced Daniel's heart. Nay, we know it did, for later on when the question of the ceasing to pray comes up and the lions' den is given as the alternative, we find Daniel going to his open window and looking toward Jerusalem and thanking God. What was he thanking God for? A mass of ruins and hopeless desolation? He was thinking of that everlasting righteousness. For him it was all there. He could see the walls built, the city inhabited, the temple erected, the worship of God going on. To him it was as good as done, because God had revealed it as a part of His unchanging Name.

Are you often despondent and miserable with your own failure, and the failure of others and of the Church? Can you not take to heart the Name? Can you not do as Daniel did, and praise God there is everlasting righteousness in the Name? Do not wait till you see Him. My own experience, and, I think, the experience of many is that it is not till we believe God in all His dealings with us, and praise Him for them, that we do see. Can it be that at the end of this day I shall be able to thank God that I have been able to obey Him and to walk in His commandments? Thank God that you are going to have a good day before you start it, not in some foolish optimism but in the Name of Jesus. There is power in the Name of Jesus, the power of everlasting righteousness.

Now, to call upon the Name at all does, in one realm, lead into trial, and if these men in the book of Daniel show us anything they show that somewhere or other there is a bitter, unceasing, implacable hostility to the Name. The book of the Acts tells the same story. As soon as men started rejoicing in the Name, and calling themselves by the Name, all hell came out against them, and it will against you and me; but it will break itself. You know what happened to the men who threw these three into the fiery furnace. You know what happened to the men who threw Daniel into the lions' den. They brought destruction on themselves: and Satan will bring destruction on himself. But we have to be real with God, we cannot play with these things. It does not mean an easy life, free from temptation. It means the temptations become more subtle, more constant. You will find yourself in such circumstances as you never knew

before, but you will find there is a power in the Name. Here is everlasting righteousness.

### **The Fulfilment of the Eternal Purpose**

Then there is the sealing up of the vision and prophecy, or as the margin puts it "to seal up vision and prophet". To me this means the full realisation, the consummation of the vision and prophecy, realised in the Name. Now the Lord has a vision, an eternal purpose for you and for me, and for all men. It seems so marred, so spoiled, so impossible, but the mighty saving Name of Jehovah—Jesus, means that in the end God's full purpose shall be realised. If that is not glory I do not know what is. Think of it. You are disappointed with your life, you are afraid that in the end there will be disillusion, or perhaps there already is. If you lay hold of the living value of the Name you may praise God through all eternity for a fulfilled destiny, a realised purpose.

Now, of course, the vision and the purpose are all summed up in a Person. God's purpose for you and for me and for men was, from the beginning, to be like His Son. It was not a new idea after Calvary. From eternity God's purpose and desire was for men to be like His Son, and that is why we referred to the marginal reading "to seal up the vision and prophet" instead of "and prophecy". Who is the prophet if not Christ, setting forth Himself in person the purpose and the desire of God. Does it seem like a dream to want to be like Christ? Does it seem something remote and impossible? The Name means the sealing up of the vision and the prophecy. It means the realisation of the eternal purpose of God. Oh, you have heard so much of God's purpose, the call to follow the pattern as God has it, His desire for you, His desire for His Church. Have you not even in your own heart, without perhaps putting it into so many words, taken up the attitude: 'Well, it would be nice, but it does not seem possible, we shall have to accept something less than that'. If you say that, you have let go of the Name, you have counted yourself and counted the Church as human individuals and have missed the point. Daniel had a different vision, and as I say, he went to that open window and prayed to God, and to him the thing was done, and that is what brought it about. Daniel's prayer and Daniel's testimony doubtless played a remarkable part in the restoration of that city. The thing will be

done in glory, the fulfilment of the purpose of God, for a redeemed humanity will be consummated in the Church.

It is not in the first place the response of such-and-such individuals to the word that they hear. It is not in the first place our faithfulness to the Lord, though that comes in. I believe that will be consequent upon a new apprehension of the glory and wonder of the fact that in the Person of our Saviour God the thing is done, and we may praise Him and rejoice in the vision realised, God's eternal purpose as a fact. Even now, without waiting for that day, we may be standing in the glorious and blessed certainty that nothing shall come short of the purpose of God.

### **God's Dwelling Place**

Now we reach the last thing in that verse: "...to anoint the most holy". Doubtless this has some reference to a temple at Jerusalem, but my mind immediately goes to Paul's definition of the Church, the dwelling place for God, a living temple, a habitation of God in the Spirit. Oh, the wonder of it, God finding rest and contentment in dwelling among His people, God at rest, God satisfied in His holy temple. That will mean blessing to the universe. That is the explanation of the millennium. That will be the key to the redeemed heaven and earth, that God at last has found His resting place among His people. Now that is in the Name. That is the heavenly and eternal purpose of God. When we cry, Jehovah my God! Jesus my Saviour! we are saying from the first initial step of the trembling sinner finding forgiveness to the last glorious cap-stone of that holy, eternal temple for God's dwelling place, that the whole work of redemption is complete and finished, that the Name guarantees the end.

We have a sense of the weakness of things as they are found in the world, we have a sense of our own poverty and smallness. Let us remember that in Christ we are made a habitation of God. God dwells in us, this is God's temple. And let us at the same time turn our hearts in that exercise of hope to a new day which the Name guarantees. We may be rejoicing as we look to the future, and are as sure as anything can be sure that every foe shall be defeated, every failure shall be overcome, and one day, perhaps very soon, in the coming forth of our Lord Jesus, there shall be a full and final consumma-

tion of this work. Now when we claim the Name, when we rejoice in the Name, when Jesus our Saviour is the theme of our confidence and hope, we may know the day we move toward is the day of the fullest realisation of every purpose of God in redeemed humanity.

Jehovah my God! Will you say that, perhaps with new meaning, new expectation, new confidence, new hope. God will not lie, God will not

fail. In the measure in which you may lay hold of it God will make good His pledged work and His revealed Name. Shall we not, then, in a new way open our hearts to Him, and lay hold of Him as He comes out to us anxious to reveal Himself, offering His saving power, and say, Jehovah my God! His Name is Jesus, my Jesus, He it is that saves His people from their sins.  
H.F.

## The Lord's Testimony

No. 3.

### The Secret of a Ministry of Recovery

READING: 2 Kings vi. 8-23; ii. 9-12; Ephesians i. 17; Matthew xi. 11.

In our previous meditations we have seen that the joint ministry of Elijah and Elisha had as its great aim the recovery of God's testimony as embodied in His people Israel. The honour of God was at stake in this matter. Elijah, by his great and dramatic act on Mount Carmel, established for ever that Jehovah was God. He proved that Baal was a false god and that Jehovah, who answered by fire from heaven, was the true and only living God. Elisha demonstrated the further fact that God is Salvation. He moved quietly and confidently into the most perplexing and distressing situations and transformed them by the exercise of Divinely-given power. His life is full of most valuable instruction. Looking at his ministry as a whole, we have already seen that he took up, and carried to completion, the work of his predecessor. Elijah struck the first great blow at organized Baal worship, and Elisha, in a hidden, but none the less effective, way was the means in God's hand of breaking the power of that worship completely.

Elisha's ministry, looked at in detail, is most arresting and instructive. Let us summarise the chief incidents in the sacred record.

#### (a) Miracles in Private Life.

1. The raising to life of the Shunamite's son. 2 Kings iv. 8-37.
2. The healing of Naaman, the Syrian. 2 Kings v. 1-19.

#### (b) Miracles in relation to the School of the Prophets.

1. The relief of the Prophet's Widow. 2 Kings iv. 1-7.
2. The healing of the Food Supply. 2 Kings iv. 38-41.
3. Inadequate Food made sufficient. 2 Kings iv. 42-44.
4. The lost Axe-head restored. 2 Kings vi. 1-7.

#### (c) Miracles in relation to National Life.

1. The removal of the Curse on Jericho. 2 Kings ii. 19-22.
2. The Crisis of the Moabite Rebellion. 2 Kings iii. 4-27.
3. The Capture of the Syrian Army. 2 Kings vi. 8-23.
4. Food for Besieged Samaria. 2 Kings vii. 1-20.
5. Death-bed Scene with King Joash. 2 Kings xiii. 14-19.

#### (d) A Posthumous Miracle.

A dead man made to live when he touched Elisha's bones. 2 Kings xiii. 20-21.

That is a truly marvellous record. What is its secret? Is this simply ancient history or is it a revelation of spiritual values? What message has it for us in our day and generation? Almost every incident has as its chief feature, recovery; recovery of life, health, resources, food etc. And these outward incidents were *only* symptomatic of the great and deep work to

which his life was devoted, namely, the recovery of the whole people from idolatry to the pure worship of Jehovah, in order that there might be once again a testimony for God in the earth.

Is there need for a similar ministry of recovery to-day? Surely the need must be admitted: but the burning question is, how may it be secured? What can be done to bring the people of God back from apostasy, deception, carnality, and worldliness, to God's true pattern of life and service? Is there any hope? Have not things gone too far? Are we not in the days foretold when there would be a famine of the hearing of the Word of the Lord?

### Prophetic Ministry

Let us look again at the life of Elisha and seek to see by what means he wrought so wondrously in a time of great darkness and spiritual need. Firstly, he was a prophet. His ministry was prophetic, he was not simply a miracle worker; everything he did was related to the governing purpose of his life. What is the function of a prophet? He stands for God. He declares the purpose of God to His people. He brings the Word of the Lord to them. He speaks with authority. His distinctive note is "Thus saith the Lord". In no circumstances may he trim his message to suit popular opinion. The standards of life are debased and men think in terms very different from those used by God. The prophet, therefore, must declare the whole counsel of God. He must imperatively and uncompromisingly call the people back to that which God has revealed as to His purpose for them. He necessarily runs counter to the spirit of the age and is therefore unpopular. But he must be bold; God has commissioned him and he must carry the Divine message to the people, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. "The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"

Do we realise the lack of such ministry to-day? How few there are who declare the whole counsel of God to His people. Thank God for every one who does lead the Lord's flock into the green pastures of His Word and unfold to them the unsearchable riches of Christ. Should not the lamentable scarcity of such ministry drive us to our knees? Is not one reason for featureless and powerless preaching to be found in the poverty of the prayer life of God's people? Where are God's intercessors? A

praying Church leads to a powerful pulpit. A ministry of recovery is always born in prayer. Think you that the 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal and whose mouth had not kissed him were apathetic about the rest of the nation? They were a hidden company. Elijah did not know they existed. But I have little doubt that in their secret faithfulness they carried the burden of national apostasy on their hearts and pleaded before God. Probably Elijah owed much of his power to their secret intercession. Travailing prayer that prevails with God, issuing from faithful and burdened souls, lies behind, and is the power of, all ministry that leads to recovery of the Lord's testimony.

Elisha being a prophet was also a 'seer'. This is a familiar Old Testament word for a prophet. It means literally "A beholder in vision". Amos, called from his occupation as a herdsman to be God's messenger to Israel opens his prophecy thus: "The words of Amos... which he saw..." Prophetic ministry is necessarily based on vision, the power to see. Dr. George Adam Smith of Aberdeen says that two indispensable qualifications of a prophet are *vision* and *voice*. Your prophet sees what others cannot see and therefore says what others cannot say. Elisha was supremely a man of spiritual vision. He saw God; he knew Jehovah, the God of Elijah; he lived and moved in the realm of spiritual realities, not in that of earthly shadows. His knowledge of what was happening was, to ordinary men, positively uncanny. It was too much for the king of Syria. "Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled... and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel? And one of his servants said, None my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber". For Elisha not to know was an unusual experience. There were such occasions, and they do but serve to throw into relief his normal power of vision. One such instance is found in the case of the Shunamite woman. To his servant he says, "Let her alone: for her soul is vexed within her; and the Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me". He was completely unmoved when besieged by the Syrian army in Dothan, and said to his trembling servant, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more

than they that be with them". He could see that which was hidden from his servant. "And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha".

It was because Elisha's eyes were open to behold that which was not visible to mortal sight that he was able to deal with situations that baffled ordinary men. He worked miracles. Yes, but what is a miracle? Miracle is not magic; it is rather the bringing to bear upon the realm of nature the superior laws of the spiritual realm. No one can do this unless his life is normally lived in the higher realm and he walks with God continually. Given that, his power is bounded only by his faith, and the Will of God.

### Spiritual Sight and Understanding

The first requisite, then, in relation to a ministry of recovery is the opened eye. Man, by nature, is spiritually blind. He simply cannot see. Even when he is born from above and has the life of the ages, his constant need is to be given spiritual vision. Paul is found praying for the saints in Ephesus the prayer Elisha prayed for his servant: "Wherefore I also...(make) mention of you in my prayers, That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened that ye may know..."

So a ministry of recovery will be concerned, first of all, with this question of spiritual sight. The tragedy of spiritual blindness is that those who lack the power of vision do not know of the existence of the things they cannot see, and imagine that the things of which they are cognisant constitute the whole range of spiritual knowledge. Often they go further and deny the existence of anything that they are not able to discern.

"There is no God. Doth weary reason say  
I see but starlit skies.  
There is no Sun. So crieth at noonday  
The man with sightless eyes".

This is not only limitation but paralysis. Spiritual power depends upon spiritual vision.

In every aspect of truth revelation is necessary to understanding. Only anointed eyes will

see; only seeing eyes will behold and apprehend; only those who gaze in awe at the eternal verities lying enfolded and behind the words of Holy Scripture will be brought experimentally into the power of living truth, and thus be able to apply the truth to situations in the Church and the world. Ministry comes out of experience, and only as we live and move in the heavenly realm shall we be able to bring the power of heavenly realities to bear upon the declension of God's people, and thus be used in a ministry of recovery.

We must know the dignity and grandeur of our calling: what it really is to be "in Christ", to have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in the innermost shrine of our being, to have the indwelling of the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit; to live, by the continuous ministrations of the life which has triumphed over death, in the power of resurrection. Oh what a privilege and prospect is ours! We are so apt in our thinking to put these old servants of God on a pedestal and consider that they had advantages which we do not possess. The very contrary is true. Elisha was indeed a great prophet, one of the greatest servants God had in Israel's long history: a mighty man of prayer; mighty in faith, mighty in accomplishment. But our Lord, looking back upon the long line of Old Testament prophets and speaking of the last of them, declared that among them that were born of women there had not arisen a greater than John the Baptist. Then he said an amazing thing: "Notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he". Are you in the kingdom of heaven? Have you seen and entered the kingdom by the door of new birth? Have you been born of water and of the Spirit? Then the Lord says you are greater than John, and therefore greater than Elisha. You are in a greater position, have greater privileges, greater responsibilities, greater opportunities. Elisha was verily a man of God, but it is not said of him as it is said of those in Christ, "He that is joined to the Lord is *one spirit*". It is not said of him that he was made "to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus". Do we not verily need that our eyes should be opened? Do we not need to know "what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe"? Yea, we do indeed need to know what the

Church is to Christ and to 'walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called'.

The privilege of those born into the kingdom of heaven is life in the heavenlies; not living on earth and gazing upwards, but living above in the good of our union with the enthroned Christ, and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, bringing the impact of that throne to bear upon earthly conditions. Oh the power of a heavenly life lived upon earth, the indescribable influence of a life of vital godliness, the healing power of a life lived in the presence of God! "Great is the mystery of godliness". First and foremost that statement is true of our blessed Lord to whom these words primarily apply, but it is also true of every manifestation of godliness in the saints. It is a mystery that has healing power. You cannot touch a true man of God without being challenged, helped, lifted, healed.

Elisha was supremely a man of God. That is character, not office. His ministry was the outcome of his life. He walked with God, knew the mind of God, and was therefore able to measure the need of God's people. Here is the secret of a heart burdened for the recovery of the Lord's testimony in His people. An increase in the knowledge of God issues in knowledge of the purpose of God for His saints, and that creates burden, because so many are found living on a spiritual level so far removed from that to which God is calling continually. A burdened heart finds relief in intercession, and this creates the conditions necessary for a ministry of recovery.

As was said in dealing with the "Pot of Oil", recovery is by way of discovery. The Lord's people must come to realise what God has secured for them in Christ. To this end a prophetic ministry is required to interpret to

them the mind of God as revealed in His word and insistently call them into correspondence with it.

Oh for an instrument and ministry of recovery in these dark and evil days! Wherever it is found operating it will possess three features. In the first place, it will be operating all the time, hiddenly, yet powerfully, in the breaking of Satan's hold on God's people. Its battle cry will be, Calvary; its weapon, the Cross; its plea, the precious Blood. Weak in itself, it will be "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds". Secondly, it will declare with no uncertain voice the counsel of God to His people. The Eternal Purpose will be its watchword:

"What God hath willed  
What God hath planned"

It will discover to the saints the resources for the accomplishment of that will and plan, and lead them to recognise their inheritance in Christ. Thirdly, it will demonstrate, in a ministry of detail in human lives and spiritual situations, that "God is salvation"; not in sensational or outward ways, for Satan, in these end days, is using such means for the deception of the saints; but nevertheless, in true spiritual power and victory.

"The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power". Power is vital godliness acting continually on that with which it comes into contact. Let us, then, not only labour in prayer to secure that there shall be in these days a ministry of recovery, but so live that we may have a share in it, and thus be used by God for the expansion of His testimony in the earth.

S.A.

### ERRATA

We greatly regret to have to notify our readers of a number of 'errata' occurring in the article entitled "The Lord's Testimony" in the May-June issue of the Witness and Testimony.

Page 80, Col. 1, line 31, for "everything" read "everyone"

Page 80, Col. 1, last line, for "enthroned" read "embody"

Page 81, Col. 1, line 17, for "people" read "prophets"

Page 81, Col. 1, line 52, for "Israel's" read "Ahab's"

Page 81, Col. 2, line 34, for "Elijah" read "Elisha"

Page 83, Col. 1, line 8, for "means" read "needs"

Page 83, Col. 1, line 21, for "gave" read "showed"

Page 84, Col. 1, lines 46-47, for "Exodus xiii. 32" read "Exodus xxx. 22-33"

Page 84, Col. 1, line 51, for "secret" read "sacred"

Page 84, Col. 2, line 35, for "secretly" read "sacredly"

## A Good Man in Danger

It was no small thing that Jesus should have said of a man "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile", thus marking him out as one apart from the majority of his nation, as being more spiritual than fleshly or carnal: a son of Israel rather than of Jacob. Further, it was no small thing that this man came to a fuller revelation and apprehension of who Jesus was, and was thereby able to exclaim "Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." And yet again, it was no small thing that he should have received from the Lord this word of assurance, "Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." That son of Israel went far beyond Jacob and saw all the spiritual side of Jacob's typical dream. If we knew all that these things meant for Nathaniel we should undoubtedly be convinced of the greatness of the blessing that came to him on that day when Philip found him and bore his testimony. And yet Nathaniel was in danger at one point of missing it all, and the reason was a foolish prejudice. Nazareth had a bad name, and up and down the country when Nazareth was mentioned people just passed off as a bad lot everything and everyone in the town. So whatever good there may have been suffered under the general prejudice. Thus to suggest that Nazareth could produce any good thing was pooh-poohed, and a cynical rejoinder was made "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" The Devil was always seeking to prejudice the chances of Christ getting a following, and he would not stop at corrupting a whole town in the minds of men to destroy the eternal and Divine values of one of its members.

Nathaniel had taken up the popular prejudice

and epithet, and just for a brief moment that prejudice stood to shatter and ruin that glorious prospect. Everything for him trembled for that moment in the balances. Would the prejudice win, or would the bigger and finer element rise and waive the prejudice aside? How thankful he must have been afterward that he decided to suspend the prejudice while he put Philip's testimony to the test, while he set aside the widespread and popular belief about Nazareth, and proved the matter for himself!

What a tremendous blow to prejudice was his "proving of all things"! What warning he was ever able to give to others as to the infinite peril and possibility of loss through being influenced by popular opinion, even when accepted by the religious world.

Nathaniel was tested by this prejudice, and a prejudice is a test of every man's quality. In the presence of something very generally accepted and believed, although unproved, opportunity is given for many personal interests to arise and govern the course to be taken; reputation, future prospects, loss of friends and esteem, and many such like considerations.

It is a matter of comparative values. Nathaniel may have lost much, but ask him whether he made a mistake! However, the lie was very definitely given to that report, and the Devil was found to be behind it. The greatest Good possible to man came out of Nazareth!

So, while Satan works to prejudice the Lord's interests, God only uses the prejudice as a means to test the reality of those concerned, and the prejudice is used as a safeguard against mixture and unreality in those who will have God's best.

T.A.S.

# Spiritual Maturity

No. 3.

## The Way to Divine Knowledge

READING : 2 Cor. iii ; Rom. viii. 19, 29 ; v. 17-19 ; iii. 12 ; iv. 6 ; Genesis ii. 17 ; iii. 4-7.

In those passages you have the parts of a wonderful revelation. First of all, there is God's thought and intention : His Son, His image, His fulness ; the standard, the model, the completeness. Then you have believers conformed to the image of His Son, and the whole creation brought into being in relation to that purpose, its very meaning and object found in the intention of God as to His Son, and man's conformity to His image. So that the whole creation is, as it were, made to hang upon one central purpose, man in the image of God's Son.

### Life and Light

Two things become the great governing factors and principles by which the purpose was to be realised ; the one life, the other light. " God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," planted a tree of life, open to man, and a tree of light (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) which, while man was under probation, was kept from him, under a prohibition. It is well to remember that true light only comes along the line of the obedience of faith. It was not that God was withholding essential knowledge from man, but was testing him as to his faith in Himself, and as to his obedience of faith.

We have seen how things proceeded. Man ceased at a certain point to believe and obey God, and believed and obeyed God's adversary instead, and man's disbelief and the disobedience were in the direction of having knowledge and light for his own ends and glory, that he should have the seat of glory and power and wisdom in himself, become something. When you have recognised that you have got to the heart of everything, for God never intended man to have that in himself, but only in His Son. The glory

and the wisdom, the knowledge and the power are all bound up with His Son, Jesus Christ, and never to be had apart. Man essayed to possess it all himself, to have it in himself, so that he would become independent in God's universe. So he struck for light and knowledge, for self-glory and empowerment, and exaltation. The result was immediate death. " In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die ". There was no postponing of things. Death took place that day, and the evidence of the death from that day onward is blinding, darkness or ignorance ; just the opposite of what they aimed at, and struck for. Even when we come to Israel in the wilderness in the presence of a great revelation of God's glory, we read that their minds were hardened, and a veil was upon their hearts ; and that veil remaineth.

All that, of course, is the working out of a deeply laid plot, a plot to defeat God in His purpose, to cheat Him of His end, to frustrate the realisation of His intention concerning His Son. The history of this world is the history of a rivalry between the Son of God and Satan ; Divine purpose fixed in Christ, Divine purpose assailed by Satan, and the assault always directed against the Son of God, revealing that Satan's great object is to have the place which God has given to the Son. So that this is just the outworking of that plot, that evil device.

Now we come to this second letter to the Corinthians. It has a tremendous background and you will see how very great is its significance and its value. Oh, how much there is behind this letter. Here is a man sitting down to his spiritual correspondence, writing to believers a personal letter, and as he writes the Spirit of God takes him back into the past eternity and into the counsels of God, touching all the deep, mighty elements of the drama of the ages. When you read the letter for the first time, it looks like so

many personal things said by one man to a few friends, but if you dwell upon it, meditate upon it, it expands, and expands, and you find yourself taken right back into the heart of God before times eternal, and on through the past ages and up to the Cross of the Lord Jesus, and out from the Cross on through this dispensation, and still on to the consummation of all things. It is all in one simple letter.

We come, then, to this letter, and with but a few touches there flash out these great thoughts of God. We commenced with the verse so well-known in chapter v: "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (verse 17, R.v. margin). God is here seen beginning all over again. The creation missed its way. Its course was foiled, the purpose of God in it was interrupted, it went astray. Creation is bound to a Divine purpose, but even if in the straight way of that Divine purpose it has not the urge of that purpose unto consummation, while if it has gone out of the way it is like a person within whom is a groaning to get back. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth..." What for? "...waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God." "The earnest expectation of the creation" is still bound up with God's purpose. That creation has gone astray. The purpose of God cannot be set aside, and therefore there must, if needs be, be a new creation, and that in Christ Jesus.

"God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness..." (We are back at the creation.) For what purpose was this? That His Son, the fulness and the express image of His thought and intention for man, should give character to the race, and that we should be conformed to that image. God said light should shine out of darkness, and that was His first act in the direction of that purpose. Now you leap right into it here, without ages between: "...hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". You have all the Divine thought and intent, and the Divine end, reached in Jesus Christ. There is a new creation, a creation with a purpose, which is conformity to the image of God's Son. How is it to be reached? By life. Put your pencil line underneath each occurrence of the word "life" in this second letter to the Corinthians. You will be surprised how many times that word occurs, and you will notice that it is

always life out of death. The Apostle is speaking much of his own experience. "We despaired even of life." Ah yes, but there was an object in God's bringing him there. What was the object? "...that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead". "Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh". Life works in you as the result of our dying! There is much more about life coming out of death with which we will not stay at this time. Then there is light out of darkness; life and light in relation to the new creation, with this end in view, conformity to the image of God's Son.

All those elements are quite clear, and you can piece them together. Our purpose is to bring it down to quite a precise application.

#### God's Purpose and its Realisation

Firstly, God's intention. An attaining unto the full measure of Christ as God's standard is His intention. We are told definitely that "whom he foreknew, he also foreordained" to that end, "to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren".

Secondly, the way to its realisation. The Apostle sums all up in one central thing in the creation, giving the creation its meaning and its value, namely, the revelation of Jesus Christ in us.

Now you see the movement. In Romans relatedness to God is secured anew through the work of Christ in His Cross; righteousness, which is by faith. Those who were separated, afar off, alienated through sin and wicked works, are made nigh by His Blood, and union with God in Christ is established; deliverance from all that which had come in to frustrate the Divine purpose, deliverance from the dead man: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord". So the relationship is renewed and established through faith on the ground of righteousness.

Now in the first letter to the Corinthians a man indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and endowed with spiritual capacities for knowing the things of God, is seen. As the Apostle says, "We have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are...given us by God". That is

enablement, empowerment, that is faculty for spiritual knowledge, for spiritual things; the man is there. Now that is what is to go on in that man. What is the central thing that is to be the object of those faculties? For what are those faculties given? They are given for an apprehension of Jesus Christ. In a word it all amounts to this, that to reach God's end, to come to that fulness of our foreordination according to His foreknowledge, there must be that inward revelation of Jesus Christ which is constantly expanding. All growth is bound up with that, and so the Apostle bases the whole of this argument upon the one point, namely, that "God...hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". I take that phrase "the face of Jesus Christ" to mean that Jesus Christ is an image or portrait of God's glorious thought. It is only a figurative word, which does not mean actually his countenance. The face is the representation; it is the man. The knowledge of the glory of God is in the face of Jesus Christ, and that has to come into us by revelation. Every inch of ground in spiritual progress that you and I will cover, every bit of advance in spiritual increase will be upon the basis of some fresh revelation of Jesus Christ in our hearts—not truth to our minds but the revelation of the person in our hearts. God has bound up everything with His Son in person, and there can be no light, no knowledge and no life leading to God's end apart from the revelation of Jesus Christ. Thus spiritual progress, spiritual increase just resolves itself into a question of the unveiling of Jesus Christ in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, so that as we go on we are able to say, 'I am seeing more and more of what the Lord Jesus is, and who He is in the Divine thought, and that seeing for me is enlargement, is increase, is strength, is life, is power'. It is all such a thing as that.

### The Proof of Experience

You see the Apostle takes an illustration. He takes us back to Israel at Horeb, and tells us of Moses going into the Mount, of his receiving the law and coming down with some of the light on his face, and standing before the congregation and reading the law, and of the glory being too much for them to look upon, so that he had to put a veil over his face. He read a law which itself was in glory, given in glory and accom-

panied by glory, albeit a glory that was departing. What was the effect? It was, as we have said, written by the finger of God, it was accompanied by glory, it was an unveiling of the Divine mind for His people. Everything was very wonderful; it spoke of God, had all the accompaniments of heaven with it; but what was the effect? Death! Condemnation! That very generation perished in the wilderness, and never came to the end which God had fixed for it. God had referred to the land flowing with milk and honey, with fulness. That was His thought, His intention, His purpose. He covenanted to give them the land. Then came the revelation of His mind as to the way in which they could come into His thought and intention for them, and they perished in the wilderness and never reached the land. Why? Because there was not only a veil over the face of Moses, but there was a veil over their hearts. They had not had the eyes of their hearts enlightened. They had not received a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

The Apostle takes that right up and comes immediately to the question of the new creation, and says, 'Things are different now; there is no need that anyone should perish in the wilderness to-day. Here is the so much greater advantage which secures God's end'. What is it? It is not something presented to you in your impotence and helplessness, but a revelation given within you, Christ who is God's full intention revealed within you. It is not something objective to which we are journeying, it is Christ within, the hope of glory. It is not something into which we have to strive day by day, but an inward reality. Christ is revealed within, and when you see Him you are in the land. You have come right into living touch with God's end. What remains? Only that what is within you should be expanding from day to day, growing, increasing, until Christ (as the Apostle puts it) is fully formed in you, and you, not now beholding Him in some objective way, but by the Holy Spirit in your own hearts seeing the Lord Jesus in a growing way, are changed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, conformed to the image of God's Son. It all hangs upon this: "God...hath shined into our hearts..." God has made this whole thing in His purpose now an inward thing by the Holy Spirit. How near we are to it. How marvellous is the possibility of reaching God's end. The

Apostle here says, in effect: 'Now that is the basis of all our ministry. We are not talking from a book; we are not, like Moses, reading from tables of stone; we are not just reciting something which God has written, we are now living out something that God has done within'. That is ministry. "We have this ministry". That is something that is coming from the inside.

Now let us see how far we have, for real practical ends, grasped the significance of this. Let us start at the beginning. Can you really associate yourself with these words, "God... hath shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"? You can put it in other words if you like, if that seems too wonderful. Can you really say, I know the Lord Jesus in a living way within my own heart? Then you have all the fulness summed up in that, and all that you need to reach God's end is that you should discover what you have; not seek that God will give you more, but that God will show you what you have in Christ, what Christ is. There is such a fulness in Christ that it will take so much longer than the longest life that we could live here on this earth to discover anything worth while comparatively of what Christ is. I am quite certain that the one effect left upon us of a growing knowledge of the Lord Jesus will be that we feel we are only on the edge of things all the time. However long we live, and however long that goes on, we are only on the edge of things. I am sure that is true in the case of those who are discovering something more of the Lord Jesus. I can say that my most recent discovery of the Lord brought me to the place where I wondered if I had ever known Him before. It almost makes you feel that you have been wasting your time when you get a new revelation of the Lord Jesus. That is how it will always be. It is a wonderful thing to have a revelation of God in Christ in your own heart, and it is a wonderful thing if that revelation is opening out, growing from day to day as you go on. Do believe that, while it may sound to you a thing altogether too high for you, it is meant to be of the greatest and simplest help to you.

You young people have a high standard put before you, the whole thing seems so immense, and so difficult, that you wonder if ever you will reach it, and sometimes you perhaps feel the burden of it all, and do not feel you will ever attain. Now let us get rid of all that burden, and

all that worry, and come right back to the secret of everything that God ever intended for you. It is this: "Christ in you, the hope of glory". Have you despaired of reaching that glory? Well, the hope of glory is Christ in you. There is hope. If you look upon the old creation, that old creation of which you are a part, and which is in you, you despair. Christ in you is the hope of glory. There is a new creation in Christ Jesus. If you have the basic thing you have the root of the matter. We do not mean that thing of which a great many people are talking in their modernism, about the Christ in every man. We mean that definite act of faith in Christ Jesus, and His work on the Cross, by which you receive Him into your life and are thereby born again and made a new creation. If that has taken place, and you know that Christ is in you, you have the root of the matter. Now everything in the outworking of Divine purpose related to that is simply a matter of your seeking to know the Lord Jesus Christ in all that He is as your fulness for every day.

#### The Path of Discovery

As you look at this second letter to the Corinthians, you see that it begins another chapter in this very thing, and you look at the Apostle Paul himself there, because he is brought into view as a practical example of this truth. You will see what is implied when we speak of learning to know what it means that Christ has been revealed within. See this Apostle, in whom Christ is, in whom Christ has been revealed, taken into definite situations, trying circumstances, deep waters, through much suffering, and as he passes that way I see that all that upon which he might count and reckon in himself and in this world to get him through is breaking down. He comes to a place where he himself cannot go on any further, and he knows it; he cannot take another step, he cannot put forth another effort. If this man had ever acted upon the strength of his own will—and, you know, some people can do an immense amount by their will power, and I think Paul did something in that way sometimes—if ever he had been so actuated by his own will as a strong-willed man, making up his mind that he would do it if he died in the attempt, he got to the end, where he could not make another effort, he despaired of life. Then it was that he made a discovery, that that was not the end but the

beginning. When he got to the end himself there was "God who raiseth the dead".

He discovered Christ in him as the risen One in the power of resurrection, and to have made that discovery had a wonderful result. In what way? "We have this ministry". The whole of this second letter to the Corinthians is on the ministry. What is this ministry? It is the ministry of life being ministered, the life of the risen Lord who has been discovered as life, discovered in the hour of death. The energy of His risen life was discovered in the hour when all his own energy had come to an end. Yes, the light of that risen life breaking upon him when he was in a corner and did not know which way to turn, and felt that he was shut in and there was no way out. He discovered that the Lord had a way out, the Lord had ways of which he was entirely ignorant, the Lord knew more than he did.

To make that discovery sometimes is good. Somehow or other we are always coming up against the fact that the Lord knows more than we do, and knows better than we do. That is discovering what Christ in you is. It is very practical. It is something for every day. Believe me, the Lord is taking you and me along such a path with the one object (Oh, let this be written in our hearts!) of making us discover what a Christ we have; and as we discover Him, what He is to us in every circumstance, in every need, in every hour of despair and weakness, and helplessness, that is the increase of Christ. That means that something more of the Lord

has become our life, and that kind of thing goes on. That is why the Lord presses us so much, deals with us as He does. The greatest discoveries have been made in the greatest trial, and the deepest distress of heart. We have come out with a fuller measure of the Lord. That is what constitutes ministry, Paul says here. "We have this ministry", and "We have this treasure in vessels of fragile clay..." and that is necessary in order that "the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God and not of ourselves". It is all of God. It is revealed in Christ.

We have touched upon the mere fringe of this whole glorious matter. We see that "the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing" of this that God is to-day doing in secret, under cover. The world is not seeing, and we ourselves do not always see what God is doing in us, but there is going to be a day of manifestation. It is the day when sonship is manifested, and sonship is not just some kind of formal relationship to God. Sonship is a nature developed, a likeness produced. The day of the manifestation of that likeness to His Son is coming, and the whole creation will heave a great sigh of relief and say, We have arrived at last!

That is God's end, the revelation of His Son in us, our conformity to His image, the hope, the assurance. "God...hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ".

T.A-S.

## The God of Glory

This is one of the very significant titles of God. Its significance is something presented to faith, and we are to lay hold of it, stand upon it, and refuse to be moved from it. What is that significance?

It is that God's ends will always be glory. We are often tempted and pressed almost be-

yond measure to accept failure, disaster, defeat, and ultimate loss. To believe in God is to believe that in relation to Him the end of all must be glorious. God will never commit Himself to any purpose or work which in the end will fall short of glory.

He is the God of Glory!

## The Fellowship of His Sufferings

“That I may know him and...the fellowship of his sufferings” (Phil. iii. 10).

“I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ...for his body’s sake, which is the church.” (Col. i. 24).

“...to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” (Heb. ii. 10).

“...he himself hath suffered being tempted.” (Heb. ii. 18).

“...if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable (grace) with God.” “For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered...leaving you an example...” “When he suffered he threatened not.” (I Pet. ii. 20, 21, 23).

“Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm ye yourselves also with the same mind.” “...insomuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings...” (I Pet. iv. 1, 12, 13)

The phrase—“the sufferings of Christ” is a comprehensive one, and goes far beyond anything of which we know. It embraces a whole realm of suffering in which we have no share. We are not called to be partners in the atoning suffering of Christ. This we should recognise and settle once for all. So often the adversary seeks to relate in our minds our sufferings and our sins, and thereby to undermine the work of Christ in our hearts. In a very dangerous and evil book which is being circulated in various languages the writer makes the statement with emphasis that we must all atone for our sin, even after we have become Christians. This is a lie of Satan. There is all the difference between the chastening (child-training) of the Father in love, and judgment under condemnation for sin. Let it be realised that “a full atonement He hath made”, and we have no place or share in the sufferings which were endured in *that* work.

But there is another realm of His sufferings in which we may participate, not for our salvation, but in our vocation. These sufferings have

numerous forms and aspects, and we can only touch upon a very few here. We will divide them into two, the inward and the outward.

### The Inward and Hidden Sufferings of Christ

In the passage quoted above (Heb. ii. 18) we are told that “he himself...suffered being tempted.” So that we are given to understand that being tempted was one line along which Christ suffered.

Some of those temptations are patent, but the suffering was deeper than we can know because there was so much more involved for Him than can ever be for us. And yet we may know *something* of this.

For example, how persistently was our Lord tempted to order His conduct in self-interest. From the ordeal in the wilderness to the last moments on the Cross it was “save thyself”. The quick road, the easy road, the popular road; this was the way into which He was ever being pressed. The way of the Father’s will was other than this. It was the way of patience, of difficulty, of loneliness. The very nature of the purpose which governed Him ran entirely counter to Adam’s quick and cheap-success way with its snare of a lost Divine destiny. He had come to reverse *in man* that way and that propensity. There was a terrific atmosphere against that Divine way, and the antagonism, loneliness, and universal insensibility to the heavenly nature of things pressed in upon Him so terribly that no merely passive attitude was possible. He had to fight through the pressure of suggestion and coercion. “He suffered...being tempted.”

He was tempted to avoid personal inconvenience; to disarm misunderstanding and offence; to compromise so that unnecessary (?) alienation of sympathy would be eliminated. It was no moral suffering to Him to meet this kind of temptation, but the temptation so often came through channels that made it very painful for Him. One of the inner company, a most intimate

disciple and friend, would in these things misunderstand Him so utterly and "mind the things which be of men, and not the things which are of God", thus serving Satan to turn Him subtly and "lovingly" from the path of suffering set before Him.

It is suffering when the nearest on earth, failing to understand the demands of devotion to the Father, uses the persuasion of human love and solicitude to effect an alternative course!

He was tempted to further His cause by world means and methods. A descent from a high eminence into the midst of the crowd would make a great impression. It would draw attention. It would be a sensation. It would be like coming out of heaven. The people would be captured and His position would be established. That such suggestions—which doubtless returned at other times of possible success—should have been made to one who was here for God's pleasure was in itself pain. There was no need for there to be anything in Him which responded to such suggestions. The suggestions themselves were things of moral and spiritual pain, and to be in an atmosphere where they abounded was to Him horrible.

He was tempted to make policy a governing factor; what the religious world would think and say. What was the accepted thing; the thing that was done? This was impressed upon Him by His own brethren (see John vii).

Well, He came into our temptations; "tempted in all points like as we", and in some way which we do not understand, it was suffering to Him.

There are sufferings which are peculiarly and most deeply the lot of those who have paid a great price in their abandonment to a Divinely

given vision and purpose. The pain of this kind of trial was, and is, suffered most in secret.

We turn to a more outward aspect.

### The Outward Sufferings of Christ

As God's Son and the heavenly seed, Christ was a marked man. There was, therefore, an antagonism to Him in the very air, where the "prince of the power of the air" has his seat. Men became involved and were influenced in spite of themselves.

So far as they were concerned it was so often unreasonable and undeserved. As someone has put it, they were just the Devil's catapults. He just *could not* be right, whatever He said or did. At one time He was too humble, only the carpenter's son. At another time He was too great and superior. His good was misunderstood and distorted. It would seem that He was not going to be given a chance of being right. If at any time one who had taken on the popular prejudice did really make some honest inquiry the whole thing was exploded and revealed to be fake. "He was reviled", "He suffered".

Many more ways are recognisable as parts of this hostility. Let us remember that all who are Christ's will suffer in this way. They are marked people because they are of "the seed royal", and back of all reason and human good sense there is that which makes the best amongst men almost irresponsible for their words and deeds. It is "the fellowship of his sufferings".

But let us remember that "he was made perfect through sufferings." He *was* perfect in nature, but that nature was brought out to perfect fulness through sufferings. We, through suffering with Him, will be perfected into His likeness, conformed to His image. T.A.S.

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## All Things in Christ

No. 9.

### The Heavenly Man and Eternal Life

It is Christ as the Heavenly Man that is our consideration at this time, and we have been seeing that the main spring of the being of the Heavenly Man is eternal life. "In him was life..." (John i. 4.); "...as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself..." (John v. 26). It is eternal life, Divine life, life from God, a special kind of life; not merely extensiveness of life, but a nature of life. The main spring of His being as the Heavenly Man is eternal life. The Lord Jesus, as the Son of God, was ever appointed to be the Life-giver. From eternity that life was in Him for creation.

#### Eternal Life in View from Eternity

The words in the Gospel of John, used by the Lord Jesus, that it was given to Him of the Father both to have life in Himself, and to give that life unto whomsoever He willed, carry us back again into the "before times eternal". Here they relate to redemption, but that is not where the matter of life giving, of God's intention with regard to life begins. We are shown in a figurative way that right at the beginning, before

there was any fall, and therefore before there was any practical necessity for redemption, God's thought was eternal life, and when from fallen man He shut off the tree of life, He is seen to do so on this ground: "...lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever..." (Gen. iii. 22). Now God had made that provision. Eternal life was there in the thought and intention of God, but this eternal life was for a certain kind of man, and the Adam that came to be, as separated from God, ceased to stand in God's view as the being in whom eternal life could reside, and so that was reserved. It was maintained in the Son; for the tree surely is but a figure of Christ. When we get to the end of the Scripture the tree is seen again. Christ is the "tree of life". Christ is the repository of that life, and here He comes forth in man-form as the last Adam, as the kind of man in whom that life can be.

Through union with Him now by redemption, that life that is in Him is deposited in the believer himself; not as apart from Christ, but in Christ in the believer. It never departs from Christ. The Apostle states that this life is in His

Son, and was given to us. We have eternal life, and this life is in His Son. It is Christ resident within in the person of His Spirit in whom the life is, and it is never possessed apart from Him.

We have been saying that the Lord Jesus, as the Son of God, was ever the appointed Life-giver. Of course, He can only so be known as Redeemer. He could have been known as the Life-giver apart from redemption, but now on account of man's condition through the fall, He can only be known as the Life-giver according as He is known as Redeemer. So that what we have to do with now, here in time, is redemption and life, redemption unto life.

### Redemption Related to the Eternal Purpose

Here we want again to speak for a few moments of that main line of eternal purpose which the Lord is seeking to bring us to, and to bring to us. Because it is so great, and lifts us so much out of that with which we are more entirely occupied in time, that is, our salvation, our redemption, and all that is associated with it; because it takes us out of that and puts us into so much larger a realm, it is quite natural that we should have difficulties and not be able to grasp it immediately. That is how we are finding it, and that is what is making necessary a return to this main emphasis.

Look again intently at the word redemption. The word itself carries an implication. Redemption implies a bringing back. The question immediately presents itself: Brought back to what? and to what place? There is something that, for the time being, has been lost. It has ceased to remain in its original relationship, in its original position. It has to be brought back, reclaimed, restored, redeemed. Then there must have been a place and a position, and that is our main point.

We are seeking to say at this time, that before ever there was a fall, and even before this creation was, there was a counsel of God issuing in a purpose, and the straight line of that purpose through the ages was intended to work out progressively to a universal display of God in man, through His Son. So, through the Son, He created all things. Everything that was created in heaven and in earth, and in the universe came, through the Son, to be "Son-wise" itself, God expressed and manifested in terms of "Son". In relation to that, we were "...foreordained... unto adoption as sons..." (Ephes. i. 5).

If you read the Word carefully you will descry Adam in the condition of a child, rather than of a son; a child under probation, under test; and because he failed under the test, he never came to the maturity of a son. Some of us are familiar with the New Testament teaching on the difference between a child of God and a son. Adam is in the infancy of God's thought, God's intention. He has to grow, to develop, to expand, to mature, to come to full stature; and we are not saying that the one test was the only one, the final test unto his maturity, but it was the first one. The whole plan of growth, of progressive development unto a fullgrown, corporate man, does not necessarily rest upon redemption. It rests upon the eternal purpose, the eternal counsels. The straight line of things would have gone right on apart from any redemptive plan at all, and would have been realised. If Adam had not fallen, the eternal purpose would still have been realised, because it is all eternally vested in the Son. Now inasmuch as man is included, Adam was included. Adam failed and, with him, the race. Then a redemptive plan must come in; just as complete a plan in the counsels of God, but one developed or projected because of something that went wrong. We cannot say the fall was right, but it occasioned a plan, a perfect plan, a wonderful plan, and when God made the plan, when in His eternal counsels He was projecting this whole scheme of creation and intention and purpose, then the attitude, as we read back into those counsels, was undoubtedly this: 'We know, because We cannot help knowing, being what We are, all-knowing, how things will go. We know that Our first thought will not be immediately realised, that there will be this bend down, this break. We therefore project this further plan of redemption by which We come down into that bend and bring things right up again on to Our level. We fill it up; but in so doing We will not lose, We will gain. This work of the adversary, all this tragedy, this suffering shall not take from Our original plan and thought, shall not diminish it one whit, neither shall it just mean that in the end We come back to Our level; We will come back with added glories, and these will be the glories of grace.' God always reacts to the work of the Devil in that way; to get more than He had before, through suffering. Suffering is not God's will any more than sin is God's will, but in the sufferings of His own people He always secures something more than was there before.

It is not only that He keeps even with the Devil, God is always "more than conqueror". That means that He obtains added glories as the result of the interference of His enemy, whatever may be said of that. This is so in the details of the individual experience, but in its fulness, in its whole movement, that interference occasioned the whole redemptive system and plan.

We recognise that, but that is not at the moment the thing with which we are dealing. Were it so, we should be speaking on the glories of redemption. But the Lord has laid this burden of His eternal thought for man upon our hearts at this time, and we do not believe that for one moment we are taking away from the glories of redemption, or putting redemption into a place of less value than it should have. If it seems to you that we are brushing that aside, or putting it into a secondary place, it is not that we are seeing less value in it than there is. God forbid! How are we to know God at all apart from it? At the same time, what we have in view is God's Son. It is not redemption, but the Son of God, this Heavenly Man, as representing God's full thought for man, and for the universe, with which we are dealing. The Son of God as Redeemer is but one expression of the Son, and one which, while so full of glory, and ever to be the theme of the redeemed through the ages of the ages, has become painfully necessary here in time. It speaks of tragedy. It speaks of Divine heart-break, of God suffering. This, however, as we have said, is not our main consideration at the present time, but in these meditations we are occupied with Christ as the Heavenly Man.

### The Lost Treasure

We have said that we can only know Him as the Life-giver now in terms of redemption, as the Redeemer: "...the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10). What do we understand by that Scripture? Of course, in Gospel terms we have painted pictures of lost sheep, and we have thought of the individuals who are out and away from the Lord, as that which is lost. Well, that is quite true, but you have to be far more comprehensive than that in interpreting that scripture. God has lost something, and the Son of Man has come to recover that which God has lost. What is it that God has lost? Listen again: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure

hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field" (Matt. xiii. 44). What is the treasure? What is the field? The field is the world, the treasure is the Church. That treasure is hid, and the Lord Jesus paid the price for the crown rights of the whole creation in order to have the Church which was in it. Christ acquired by redemption, by paying the price, universal rights in order to secure that treasure, the Church. This it was that was lost. What is the Church? The Church is the one new man, the fulness of the measure of the stature of a man in Christ. It is the corporate heavenly man, the expression of Himself in corporate form, His inheritance in the saints. That is a very precious treasure.

The Church is not the only thing, but it is the central thing. The Lord Jesus has acquired the rights of the universe, and there will be other things in addition to the Church. There will be the nations walking in the light thereof. There will be a redemption that goes far beyond the Church, but the Church is the central thing. He has found that, and it was this lost treasure that dictated His course, and governed Him in paying the price. That is a tremendous thought. The Church is so precious to Him as to make Him willing to pay the price for the whole universe, in order to have it. That is the focal point. The Church is the key to redemption. It is that which is coming to the perfect image of Christ. All else will be secondary. There will be a reflection of Christ through the Church; His light will fall upon all else; what He is will come to rest upon all else; all else will take its character from what He is in the Church, but the Church will be at the centre: "...the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof..." (Rev. xxi. 24). It is a tremendous thing to live in this dispensation when the Lord, though having acquired the rights of the universe, of the whole creation, by His Cross, is specifically concentrated upon the treasure now, to get it out of the creation.

"The kingdom of heaven (it should be in the plural, the kingdom of the heavens) is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid..." The Lord is doing a secret work in relation to the Church. It is always a dangerous thing to bring what we conceive to be the Church out into a conspicuous place, and make a public thing of it. The real Church is a secret, hidden company, and a hidden and secret work is going

on in it. That is its safety. When you and I launch out into great public movements, displaying and advertising, we expose the work of God, and open it to infinite perils. Our safety is in keeping where God has put us, in the hidden, secret place with Himself. That by the way.

"The kingdom of heaven (the heavens) is like unto..." What is the significance of that phrase? It means that the whole heavenly system is focussed upon the Church. It is the centre of the heavenly system. All that "the heavens" means, in this spiritual sense, is interested in the Church, is concerned with the Church, the treasure in the field. Why is this? Because, again, the Church is the *heavenly man* in Christ.

Take the Lord Jesus in person, as the Heavenly Man. The whole universe is interested in Him. At His birth heaven is active; the hosts of heavenly beings break through in relation to Him. Hell also is active and, through Herod, seeks to destroy this birth and all its meaning. You find that right on through His earthly life all the universe is centering its attention upon Him, and is related to Him, so that in His death the sun hides its face, the earth quakes, and there is darkness over the face of it. The whole universe is bound up with this One.

Thus the kingdom of the heavens, all the heavenly system, is concerned with this treasure in the field, because of its eternal significance, relationship, purpose. That is an immense thing. Now, of course, you are able to appraise more perfectly the value and meaning of redemption. To see the background of things is not to take away from redemption, it is to add marvellously to it. It is to give to redemption a meaning far removed from that of just being saved as a unit here and getting to heaven. That is a big thing, of course, that saving of the individual. But when we see the redemption that is in Christ Jesus in the light of God's eternal background, how immense a thing it is! If you want really to appreciate, and rightly appraise redemption, you have to set it where Paul set it, and see that it is cosmic. The coming into redemption on the part of every single individual is a coming into something immense, a far bigger thing than the redemption of the individual himself. All the powers and intelligences of the universe are bound up with, and interested in, this redemption. We believe that in order rightly to appreciate and enjoy the things of God, it is necessary

to get their universal and eternal background, and not take them as something in themselves. That is how Paul saw redemption.

#### **Eternal Life the Vital Principle of Redemption**

The vital principle in redemption has to be implanted. Redemption is not something objective, something that is done for us. It is that, but it is not just that. It is not merely a system carried through, but redemption embraces a vital principle which has to become implanted in the believer, and the vital principle in redemption is eternal life, the life of the ages. So that redemption, bringing with it its vital principle, at once swings us back into relation with Christ before times eternal as the appointed Life-giver, and then we are carried right through with deathless life. Redemption itself, by itself, that principle of eternal life, expresses itself in the bringing back to the place where God can do what He found it impossible to do with the first Adam, to the place where He can give eternal life. When we come into redemption, all the ages of this world are wiped out as a matter of time, and we find ourselves at once made eternal beings, linked back there with the timeless God. The vital principle of redemption is eternal life to be implanted in the redeemed.

#### **Redemption Progressive in the Believer by the Life Principle**

The next thing, working out from that, is that this vital principle of redemption makes the perfect redemption which is in Christ Jesus progressive in us. In Christ our redemption is perfect. We have a full redemption in Christ. His being in glory betokens that redemption is complete, full and final. But when the vital principle of redemption, that is, eternal life, is introduced into us through faith, this, which is perfect in Christ as redemption, takes up a progressive course in us as that principle of life. Redemption becomes progressive in us by life. That life is a progressive thing. We only come to the understanding and the enjoyment of the full redemption as the life increases in us. It is the work of redemption life in us which is going to bring us to the fulness of redemption. That is going to be proved true in spirit, mind, and body. We are going to enter into the fulness of redemption that is in Christ's present heavenly, physical body. His body, His present heavenly physical body, is a representation, a standard of the

redemption of our complete humanity. We are going to be made like unto His glorious body. By what principle is this to be accomplished? By the working of that redemption life in us progressively.

### The Two-fold Law of the Life

Now, how does that redemption life in us operate? It operates in two ways. On the one hand, it operates to cut us off from our own natural life as the basis of our relationship with God. That is a big thing, and a big work, and a very deep work. So many in spiritual infancy and immaturity are making their own natural life, energies, resources, enthusiasms, and all such things, the basis of their relationship with the Lord both in life and service. It is a mark of immaturity. We know quite well that the young believer is always full of tremendous enthusiasm, and thinks it to be the real strength of his union with God, and that it really does represent something in relation to God. When presently the March winds begin to blow, and the blossom is carried away, such as these think the Winter has come instead of the Summer. They think they have lost everything. They ask, What has happened to me? The words of the hymn are perhaps heard upon their lips:

“Where is the blessedness I knew  
When first I saw the Lord?”

But you do not get the fruit until the blossom has gone. It is the Summer, not the Winter, that follows the blowing away of the blossom. Of course, we all like to see the blossom in its time, but we should have some strange feelings if we saw the blossom there all through the Summer. We should say: ‘There is something wrong here, it is time that blossom went’. We look closer, and we see something in its place, full of promise, and of much more value. This early blossom may be a sign of life, but it is not the life itself. A sign of early life belongs to the early Spring, showing that the Winter is past and resurrection is at work. It is a sign, but it is not the thing itself, and it passes with spiritual infancy. These early enthusiasms are not the real basis of our union with God, but are signs of something that has happened in us. They are of ourselves, they are not of God. He is something other than that. He is not going to blow away. The life is working and will show itself in stronger and deeper forms.

All the way through this life we have to learn

the change from what is, after all, ourselves in relation to God, to what is God Himself in us. There is a great deal that is of ourselves in relation to God, and I expect there will be in some measure right to the end. There is still something of our minds at work on God’s things. We may be thinking that they are God’s thoughts, God’s mentality, but there is still much that is of our human mind, the mental make-up of ourselves in relation to the things of God, and we shall always find that God’s mind is other than that, and we have to give place to new conceptions of the Lord. In will and in heart it is just the same.

We have been speaking of the body. This law of life works to the removing of our natural basis in relation to the Lord, so that even in our physical being we come on to the Lord in relation to His things, and the Lord becomes even our bodily life in relation to heavenly things. That is a fact. Therein is the testimony, that we are brought progressively, on the one hand, to the place where, in the Lord’s things, we have no life in ourselves, where even physically we are faced with impossibility. It always has been so from God’s standpoint, but we have been thinking that we were doing quite a lot because we had not been brought to the point where the consciousness of natural inability was allowed to overtake us. Now we have come to the place where, in greater or lesser degree, we realise that in the things of God we “cannot”, even physically.

But if, on the one hand, eternal life operates to cut us off from our natural life as the basis of our relationship with God, on the other hand, it is perfectly wonderful what is done. It is “the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes”. The Lord even comes in as our physical life to the doing of more than would have been possible to us at our best, and certainly far beyond the present possibility, because He has made us know that as men we are nothing, even at our best. Life does that. Life forces off one system and brings on another, making room for it as it goes.

That, I believe is what the Lord meant when He said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it *more abundantly*” (John x. 10). We have thought that just to mean that we are to have abundance of exuberance. We are always asking for life more abundant that we might feel wonderfully elated and over-

flowing and energetic. The Lord is pre-eminently practical, and more abundant life means that, having life, you will find the need of more to lead you a little further, and you will need it abundantly as you go on, because that life alone can bring you into the fulness. And it is His will that there should be the full provision of life unto the full end, because the purpose is such an abundant purpose. The life is commensurate with the purpose.

All that and much more is bound up with this basic statement that the active principle of redemption is eternal life, and that while that redemption is perfect in Christ it is progressive in us by the principle of life, and that to come into the fulness of redemption for spirit, mind and body there has to be a constant increase of redemption life. This life is redeeming us all the time. It is redeeming us from this present evil

age, from all that came in with Adam. Full redemption will be displayed when Christ appears, and we with Him, when seeing Him we shall be like Him. It will simply be the manifestation of that life which is His eternal life in us. Oh, the possibilities of that life to transfigure! As we look at the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration we see the full display of the life which the Father gave to dwell in us. It blazes forth in its fulness there, and shows you what kind of a man that man is in whom Divine life is fully triumphant. He is a man full of glory, full of perfection; and when we see Him we shall be like Him.

The word for us as we close is this, that He has called us unto eternal life. We must lay hold on eternal life daily for spirit, and mind, and body.  
T.A.S.

## Life in the Spirit

No. 4

### The Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ

**READING :** Romans v ; John xii. 20-28, 31-33.

I have been meditating upon the place of the death of Christ in the Gospel by John, and I have found that numerous references are made to His death in different ways, and that they are all in connection with something new brought in as the result of it. We will look at some of these.

At the same time I have been reminded with a sense of freshness of how often the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus in the later writings of the New Testament has associated with it the word "new". So often when we read there of the Cross of Christ and its result, the word "new" occurs. You will recall immediately some of the references; Romans vi. 4, for example: "We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that...we also might walk in newness of life". There is newness of life as the result of Christ's death and resurrection.

Then Paul, in the second letter to the Corinthians speaking of the death of Christ and our union with Him in that death, and then of His

resurrection and our being risen in Him, says: "If any man is in Christ (Christ risen) there is a new creation: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new".

We could go on reminding ourselves of the occurrences of this word in relation to the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, but we just make mention of the fact now because these references to the Lord's death in John's Gospel all bring something new before us, and it is the new things out from Christ's death, in resurrection, which affect us, and should occupy us, not only now but continuously.

We will run our eye briefly over this Gospel by John, to note some of these things.

#### A New Man

*Chapter iii. 14-16:* "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever be-

lieveth on him should not perish, but have eternal life ”.

If you will look at the context of those words, you will be able to see to what they bring us as related to the death, the Cross of the Lord Jesus, and you will see that there are two sides to that matter here.

There is the side which is represented by verse 14 : “ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up ”. Surely that represents the death side of things ; and it is perfectly clear, and no one will for a moment dispute the fact, that the Lord Jesus, God’s Son, is not placed in that position of correspondence to the serpent lifted up by Moses in the wilderness, on His own account. No one will ever say that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is personally rightly represented by a serpent, for you will remember at once that a serpent is always a symbol of a curse. The first curse that ever came into this creation was pronounced upon the serpent, and all the way through the serpent is the embodiment of a curse. Now it is said that the Son of Man is lifted up like the serpent. Why bring these two things together ? Surely they ought to be kept far apart, and never be mentioned in the same breath. Surely there is no correspondence. The Apostle Paul makes perfectly clear what it means, when by the Spirit he writes to the Galatians, “ Christ redeemed us from the curse ...having become a curse for us ”, literally, “ in our place ”. Then if in that position, as made a curse, He is crucified, and that as taking our place, surely that is the putting away in death of ourselves representatively. Christ’s death, then, was representative of man who lies under God’s curse, because he has been led captive in death. God’s Son has stepped in, taken our place, been made a curse, received the judgment of God, and has died as us. That is the death side.

If that kind of man is removed out of the way, what have you ? You have the way prepared for something new, a new man, and so verse 16 shows the other side. God gave His only begotten Son to take the place of man in sin, under the curse, “ that whosoever believeth on him should not perish (He has perished for them, and they believe that He has perished for them in that act), but have eternal life ”. The death of Christ brings out the basis of a new position for man. Man’s own position was that of lying under judgment, reserved unto everlasting

death. Christ has stepped into that, taken man’s place, been made a curse, judged and separated from God representatively. Now in His resurrection there is provided an escape from that and the ground for a new position for man. What is that ? That there man is no longer under a curse, separated from God, under judgment, reserved for death, but in Christ he is risen by faith, accepted by God, and in the place of blessing. That is very simple, and there is a great deal of Gospel packed into that, but you can see that the first reference to the death of Christ in this Gospel brings forth that death as providing a new standing for man before God, and that is a wonderful thing. Man was in death ; now he is in life. He was in sin ; now he is in Christ’s righteousness. He was separated from God ; now he is in union with God through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, which he has embraced through faith as being on his behalf. That is what it means to believe on the Lord Jesus ; not just to believe the Lord Jesus, but to believe on the Lord Jesus.

#### A New Sustenance

*Chapter vi. 53-54* : “ Jesus therefore said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life ; and I will raise him up at the last day ”.

When language like that is used the death of Christ is pre-supposed. The Lord Jesus in so speaking is looking on to His death, and bringing His death into view, and the very words pre-suppose that Christ has died in order that we may eat His flesh and drink His blood in the sense in which He meant this. Eating and drinking simply means inwardly appropriating. We have advanced here to see that we are now on the ground of eternal life, beyond that first presentation and acceptance of the death of Christ. We are now in that position of which the Lord was speaking to Nicodemus, in that very same chapter, “ born from above ”. We may state the position thus : ‘ I have started, I have come into the new relationship with God, I am saved. My great need is to be maintained and to grow ; to be maintained in that position, and yet not just to stay there but to increase in that life, to grow and develop ’. That is God’s thought for His children. He would not just

have them to be those who are born again and stay there, able to say, 'Yes, I am saved', but no more.

If I were to show you one who is a child in dimensions, and were to tell you that this child is forty years old, and is still having to be fed with a bottle, still being carried about in a pram, still having to be nursed, still having everything done for him, I wonder what you would say. You would call it a tragedy. There has not been development mentally or physically. There are a lot of Christians like that, truly born again but never having advanced beyond that. All they are able to say is that they have been saved; but they have never grown up.

The question, then, that arises is that, as children of God through new birth, we have to grow to the full stature of sons of God. For that we must be fed, we must have nourishment; we must be sustained in the life that we have, and we must have that which shall make that life increase. Thus we advance to this second step, and here we see the death of Christ to mean that, with the putting away of the old life in that death, on the one hand, there is brought in, on the other hand, a fulness in Christ risen. It is not just that He gives life, but in giving life He brings fulness for all that that life requires. We have heard so many people say, 'Well, if I start I fear I shall not be able to go on'. What we have said is the answer to that. The Lord Jesus in His risen life is a full provision for keeping us in life and causing us to reach the full measure of God's thought for us as His people. That is what the Lord Jesus means here. He tells us that He is sufficient for all our requirements in this new life, but we have to appropriate Him on the ground that He has died and risen again.

The pre-supposition that Christ has died is in the words "eateth my flesh...drinketh my blood". The blood must be shed; that is, the life must be poured out in order to be available, and we have continually to take of that which Christ has released for us of Himself, His own life, in order to grow up. We shall never fully understand this. These people did not understand. When He said these things some immediately exclaimed: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat". To those who are God's children the method may be a mystery, but the fact is no mystery at all. The fact is that some of us have gone on for years in the Lord, in the face of everything that we think could come

against us to stop us from so doing. If we could have been held back, if we could have been thwarted, and defeated, and baffled, and broken, and shattered, and destroyed, and put out of this life, we should have been, for all hell has raged against this new life, and all the forces of evil have come in our way to turn us back. It is not because of our sheer force of will and determination that we have gone on, for very often we have reached the point of despair; but we have gone on, and are going on. Why? Because it is a fact that we have trusted in Christ, and when He is trusted He maintains. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus brings not only the life, but all that the life requires to make it full, to make it complete.

### A New Relationship

*Chapter x. 17-18:* "Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from my Father".

Here is another reference to Christ's death. If you look at the context you will see that the Lord is saying, "I am the good shepherd...I know my sheep". Then He says, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring...and there shall be one flock, one shepherd". He is referring, in the first place, to the Jewish believers as His sheep. Then when He speaks of "other sheep I have, which are not of this fold", He is thinking of those Gentile believers which are going to come, and He says, "Other sheep...one flock...one shepherd". You will not see a Jewish strain of sheep, and a Gentile strain of sheep. You will not be able to make any such distinction. They will be one flock, two flocks having been brought together into one fold; not two strains of sheep, and not two brandings, as for it to be possible to say, This is a Jewish believer, and that is a Gentile believer; there will be one flock, and it will not be possible to differentiate between the sheep. That is said to be a consequence of Christ's death and resurrection.

Paul will explain that. He will tell you that Christ in His death destroyed the enmity between Jew and Gentile, and in His resurrection He made of the twain—Jew and Gentile—one new man. You cannot imagine one man, a man

who is one complete, perfect entity, being two men. That is an absurd thought. Now, one new man means that all that is diverse has been done away, and you have one sort of man, one *new man*. It is to that the Lord Jesus is pointing in this figurative way in John x.

All this means that, as the result of death and resurrection, believers from all different types of people here on this earth come to possess a common life, so that in the innermost reality of their being they are one. This is something new. This is what Paul calls the new man. It is a corporate man.

That is true in reality, so that to those of us who really do know the Lord, and are the Lord's, it matters not what nationality we are, it matters not at all what we are in ourselves on this earth, we have something in common. We are living in an altogether different realm. We are one in Christ. If you were to assemble a number of persons of various nationalities into a room, and all were truly born-again children of God, they would all be found to be one in the deepest reality of their being, in perfect fellowship, because of that inner truth, that they shared the one life of Christ. If you deal with such a situation apart from Christ, or the case be that of those who are not in Christ, you will, of course, find that there will be all kinds of diversities, differences, and those differences will begin to operate, and make themselves manifest. But in Christ there is a level where all that are His meet and are one, and there is perfect fellowship in our hearts, in our spirit, and the other things which are of this world, of this earth, take a second place, and must be kept in the second place.

This is one of the new things that come out of the death of Christ: In His death He embraced all nationalities. You must remember that different languages and different tongues are the result of the curse but in His death Christ took the curse and destroyed it. In risen union with the Lord Jesus we find ourselves in spirit lifted above the curse. The many languages may still present a difficulty on the earth, but in spirit we are one; we have a language which we all understand. We are in Christ. Our fellowship is there. That is a new thing that has come with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

### A New World

Chapter xii. 31-32: "Now is the judgment of

this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself".

Here you have two things in relation to the death of the Lord Jesus: firstly, the judgment of this world; secondly, the prince of this world cast out.

The judgment of this world took place in the Cross of Christ. What is the judgment of this world? The Word of God will supply the answer. "The whole world lieth in the wicked one"; "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God"; "The wages of sin is death." The Lord Jesus in His Cross took upon Himself the judgment of the world, the judgment of a sinful world; the judgment of the world passed upon Him in His Cross. Then was the judgment of this world. You say, If the world has been judged, why look forward to a judgment in the future? Well, if you accept by faith the judgment of the world, of which you were a part, as having been taken by the Lord Jesus, you have no judgment to look forward to with any fear. Judgment has gone for ever if you have seen that Christ has taken the judgment of the world, to which you belong. If you have not taken that position of faith in Him, then judgment still lies ahead for you, in the judgment of the world. Christ has made it possible for us to escape from this world.

The point is this, that because in Him the world was judged in His Cross, you and I by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus are out of the world; we have escaped from the world in this spiritual sense that we are no longer a part of it to be judged, we are delivered from it. What have we then? A new world! Only children of God understand that language, what that means, but they do understand. You can test whether you have been born again or not, whether you really have come into a living relationship with Christ, by whether you find a clash between your spirit and this world. Do you find you can get on just as easily with ungodly men as ever you could? Do you find that this world is something which sickens you? Do you feel a stranger in it, that you do not belong to it, and in heart are really out of it? Do you find that becomes more and more acute, so that as you move in this world you feel it is an artificial world, that the people in it are all living an artificial life? That is a proof that you are out of it. If you have

no sense like that, then it is time you looked seriously into the matter, because one of the first things that comes to a true child of God is the sense of separation from, and conflict with, the world. They go back to business, and without saying anything about it they know, and, strangely enough, without anything being said to the people of the world in it, a sense of conflict arises. Spiritual things speak very loudly, without audible words.

This is the test of whether we belong to the Lord. Do we in our hearts live in this world as strangers? This is not our world, this is not home, and everything here is foreign to us. "Now is the judgment of this world". Ours is a new world, a world which will never be judged. It is the world of Christ risen.

If you look at the part of the record that deals with the period that followed His resurrection, you will see that He never appeared to the world again after His Cross. It was only to His own that He appeared. He was outside of the world then.

#### **A New Lord and Master**

"Now shall the prince of this world be cast out". That is something which comes in by the death of Christ. The prince of this world held us in bondage; he was our master, our lord. Not that we ever deliberately and consciously worshipped the Devil, but that does not alter the fact that by nature we are in the evil one. The

Apostle John says, "The whole world lieth in the evil one", and by nature we are in the kingdom of Satan and he is our lord. If he is cast out in the Cross of the Lord Jesus, there is a new possibility, namely, of having another Master, another Lord. So that in the resurrection of Christ, and our faith-union with Him, we have a new Master, a new Lord.

You see what you have in each of these stages in John. In the first place you have a new man, possessing eternal life. Then you have a new provision for that new man, for his sustenance. Then you have a new relationship, in one flock, one Shepherd, and a new relationship with believers. Then you have a new world. Then you have a new Lord and Master. It is all very simple, but all this is related to the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Those who know it in their own lives and experience will rejoice in being reminded of it, and will seek to adjust themselves to it, and any who are not in the enjoyment of it will know that it is as much open to them as it is to any one.

"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish (perish with the world, with the accursed thing, with the Devil) but have everlasting life".

This is the new door, the new way to having everything new that is ours in Christ crucified and risen.

T.A.S.

## **The Sanctuary of God**

### **A Précis of Messages Given in Conference**

**READING:** Exodus xxv. 8-9; xl. 34-35;  
Isaiah vi. 1; 2 Chron. vii. 1; Acts ii. 1-3;  
Ephes. i. 4-6; 11-12; ii. 21-22; Hebrews iii.  
1-6.

#### **God's Eternal Purpose in Relation to His House**

The governing thought in these passages is that of eternal purpose. Then we are led by that thought to something which includes many other things, and affects many other things, but which comprehensively is the Sanctuary of God or God's House.

Creation began outside this world. There was a created order which was heavenly, and then there came the created order of this "Kosmos" (something bigger than the earth), and God's intention was that the creation should come to a knowledge of Him and have fellowship with Him. God is revealed as desiring fellowship with His creation. All God's great thoughts are gathered into this idea of a Sanctuary in which He may dwell. That governs things from eternity, and the creative activities of God were with that end in view.

We know what transpired. Foreign elements which excluded Him came into His creation.

### **An Elect Line**

Then God laid His hand upon a chosen line.

The book of Genesis gives us that elect line in individuals, who themselves are not perfect, but who were raised up to express some feature that is of God, and when all the men are put together you have a collection of features which, when brought to perfection, show us one Man, Jesus Christ. So that the Lord was foreshadowing a perfect Man by a certain number of features which were represented by a number of men.

Abel, Enoch; Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, are imperfect men, but there is some feature in them which is of God. For instance, Abraham was a man of faith, and God is the God of the man of faith.

So God shows us step by step in the features which these men embodied what will ultimately be the character of a vessel in which God dwells.

The Lord Jesus is the full embodiment of those excellencies brought to perfection. God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in a way in which He could never be the God and Father of any other man.

### **An Elect Race**

In Exodus you have an elect people. Although poor specimens in themselves, they represent corporately those principles of their fathers.

### **A Priestly Sanctuary**

Then God says, "Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them". This is the realm of types and figures. God did not, even with Israel, get His sanctuary in the way in which He first thought of dwelling among men.

When Moses had made all things according to the pattern, the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle.

God's sanctuary is intended to be a priestly sanctuary, and priestliness in the House of God is a very widely, and richly, and fully-developed truth in the Word of God.

### **A Kingly House**

You pass into the kingly period, and you have the temple. This also is made according to a pattern in revelation, and when perfected you

have, in the presence of the king, the glory of Jehovah filling the House.

### **A Prophetic Ministry**

With Isaiah you see the Lord high and lifted up, seated upon a throne, His train filling the temple. This is God's speaking in and through man as related to the House of God. When God fills His House, He is known in His House by representation; He speaks. That is the prophetic principle.

### **A State of Things According to God's Thought**

We pass over to the New Testament, and look at Acts ii. Here is a company of believers, standing on the ground of Christ crucified, buried, risen, exalted and the glory of the Lord fills the House. Pentecost is the counterpart of these things that we have in the Old Testament. Here you have the House of God really coming into realisation. God is there in glory, power, love, fellowship—shall we say, in eating and drinking, because that is a feature of the House. Moses went up into the mount with Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and seventy of the elders, "and they did eat and drink in the mount". The kingly feature comes in at Hebron where David was made king, and it says that they did eat and drink together three days. Pentecost was a real feast time, and was certainly marked by fellowship. It was because God was in the midst.

The last picture of the Church in the New Testament is the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, having the glory of God.

In between Pentecost and that last scene in the book of Revelation you have "Hebrews", in which this declaration is made: "...whose house are we..." The believers form the House of God.

"...Christ as a Son over God's house, whose house are we, if we hold fast". God's dwelling in a house is conditional. He cannot dwell in a house where man dwells.

When the tabernacle was completed and the glory of Jehovah filled it, Moses could not go in.

When the glory of the Lord filled the temple, the priests could not go in.

When the Holy Ghost came at Pentecost, Ananias and Sapphira could not come in.

The heavenly purpose is the sanctuary, but seeing now that this sanctuary can only be realised through redemption, the sanctuary must

embody redemptive features. So in Ephesians there are two things: (i) The thought of the eternal counsels of God which maintain the heavenly line: (ii) Redemption through His Blood, which is a dip down in order to get back to God's heavenly line.

God's eternal purpose, related to a sanctuary, foreshadowed in the Old Testament, realised in some measure in the New Testament, has yet to be perfected and completed. Everything since the fall is working to exclude God from His creation. Principalities and powers, the world rulers, the spiritual hosts of wickedness, are set against the Lord having a place. He is brought in by there being that which corresponds to His thought in which He can take up His residence. 'Whosoever two or three are gathered into my name, there am I in the midst...' Two or three gathered in the Name of Jesus are gathered into the values represented by that Name, and God in Christ is manifested in that sanctuary. God's thought as to dwelling is not a limited thing. Solomon's prayer was for Israel, but also related to "the stranger which is not of thy people..." "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples". The House of God ultimately is to be universal.

#### Divine Order in the House

The House of God is that in which Divine order obtains, about which we shall speak later.

#### Divine Worship in the House

The House of God is that in which Divine worship goes on, in which the "worth-ship" is brought back to God. Pharaoh set the children of Israel to build *him* cities, to bring the "worth-ship" of their lives to him. Satan sought to get Jesus to give the "worth-ship" to him. That shows how intensely Satan's heart is set upon being the object of universal worship.

#### The Lord Jesus God's Sanctuary

"Destroy this sanctuary and in three days I will raise it up." "This is my beloved Son, in whom (not only with whom) I am well pleased". At last God has one *in* whom He can be pleased. There never had been a man like that before. Jesus is set forth as a wonderful revelation of what God's House is, ordered according to heaven, in which God is worshipped. We mark Him, watch Him, and learn what God's eternal thought is, and then—wonder of wonders!—we

are told that we are temples of the Holy Ghost individually, and then that we are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit. This, of course, can only be as Christ, God's sanctuary, dwells in our hearts, and He becomes the vessel of the Holy Ghost within us.

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Hebrews iii. 1, 6; iv. 14; vi. 4-5; viii. 1-2, 5; ix. 23-24; xi. 16; xii. 22-26.

#### Heavenly Government

There is that in heaven which is God's perfect thought. Man since the fall is an exile from heaven, so that heaven must govern if there is to be anything here which is according to God's mind for God to dwell in.

The government of the heavens means:

##### (a) Man by Nature is Excluded

"Holding fast our boldness...firm unto the end", means going on a heavenly path, persisting on the level of the heavenlies as "partners in a heavenly calling". As we go on we are more and more excluded in what we are by nature. Wherever God's dwelling place is mentioned in the Old Testament there is always associated with it the aspect of heavenly government, that man has to be made suitable for God to dwell there.

*Bethel.* The House of God came in with Jacob very early in his career, but he could not stay there. He called the place Bethel because he met God there, but he took hold of Divine things for himself, and therefore that could not be for *him* God's abiding place. God chastened this son whom he had received (Hebrews xii.) for twenty years, and then he could come back to Bethel and pour out a drink-offering—that which is for God's pleasure.

*The Tabernacle.* In relation to service every precaution was taken against man appearing before God in his natural state. There were no steps to the altar, but an incline, so that no flesh of the priest should appear; and when going into the sanctuary there was rigid provision for the covering of all that suggested man by nature.

*The Temple.* The same was true of the temple. Wherever you come upon the House of God precautions are taken by the Lord against man's flesh, so that man comes in only in Christ by the Spirit under the anointing.

In the New Testament this was carried out in a spiritual way very stringently and drastically. Ananias and Sapphira associated themselves with the pure, true, holy, spiritual House of God in another spirit, and the Holy Ghost smote them, setting an example of the sure judgment that rests upon all flesh that dares to come into touch with that which is of God, and where God is.

**(b) Man in Christ is Brought in**

The House of God is constituted of men. They are still human and still mortal, yet heaven brings man in and transcends the human limitations, inasmuch as he has no standing in himself. The House is constituted of what we are in Christ, not of what we are in ourselves, and the measure of Christ is an important factor.

**(c) Heavenly Qualifications**

When man is dealt with by the Cross, so that he recognises that he cannot, and accepts that he cannot and that he must not try, then heaven comes in to qualify for this heavenly purpose. Heaven governs in two ways for qualification: (i) By giving a spiritual faculty; (ii) By giving that upon which the spiritual faculty can work. The faculties are given in new birth, and then the Lord shows Himself, reveals Himself, and His heavenly things, so that we grow by using heavenly faculties upon heavenly things.

The heavens govern where God's purpose is concerned, to see that things are heavenly, and therefore there will be a steady breaking down of all that is merely natural ability, or cleverness, or facility in handling spiritual things, so that what relates to God's purpose has to come from God to us. "The second man is the Lord from *heaven*". It is the inclusive governing factor. Mark, again, the phrase, "The Holy Ghost sent down from *heaven*". That means that what is being done and said is in the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

To counter God's end the method of the enemy is to counter God's means. So he has ever sought to relate things to earth and in that way to nullify what is of God.

There are laws of heaven, there is an order of God's House, and the government must be from heaven. Our proximity upsets the balance of heavenly things. We must stand back.

Gal. i. 12;  
ii. 2;  
Rev. i. 1;  
Ephes. i. 17;  
iii. 3.

Ephes. i. 10.  
Col. 1. 28.

**The Revelation of Jesus Christ**

A literal translation of Gal. i. 12 is: "...nor was I taught it but through Jesus Christ revelation". That is a key to much that is said by Paul. It is the truth which lies behind the New Testament. All things are summed up in Jesus Christ, and all the fulness dwells in Him.

When God showed Moses the pattern in the mount, He was not showing a number of things as such, but from His standpoint was showing Christ to Moses. All the things shown stand to represent what He is in fulness. The whole life of Israel from centre to circumference was governed by a revelation of Jesus.

The answer to every question is not a telling us of something that we must know as a thing, it is a fresh knowing of the Lord Jesus. The Lord the Spirit is occupied with teaching us Jesus. However much we may have seen of Him there is still more to see, and in order to see the more, all that we have seen must be made as though it were nothing for the time being, while God is bringing us to the place where we are prepared by Him to see the Lord Jesus in a new way.

"That we may present every man perfect (or complete) in Christ" indicates that completeness for man is God's thought. Completeness begins in Christ Himself personally. He wholly and fully answers to God's thought. The completeness for all others is the completeness which is already in Christ.

Adam was created, and then it was God's thought that in a heavenly sense he should be made complete. Adam fell into a state of ruin and the race in Adam is in that state; but, being brought to the Lord Jesus and by faith united with Him, we start again, at a point where we are capable of being made complete, and there are many things necessary unto that completeness. Redemption is the first thing, and it goes right on to the end. God has His eyes upon one Man who is complete, and He says, in effect, 'Your faith in that One brings you on to the ground of that One'. We came to an end in the death of Christ. Men are prepared to accept the end of those very embarrassing sins that they want to get rid of, but to be brought to an end

of themselves is not always a happy thing. When it is really an end of everything, then God comes in and it is something new. That is the circumcision of Christ—not a pleasant experience (Col. ii. 11, 12).

Col. i. 20 speaks of reconciliation in Him. In man's heart there is enmity to God. Faith in Christ Jesus brings on to the ground where there is no enmity; He has made peace by the Blood of His Cross. God is disposed to us in love, favourably. He is for us, not against us.

Ephes. iii. 12; ii. 13. Here we see that boldness is a factor in Him toward completeness. The enmity is all done away. There is an open way to come right in with perfect boldness and confidence.

Ephes. ii. 22: "*In whom ye are builded together...*" We need a revelation of Jesus Christ in order to see what God's dwelling place is, and that will mean that we see what Christ is as suitable for God's habitation. Stephen before the Sanhedrin said, 'Moses built Him a tabernacle and Solomon built Him a temple, but the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands.' The tabernacle and temple were only types. God is so much greater than tabernacle or temple made with hands can contain. Then Stephen presented Jesus to them. What a tremendous revelation! Now the Apostle says here: "In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit". All the suitability that is in Christ is made over to us through faith in Him.

If you have not yet had a revelation of Jesus Christ you will be setting up temples and tabernacles, having ordinances and ritual, and you will attend so often according to arrangement, and you will say of yourself, I am a Church member, I belong to the Church. Listen: God's dwelling place is Jesus Christ, God's sanctuary is Christ and those who are in Christ. What is true as to our standing, as to what we are, is also true as the governing reality for all movement. It is all a matter of inward revelation of Jesus Christ. God is going to fill this universe with Christ, not with things, not even things about Christ, but with Christ Himself.

The letter to the Ephesians is the revelation of God's full thought from eternity in the councils of God concerning which He is working. It is brought into this dispensation, but that full thought can only be realised and be fully expressed as the Church comes into it. This is the

way: "That he would grant unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him..."

#### Exodus xxxii.

It is supremely important for us to be thoroughly convinced of the fact that God is moving in this dispensation particularly in relation to a perfectly prepared plan. The works were prepared, the plan was completed, the purpose was settled and fully defined before this world was, and our calling, and all that is connected with that calling, is according to His eternal purpose. No one, therefore, is free to follow his own judgments, ideas, thoughts, conceptions, mind. All must come in the first place from the Lord and must be born in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. God works all things after the counsel of His own will, and that has to have an expression in the members of Christ.

God is now, according to His eternal purpose, working in relation to a habitation which is central to the universe, and embodies universal features. Then out from the eternal unto the ultimate, God will have a testimony in time. He is working in a concrete way within the compass of this world, and it is in this connection that, under the initiative and direction and mighty energy of the Holy Ghost, the assemblies of which the New Testament speaks came into being. Paul said that at Ephesus he fought with wild beasts. Truly he knew what the principalities and powers and world rulers of this darkness are in relation to the Church of God. Then at Philippi there was the working of these forces of evil in a tremendous way to frustrate God's purpose, but the Holy Ghost was there in such energy that the assembly came into being in spite of everything. These assemblies are intended to be local expressions of the eternal purpose and of the ultimate realisation of it. They are expressions of the dwelling place of God constituted by the Holy Ghost.

#### The Nature of God's House

The passages in Exodus xxxii., xxxiii. and xl help to an understanding of this.

In chapter xxv. there have been given all the directions concerning this dwelling place.

Then everything is suspended and all that is in chapters xxxii. and xxxiii. comes between the revelation and the execution.

Moses was in the mount for a probationary period (forty days and forty nights), and it was a probation characterised by a real test of one principle, faith. Israel failed in that test, because they wanted to see and have and possess and do. Faith rules all that out. When Israel turned to the tangible, governed by faithless flesh, they opened the door for idolatry. Idolatry is, in essence, the producing of something by the energies of the human soul. It was the movement of their own ambitious souls on the line of nature.

When that came in all that had been given by revelation was suspended until that whole realm of things was dealt with. So Moses took the tent and pitched it without the camp afar off, and called it, "The Tent of Meeting". It speaks of the essentially spiritual nature of the House of God as separated from all the works and emotions of the carnal soul. That is what is meant by holiness.

We have no record of Moses having been instructed concerning this tent. Chapter xxxiii. 7. seems to indicate that Moses had done something like this before he had instructions about the tabernacle. He had evidently acted from some spiritual discernment and intelligence as to what was suited to God's dwelling place.

Moses stood in the door of the tent and cried, "Who is on the Lord's side, let him come to me". All the sons of Levi went to him. Then there comes in the essential factor that evil has to be judged before you can have any real expression of the House of God. Moses commanded the sons of Levi to use the sword against their own family in so far as merely natural elements were dictating the course of things. So far as they are operating, to order, to govern, to dictate, those who stand for God's full thought have to bring them under the sword. Hebrews iv. 12 will show that this principle is a truly Scriptural one. We have to see that the House of God stands upon the basis of what is purely of God and not of nature.

By this, God is securing the basis of complete victory. Presently these people are coming up against the whole realm of opposing forces, and God is putting things into the realm where those powers have no footing. The defeat of the Church has always been because the enemy has been given an opportunity by reason of some elements that have been allowed which are foreign to God.

Ephesians gives us an understanding of this. There is the eternal purpose, the House (a habitation of God through the Spirit). That purpose is the one object of the fierce antagonism of the whole hostile realm. The Church has hope of victory only as it is fortified by that which is shown in chapter vi: the helmet of salvation—that which girdles the mind; the breastplate of righteousness—our standing before God in the righteousness of Christ; the shield of faith—that state of faith which comes between us and all the fiery darts of evil suggestion and insinuation. All these things represent a spiritual state.

Moses did not lack the faithfulness that is so essential in order to have the House of God. (Heb. iii. 2). He loved these people, but his love did not weaken his faithfulness in dealing with the things that were in the way of the full purpose unto which they were called.

Then we see the positive side. When Moses had pitched the tent afar off, and had faithfully faced the issue without compromise, the Lord talked with him face to face. Here is fellowship, communion, and growing revelation through faithfulness.

Pentecost very largely expresses these types in reality. Under the sword of the Levites three thousand died. Under the sword of the Spirit at Pentecost three thousand were slain in relation to that which was not God's true thought.

In the Old Testament it was judgment unto death.

In the New Testament it was judgment unto life.

At Pentecost they were together in one place, and outside the camp. Firstly, the Lord identified Himself with them there. Secondly, He constituted them the nucleus of His House.

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Ephes. i. 4-10, 12, 18-19.

### Worship in the House of God

Coming back to the book of Exodus we remind ourselves that the tabernacle was intended to set forth the glories of Christ. Moses received the pattern, and others were endued with the Holy Spirit to perform the work. All that went to make the tabernacle was to show the many-sided glories of Christ:

Brass	—righteousness issuing from judgment, the righteousness of Christ.
Silver	—redemption unto God.
Gold	—the glory of God.
Blue	—heavenly nature.
Purple	—royalty.
Scarlet	—suffering.
Oil	—the witness of the Holy Spirit.
Incense	—the worthiness of the Lord Jesus as the ground of communion with God.
Precious stones	—the preciousness of the Lord Jesus to the Father.

That is enough to convey the truth that this tabernacle was intended to set forth the glories and excellencies of the Lord Jesus. It is that which the Church, the habitation of God, is intended to be; that which sets forth the glories and values of Christ. There is an end in view, "that we should be unto the praise of His glory"; that the glories of God being manifested in us, in the Sanctuary, in the Church, should bring forth praise to Him.

Worship is praise for His grace and praise for His glory in Jesus Christ—grace leading to glory. Firstly it is grace that makes us a habitation of God, because it provides the necessary conditions for God's presence. Then it is God's work, through grace, to conform us to the image of His Son, that eventually we shall be to the praise of His glory. That is the full development of the purposes of grace.

Ephesians i. shows us what God is after, and how He starts where believers are concerned, and what the end is to be—the praise of His glory.

Ephesians vi. brings us into touch with the forces that are opposed.

That which lies between chapter i. and chapter vi. is all that by which God's end is reached and Satan's object is defeated. There is Divine order in the Body and in the House. Upset the Divine order and the Divine glory disappears. In the order there is God's glory; in the disorder there is God's dishonour. A *living* expression of God's thought in the Church is an object of terrible antagonism on the part of the enemy.

Supremely the House of God is characterised by worship. God has brought it into being for that purpose. When you come into the realm of the *living* Church you come into the living reality of the powers of evil because of worship. Worship is not a form of words, or attitude of

body or mind, nor just the singing of hymns. It is such a dwelling in the excellencies of the Lord Jesus by the Holy Spirit that God is being glorified. It is firstly the heart expression of the appreciation of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

#### The Corporate Expression of God's House

The work of the Cross is the basis of God's house. The House of God comes in essentially on the basis that all that is of man is set aside.

#### Divinely Appointed Headship

Col. ii. 19; Heb. iii. 6. The first thing is Christ's headship over the Body, over the House. It carries with it universal government, that all the ministries of all the members, their activities, functionings, are all gathered up into the headship of the Lord Jesus. They are all brought together with one another in the Head, so that their relatedness with one another is governed by the headship of the Lord Jesus. We cannot have a right relationship with the Lord and a wrong relationship with another member of the Lord. The headship of Christ is that out of which all else comes and toward which all else moves.

#### The Sphere of the Full Expression of Headship

In the New Testament as well as in the Old Testament there is a great deal about the function called eldership in the House of God.

When the Lord called to Moses, He told him to bring Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of the children of Israel up into the mount. They were not the judges of Exodus xviii., but were heads of tribes and families through whom Moses always communicated with the main body of the people.

The elders were called to the door of the tent of meeting, and Divine communication was through Moses, as the head, to the elders, and then through them to the whole body.

The thought is carried over into the New Testament, and what was typical is now spiritually real and active.

Elders are representative members of the corporate life of God's people, and are not official as such. When the elders move it is the Church moving, and they have to be in such vital relationship to the corporate company in the

Holy Ghost that they carry the Church with them and the Church is found moving by them intelligently. The Lord has laid it down that the Church has to be heard. It is the sphere and vehicle of the utterance of the Head. When it comes to specific action it is the elders who are the particular instrument of expressing the judgment of the Head on behalf of the Church. They cannot act independently; they must represent and carry the Church with them, and the Church on the other hand must, by the Holy Spirit, be in intelligence in life that it may corroborate and work with its representative members.

The headship of the Lord Jesus in a spiritual way comes down through elders, and the Church comes into the headship of the Lord Jesus by the Holy Spirit, when it is a matter of specific function, through the elders. The headship of Christ is expressed, not only over the Church, but in and through the Church. The Church, therefore, is the sphere in which Christ's headship operates as differing from individual separate units. The headship of Christ embraces all the individuals, but when the Divine order is established the individual will be governed in the Church and not apart from it. The individual line is not capable of reaching God's full end, and if there is a refusal to recognise that, then what is individual begins to fade out, or perhaps come into confusion. We must recognise the sovereignty of God from time to time in doing things with an individual, but it is not His full thought.

Deborah was sovereignly laid hold of because God's fuller thought was not capable of realisation at the time. But God only carries that sovereignty so far, and if He is going to reach through to all that He has in view the individual has to find a place in the corporate: otherwise there are all sorts of perils.

### Laying on of Hands

Hebrews vi. This is the basic passage. It is always important to recognise that this is a continuation of chapter v. and to read from verse 11 of chapter v. and then on in to chapter vi: "Wherefore let us cease to speak of *the first principles of Christ...*" Christ has entered into that House over which He is also Son. Here are principles which govern the House of God, and they are said to be six, and it is not for any man to say that any one of them can be dropped

out. Amongst the six is the laying on of hands. Acts vi. 6; viii. 17-18; ix. 17; xix. 6; 1 Tim. iv. 14; v. 22; 2 Tim. i. 6.

Here we have the fact that laying on of hands was an apostolic procedure. What was in the old dispensation implied is now revealed. The peculiar feature of this dispensation is that the whole body of believers, not just special persons, comes under the anointing in this way by the laying on of hands. In the Old Testament hands were laid on special persons who were to occupy certain positions. In this dispensation all members of Christ are regarded as occupying those positions by the same means. All the Lord's people are kings and priests, and the procedure of the laying on of hands in the New Testament means that the whole body of believers comes under the anointing to occupy a certain position before the Lord as represented by the kings and priests of the Old Testament. So it seems that the laying on of hands in the case of those who were baptized was a recognised thing in the Apostolic Church.

There is no command that it shall be done, and that fact has stumbled many people. It is not commanded; it is taken for granted. When we see that it was done and what the result of it was in manifestation we have to come to the conclusion that this stands to speak of *related life*. Now these who have come to the Lord, and have been baptized into Christ, are members—with all other members—of Christ. The very act itself of hands, is an act of identification. It has in view relatedness, oneness. The giving of the hand, the lifting up of the hands is of acknowledgment, recognition.

Ananias said, "Brother Saul". The family is here. Under Christ's headship into which these believers had come there is one anointing from the Head for all His members, and so the anointing was expressed in relation to the act of identification, not of individuals as individuals, but as members of a Body. The Holy Spirit took account of that in laying the foundations for the dispensation in a very conspicuous way.

At times, as the result of that laying on of hands and anointing of the Spirit they spake with tongues, though not invariably, and that meant simply that the Spirit testified to this being something not of this creation but of a universal character which has transcended all the work of Babel. It testifies to the undoing of

the dividing work of the Devil at Babel ; that is, the Church becomes the embodiment of the great principle that Babel is cast down. The Church of God always stands over against Babel and Babylon, and the works represented in Babylon are destroyed in the House of God. Tongues were for a sign. It is interesting and significant that where there is the counterfeit of the Spirit in tongues, there is a contradiction of the meaning and Babel conditions come in ; not glory, but shame.

### Divine Order in the House

Order in the House of God is the thing about which we are speaking. Order is a most important thing in relation to protection and covering ; that is, the safety of the individual members of Christ is bound up with their relatedness to one another in a corporate life. The assembly is essential to the safety of the individual in a spiritual way.

1 Cor. xi. 9. Ephes. v. 22-24. 1 Cor. xi. 10, 12.

At Corinth there were disorders, and the Apostle was seeking to correct those disorders and to have the Lord's order established. We have to look at everything in the House of God from the standpoint of Divine order, not just the matter of the place of individuals. If there is disorder the enemy is going to have an advantage, to do mischief and to do us harm, and we shall be smitten.

There is an order in heaven, and the Church here is expressive of that order.

Exodus xxiii. 20 :

" Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee by the way...take ye heed of him...provoke him not : for he will not pardon your transgression... "

This angel represents government from heaven and he has to be recognised, otherwise there is an upsetting of heavenly order and you become exposed and suffer.

Daniel iv. 13, 17, 23 : "...the decree of the watchers..." Then there is that peculiar clause in Paul's writings : "...because of the angels..." Covering is related to heavenly order for protection. Headship is that. It seems that God has given a custodianship to heavenly bodies,

the watchers, and they are watching to see the heavenly order preserved, and when heavenly authority is set aside and violated it is as though the covering were removed from the head and a smiting results.

This is brought into the assembly, and down to relationships, the man the head of the woman, as Christ is the Head of the Church. It means there is a heavenly order here, expressed in these relationships, and if that order is upset there is exposure, the head is uncovered. The head covering of a woman is a sign that she has protection, but if she sets aside that Divine order and assumes the place which God has not given, she exposes herself to deception and to mischief. That does not apply only to man and woman, woman and man, but follows right through. If God has set in the Church in man-form an oversight and there is a refusal to acknowledge it, it is like the Church taking off its cover, and where that happens the individual or the company is bound to be smitten. I believe that is the principle behind Dathan and Abiram and their company.

An assembly governed by the Holy Spirit is of immense value to the Lord in every way, and of immense value to the individual members ; for the Church can come alongside them.

This carries with it the necessity for our being in subjection in the House of God, every one of us. Subjection to the Lord is subjection in the place where the headship primarily operates, and it is subjection in the House.

Col. ii. 19 : Order is the basis of spiritual increase. This order, leading to growth, means intelligence in the presence of spurious movements and doctrines. (Ephes. iv. 12-14).

Finally, order is a military idea, so the book of Numbers would teach. Until the Lord's people are ordered there is no hope of the enemy being cast out.

The primary thing, then, is the headship of Christ ; then the government of the Holy Spirit in the Church, in the saints ; then the holding fast the Head. All this upon the basis of the Cross, that the personal and the self and all that is of nature has been brought under the Cross and set aside.

T.A.S.

## The Ministry of Elijah

READING : 1 Kings xvii.

What we have in view, of course, in the first place, is the servant of the Lord. Once more God is found reacting to a state of things amongst His own people, rising up in His own Divine discontent, and, as always, laying His hand upon an instrument for recovery.

So Elijah stands before us to represent such an instrument, and in God's dealings with him we see the ways and the principles by which a servant of the Lord is made an effectual servant in relation to the purpose of God.

### The Sovereign Choice of God

The first thing related to any such instrument is the sovereignty of God. There is never any adequate, natural explanation for the choice and appointment by God of His servants. There may be things in the instrument chosen which will be turned to account when they are wholly sanctified and brought under the government of God's Spirit, but when all has been taken account of we have to recognise that God's choice of His instruments is always a sovereign choice and not because there is anything in the instrument to warrant His choosing that instrument and selecting it from others. He acts sovereignly in choosing and appointing for His purpose. But, although that may be true, and although God may go beyond choosing and may endue that instrument with spiritual power, yet the instrument must be controlled and disciplined continually by the hand of God. Otherwise that servant of the Lord or that instrument will be found following in the direction of his own soul, following his own judgments, being influenced by his own feelings. The intent and motive may be very good, it may be very godly, but that does not dispense with the necessity of that instrument being continuously under the hand of God for government and for discipline.

That is what comes very clearly before us at the outset in the case of Elijah. There is no doubt about God's sovereign choice, and there is no question as to God having endued Elijah with Divine power. Nevertheless, we see him at

every step under the hand of God, and those steps are all steps which are a disciplining of the man himself. God is dealing with His servant all the time, and bringing His servant all the way along under His hand, so that the servant never becomes something in himself, but has everything in the Lord, and only in the Lord. We make a great mistake if we think that it is enough to have the Divine thought as to Divine purpose, that is, to have the knowledge of what God desires to do. That is not enough, that knowledge of the thought of God is not sufficient. There has to be a dealing with us in relation to that Divine thought, and that dealing with us is usually in a way which is altogether beyond our understanding.

If God were dealing with us as sinners, that is, if He were dealing with us because of certain personal sins and personal faults we could quite clearly understand that, but when He is dealing with us in relation to Divine purpose as His servants His dealings with us go far beyond our understanding. We are taken out into a realm where we do not understand what the Lord is doing with us and why the Lord takes certain courses with us. We are out of our depth, we are altogether baffled, and we are compelled—that is, if we are going on with God—to believe that God knows what He is doing, and we have just to move with Him according to whatever light we may have, and believe that these dealings with us, so far beyond our understanding, are somehow related to that purpose with which we are called, and that the explanation waits some distance ahead and we will find it when we get there. God does not explain Himself when He takes a step with us. God never comes to a servant of His and says, 'Now I am going at this moment to take you through a certain experience which will be of this particular character, and the reason for this is so-and-so'. Without any intimation from the Lord we find ourselves in a difficult situation which altogether confounds us, puts us beyond the power of explaining that experience, and God takes us through without any explanation whatever until

we are free, until the purpose for which that experience was given is reached, and then we have the explanation.

The point is that even an instrument, sovereignly taken up by God in relation to His purpose, while knowing His main thought as to His purpose, still needs to be kept every moment, at every step, under God's hand to be disciplined in relation to that thought, to be governed entirely by God.

Elijah, great man as he was, outstanding in the history of God's movements, was brought to that very point where, although He knew that God had laid hold of him, and although he knew what God's intention was, he could not just freely by his own initiative and by his own energy go on to fulfil his mission. He could not move more than one step at a time, and even so that step had to be definitely governed by God. He could only take that step under the Divine direction. You see it here in this chapter to begin with. He had to take just one step, and then the next, and that by Divine direction, nothing beyond that. The Lord does not turn even His greatest servants loose with an idea. He does not liberate His most mightily used instruments to take a free course even though they may know what God is after.

### Divine Authority

Some of the reasons for that are clear. Elijah's ministry was one of Divine authority. There were powers at work which were more than human powers. The case with Israel was not simply one of spiritual declension. It was not just that the people had lost a measure of spiritual life and were on a lower level than they should be, so that they had to have a deepening of the spiritual life. That was not the position at all. Baal had a mighty footing in Israel, and the evil powers, the forces of darkness were back of this state of things, and the situation demanded more than just spiritual help to Israel. Something more than a ministry of exhortation and of spiritual food, something more than a convention for the deepening of spiritual life was called for. A ministry of Divine authority was needed to deal with a spiritual situation back of the condition in which the people were found. There were mightier forces at work than merely human faults and failings. The mighty power of Satan was there represented by Israel's state. Elijah, therefore, must needs fulfil a ministry of

Divine authority, and the very first public utterance indicates that that is what his ministry was :

"As the Lord, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word"

(1 Kings xvii. 1).

There is a position, and there is an authority by reason of that position. James says that by his prayer the heavens were closed. That is going beyond the merely earthly, human situation. And again, by his prayer the heavens were opened. That is authority in heaven.

### Secret Preparation

Now that ministry of authority was born in secret preparation before it came out in public expression. The Apostle James tells us quite definitely that "Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently (you have no mention of that in the historic record in the book of Kings) that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again; and the heavens gave rain..."

There is a secret history with God. He came into his public ministry with abrupt announcement. He simply stood there upon the platform of the universe, as it were, and made his declaration. But that is not all. There is a secret history with God behind that. All such ministry of Divine authority has its beginning hidden from the public eye, has its roots in a secret history with God. That kind of ministry, born out from that secret history with God, needs very special government by God to preserve its safety, to safeguard it from all those forces which can destroy it, and that is why Elijah, having such a ministry, needed to be governed in every step by God. There must be no generalization of movement in his case, there must be that specific movement, God dictating every step. So God preserves that authority as He produces it; that is, by a hidden life. Such a life and such a ministry must not be exposed, otherwise it will be destroyed.

### Separation from the Self-life

So the Lord said to Elijah, "Get thee hence..." Hence? Where from? From this exposure, this publicity, this open place with all its dangers. "Get thee hence, and turn thee east"

ward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan". Hide *thyself*. Geography may have little to do with it. What is here spiritually is "hide *thyself*". Cherith means separation or cutting off, and that is linked with Jordan. Cherith is a tributary of the Jordan. We know what Jordan stands for, the death of the self-life. In the major sense the Lord's servants have been to Jordan; that is, the self-life has been set aside; but they have to keep near Jordan, and Jordan has to govern them at every step. The most paralysing thing to a ministry of Divine authority is "thyself". It is, in other words, the strength of our own souls. Elijah was a strong-minded man, a strong-willed man, a man capable of very strong and drastic actions, of pouring out a great deal of his own soul-life with great heat, and the self-life of a servant of God is a great peril to the spirit. Paul makes it perfectly clear that at an advanced point in his ministry and in his spiritual life, when God had entrusted him with visions and revelations unspeakable, which it was not lawful for a man to utter, the main and most immediate peril and menace to the ministry of that revelation was himself. "Lest *I* should be exalted above measure..." Then the self-life had not been eradicated from Paul. Paul was not clear of the peril of doing great damage to purely spiritual ministry, and God had to take a special precaution against the self-life of his own servant, not the sinful life in its old sense, but the self-life. "Lest *I* should be *exalted*..." I...exalted! What is that? That is the exaltation of the *ego*, the self. What dangers are in that "I", and how truly it stands in peril of getting into an exalted place, a place of power, a place of influence, a place of authority. It is in this sense that the Lord has to say, "Hide thyself": 'get to the place of cutting off, of separation'.

This was so different from what you might expect. You see, here is a man, having had this deep secret preparation with God in much prayer, who finds himself brought out in Divine authority to make a great announcement which represents a crisis in the purpose of God. You would expect that from that point he would go straight on from strength to strength, from place to place, would at once become a recognised authority, a recognised servant of God, and be very much before the public eye. But God would guard against any servant of His taking up a Divine purpose and a Divine commission in

himself, taking it up in his own energy. That will destroy it, and there must be a hiding, a very real hiding. If a geographical hiding is God's way of getting a spiritual hiding, well, be it so. If God chooses to send us out of the realm of public life and ministry into some remote and hidden place, in order to take us away from the peril that is imminent of our becoming something, of our being taken up to be made something of, our going on in the strength of our own self-life, that is all well and good; but whether it be geographical or not, the word of the Lord to all His servants would always be, Hide *thyself*!

### Adjustableness

Then you see, connected with that, as a part of it, the servant of the Lord must be found always in the place where he is pliable, where the Lord can get a ready and immediate response. The servant has no programme, therefore there is nothing to upset. He has no set course, therefore the Lord has nothing to break. He is moving with God or staying with God just as the Lord directs. He must be mobile in the hands of the Lord; that is, capable of being moved at any time, in any way, without feeling that everything is being broken up and torn to pieces.

"Get thee hence...and hide thyself by the brook Cherith...and it came to pass...that the brook dried up". The Lord did not say that it would not dry up, and the fact that the Lord told Elijah to go to the brook Cherith did not mean that the Lord was going to preserve the brook for ever. It was a step, and the Lord said, in effect: 'That is the next step. I do not promise you that you will stay there always. I am not saying that that is your last abiding place and that you can settle down there for ever. That is your next step: go there and be ready for anything else that I want'.

This is a spiritual condition, of course. No one is going to take this literally. If we were to begin to apply this literally as to our business here on earth we might get into confusion; but we have to be ready in spirit for the Lord to do anything that He likes, and never to feel that there is any contradiction when the Lord, having directed us in one way, now directs us in another. It is a matter of being in the hands of the Lord without a mind of our own made up, though the way be hidden from our own reasoning, from our own

will, from our own feelings, hidden from all that soul-life, so that the Lord has a clear way with us.

The brook dried up! Well, were you dependent on the brook? If so, you are in a state of utter confusion when the brook dries up. Were you dependent upon the Lord? Very well, let all the brooks dry up and it is quite all right. Dependence on the Lord is a governing and an abiding law of true spiritual power. Elijah has been spoken and written of as the prophet of power. If that is true in any special way, he was very certainly the prophet of dependence.

That relationship to the Lord made it possible for the Lord to do other things, and to lead him on into new realms of revelation and experience. Oh, what a thing adjustableness is! If we are not adjustable, how we prevent the Lord from bringing us into His full revelation and purpose.

Those disciples of John the Baptist were adjustable, and it was because of that that they came to know the Lord Jesus. You will remember there were those disciples of John who followed Jesus, and said, "Master, where dwellest thou?" He said, "Come and see". Now had they been fixed and settled, saying, 'We are John's disciples and we must stand by John; we must stay with John, and move with John: let Jesus have His own disciples, but we stand by John', they would have lost a great deal. But they were open and adjustable, and moved beyond John.

Those disciples of John which Paul found at Ephesus many years afterward, to whom he said, "Did you receive the Holy Ghost when you believed", were adjustable. When they heard what Paul said they were baptized into the Name of the Lord Jesus. They were ready to go on from John to Christ, and so they came into the greater fulness (Acts xix).

Unless we are adjustable we shall miss a great deal. Elijah was adjustable, and so God could lead him on. The Lord allowed the brook to dry up because He had something more for His servant to learn and something more to do through him, and so He said, "Arise, get thee to Zarephath...I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee". He went to Zarephath and was made a blessing by his obedience.

### **Experience of Resurrection**

Then he was brought by his new movement of obedience and faith into a new exercise, a new

perplexity, a new trial; for the woman's son died. The woman was a widow with one son. The death of the son meant for her the loss of everything. It happened while Elijah was there and being looked after by this woman, and he was there in his obedience to the Lord. He had done this in obedience to the Lord, and now, in the line of obedience to, and of faith in, the Lord, the Lord allowed this catastrophe to come into the very home to which he had been sent. It clearly raised a big question in Elijah's heart. 'God sent me here, I know that! God raised me up and commissioned me, and in the course of the fulfilling of my commission He brought me into this situation! There is no doubt about the Lord having led this way, and now here I am, having done what the Lord told me, having taken the course that He indicated, and everything has come into death and confusion; there is a terrible contradiction here!' All sorts of questions can arise when you get in a position like that, and you can begin to go back on your guidance, begin to raise questions as to whether, after all, you were led or whether you made a mistake in your guidance. Do that, and you only get more and more into the mire. What is all this about? God has a revelation for Elijah beyond anything that he had yet received. He was going to bring him into something that was more than what he had known. He was going to show His servant that He is the God of resurrection; and that has to be wrought in a deep way into the very being of His servant through trial, through perplexity, through bewilderment. Thus the Lord allows the widow's son to die, and the house to be filled with consternation, and all concerned to ask big questions.

The prophet goes up and brings the thing before the Lord, and lays hold of God, and so relates himself to this situation that he and the situation are one, and the boy's resurrection is the prophet's resurrection. There is identification of the prophet with the situation in death, and then in resurrection. The mighty meaning of the power of His resurrection, with new experience of that for the servant of God, was an essential lesson, if this authority was to be maintained and this ministry to work out to its ultimate meaning in the overthrow of the powers of death which were working destruction. The servant of God must go through it all in his own heart.

This discipline at Zarephath was relative to

the whole ministry of the prophet. Zarephath means testing and refining, and indeed it was a refining fire. But Elijah came out, and everybody else concerned came out into a new place in resurrection.

The Lord write these things in our hearts and show us how they still remain as spiritual values connected with the reaching of God's end, the fulfilling of His purpose.

T.A-S.

## Spiritual Maturity

No. 4.

### The Incentive to Maturity

READING : Romans viii. 19, 29 ; 1 Cor. iii. 1-3 ; 2 Cor. iii. 18 ; Gal. iii. 26 ; iv. 6, 19.

We have already pointed out how much there is of strength and urgency in the New Testament concerning full spiritual growth. Indeed, more than ninety per cent. of the New Testament is addressed to believers for that very purpose. Every letter of Paul's is a strong urge in that direction, and was written specifically for the increase of Christ in the believers, that they might come to full growth, to the stature of the fulness of Christ.

We observed that this is not only true in a general way, but that every letter of the Apostle deals with the matter of spiritual growth from a different standpoint, or has a particular aspect of that matter to deal with, which, of course, has its occasion in the situation existing in the different places to which the letters were sent.

Then we began to consider the letters of Paul in their bearing upon this matter, and we got to the end of the second letter to the Corinthians. If the Lord wills, we will presently review that ground as we approach the letter to the Galatians, but we want to say another word first concerning the urgency of this matter.

#### Why Maturity is so Vital

It does not require argument and evidence to be produced to convince you that this is a matter of very great importance from the Lord's standpoint. It is quite impossible to read the New Testament and fail to see that it is to this end the Lord is by His Word and Spirit urging believers all the time, making it perfectly manifest that the Lord's thought is not just the salvation of men from sin and from judgment. The greater emphasis with the Lord is what they are saved unto, rather than what they are saved

from. It is Divine purpose which is always governing, and the calling by His grace is according to His purpose : " according to the eternal purpose ". We must remember that salvation, from start to finish, at every point, is related to Divine purpose, is toward an end, is with something in view, and in order to reach that which is in view in Divine purpose a going on with God unto full spiritual measure is necessary.

There again it needs to be said, that to have full grown people is not an end in itself. The end in view is that they may be prepared and fitted for the purpose unto which He has called. No mere spiritual infant, who is such beyond the point of time where infancy ought to have ceased, can come into the Divine purpose, and that is the reason why there is this tremendous emphasis placed upon the tragedy of immaturity when it ought to be otherwise, and upon the necessity for maturity. It is with something of a groan that the Apostle writes these words to the Corinthians : " And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes ". Now it is all right to speak to babes when they are rightly such, but when it is time they were more than babes it is a terrible thing to have to go on speaking to them thus.

So that we must see what the purpose of God through maturity is, before we can feel the real weight and recognise the real importance of full spiritual growth. What is the purpose of God ? What is that eternal purpose to which we are called by His grace in Christ Jesus ? There are several words in the New Testament which are very full words, and very significant words. There is the word " adoption ", a very misunderstood word by us, because it means something entirely different in our Western language from what it means in the New Testament.

There is another word "sons"; and, again, another word "inheritance". If you look at those words you will find that they are always related to a particular thing. They are related to a position in the ages to come, and that position is definitely stated to be dominion over the inhabited earth. That governs everything in the thought of God. You will remember that in the second chapter of the letter to the Hebrews that is clearly and definitely stated: "...not unto angels did he subject the inhabited earth to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place hath testified, saying, What is man... that thou art mindful of him (*puttest him in charge*)". The inhabited earth to come will be subjected to man, and it is that particular man which is God's object in this specific dispensation. It is the corporate man in Christ; the Church which is His Body, conformed to the image of God's Son, of whom He is the firstborn, as the firstborn among many brethren. Thus the letter to the Hebrews goes on to say that in bringing many sons to glory the Author of their salvation was made perfect through sufferings.

#### Galatians and the Day of the Adoption

That brings us right to this letter to the Galatians. You will notice in the course of this letter that the Apostle Paul lights upon Abraham, and takes up everything in relation to Abraham, and in so doing he throws back our horizon tremendously. To begin with, he gets rid of a whole dispensation, the Jewish dispensation, which came between Abraham and Christ. He leaps right over it, pushes it on one side, and gets back into the universal. He says, in effect, 'That was a merely local thing, a merely temporal thing. It came in, it served a purpose, and it is now done with. Now let us go back to Abraham, and take things up there. That is where things began, and we come in with Abraham'. "Know therefore", he concludes, "that they which be of faith, the same are sons of Abraham".

You will know that there is a great similarity between this letter and the letter to the Romans. The subject is almost identical, the object the same. The letter to the Romans is a more thorough-going treatise (if we may call it that) on the subject of law and grace. The letter to the Galatians is an impassioned outburst of righteous indignation. The spirit of the Apostle is aflame at the outrages against the work of God which

were being perpetrated, to which we will refer later. The object is the same, and if you go back to the fourth chapter of the Romans you have this remarkable word: "Now the promise to Abraham that he should be heir of the world..." You have no such thing recorded in the Old Testament. Nothing in the Old Testament says that God made promise to Abraham that he should be heir of the world in this sense. It is there that the Apostle takes things up with Abraham. In his letter to the Galatians, he deals with everything along the line of sonship, adoption, heirs of the promise made to Abraham. That is inheritance. When you have grasped that, and recognised what that means, you are getting into the flaming heart of the Apostle. We cannot get into this letter unless we understand and recognise the tremendous background of it. In a word, what we are presented with is this: God made promise to Abraham that he should be heir of the world. Upon that we are told that Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker was God, and we find Abraham refusing all the cities of this world, choosing to dwell in tents with Isaac and Jacob who were also the heirs of the promise; repudiating this world and its cities, because he looked for a city whose builder and maker was God, with the promise that he should be heir of the world.

Now we look at the Apostle's argument in this letter to the Galatians. Who is a Jew? Not he who is one naturally. He is a Jew who is linked with Abraham's seed by faith. "Not unto seeds", says the Apostle, "but...to thy seed, which is Christ". Abraham's seed is Christ. Faith in Jesus Christ constitutes us the seed of Abraham. One of the last clauses of this letter to the Galatians refers to the Israel of God, and leading up to that is all this about the 'Jerusalem that is beneath, that is in bondage with her children, and the Jerusalem which is above and is free, which is the mother of us all'. He looked for a city. We are Abraham's seed by faith in Jesus Christ, related to a city, and that city is to govern the world. The end of the Word of God makes it perfectly clear that the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, is the Church, and in this whole dispensation the Church is the object upon which God's heart is set, in order that she may govern the inhabited earth in the ages to come. That is the purpose. That government demands full spiritual growth, and because of

the greatness, the seriousness, and the importance of God's eternal purpose as to the government of this world, if in heart you enter into that with God, you also will become aflame as did the Apostle, when you discover there are things which are working insidiously against God's purpose in the saints, to frustrate spiritual full growth. Get the range of the thing, and then it goes to your heart. Everything that stands athwart God's purpose is to be met with indignation, with uncompromising zeal, for this matter is so important. It is our loyalty to God. It is our oneness of heart with God's purpose.

God has a cherished purpose concerning His Son. In His infinite grace He has called us according to that purpose. The fact of what we are, as it breaks upon us so continually, is perhaps the thing which discourages us most of all from believing in a thing like this, and yet it is true that you and I, despite what we are, our utter worthlessness—ah, mere than that, despite all the enmity that is in us against God by nature, all that is there that is so utterly contrary to God's nature, all the rebellion against God by nature, of which we are so capable under provocation—we are, by God's infinite grace, which comes down to us in Jesus Christ, called to govern the inhabited earth in the ages to come, for God, with God, in His Son. That is the purpose. That is what God is seeking in this dispensation, that instrument, that vessel for coming world-government.

When you and I recognise what the grace of God is, grace which finds a way for our forgiveness, and our deliverance from judgment, grace upon grace, ever mounting up until it sets us on the throne with Himself, in accordance with the word which He has spoken, "...shall sit with me in my throne, as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne"; such grace coming home to our hearts surely would make us intensely jealous for God and deeply loyal to God. Surely if we felt that grace our attitude would be: 'Oh, if anything dares to touch God's purpose, God's interest, that which is dearest of all to God's heart, I for one will have no compromise with that, I for one will show that I am utterly with God'. That surely ought to be our reaction to the grace of God. It was because the Apostle Paul had such a deep, deep sense of the grace of God in eternal purpose calling him that you find him so burning with zeal, so mightily stirred to white heat when

there rose up something to interfere with God's purpose.

That explains the letter to the Galatians. Listen to his words in the first chapter. There is no compromise about this: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema". That is very straight language. Let him be accursed. Why? Because he is interfering with God's purpose when he seeks to subvert the saints, when he interferes with their going on to full growth.

Sonship, adoption, is something which lies ahead. The adoption has not yet taken place. We are children of God, we have the Spirit of sonship, but the adoption is not yet; that is coming. The word "adoption" would help us more if it were translated literally; for it bears a different meaning in the New Testament from that which obtains among us to-day. The word simply means placing as sons, the installation as sons. It is rather the official element than the element of relationship. It occurs only five times in the New Testament, and these are all in Paul's letters, and every occurrence is very interesting and helpful.

So that is ahead, and it is that to which the Apostle refers in his letter to the Romans: "The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God". That lies in the future, and that is the day when the government of the inhabited earth to come will be taken up in the saints conformed to the image of His Son, in the Church as mature.

Now you see, I am sure, a little more of the importance, and why there is given such a place of importance to this matter of full growth. It is in maturity that the inheritance is to be possessed, that the placing of sons is to take place, that the subjecting of the inhabited earth to come is to transpire. Hence the need for going on to full growth. Government is important to God, and it is the full meaning of grace in the saints. So much, then, for our further emphasis upon the importance.

### **A Retrospect of the Letters to the Romans and Corinthians**

Now, we said that these letters of the Apostle Paul are each dealing with some aspect of spiritual maturity, or dealing with the matter from respective points of view. The letter to the Romans, as we have already pointed out, re-

presents the work by which relatedness to the Lord is brought about unto His full purpose. The purpose is brought into view right at the outset, the manifestation of the sons of God conformed to the image of His Son. That is the purpose. Then everything is dealt with in order that a relationship shall be brought about, so that God can begin His purpose and proceed to its realisation. Thus, in the letter to the Romans you have a revelation of God's attitude toward men by nature. The whole race is taken into view, and the verdict is, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God", and therefore lie under judgment and death. "There is none righteous, no, not one". Gentile and Jew are all in the same position before God. It is a startling fact, nevertheless clearly and positively stated; irreligious and religious; those who were without and those who were with the oracles of God. The natural difference that the oracles of God are seen to have made is that they have proved how helpless man is, and how deeply sinful he is by nature. The law came in, and, far from saving man, it only accentuated the natural condition of human weakness and sinfulness, and made manifest how impossible it is for man to stand up to God's requirement. So that universally man by nature is proved to be hopeless and helpless, under sin, condemnation, judgment and death.

Then the Cross of the Lord Jesus is brought into view as the place where God's verdict concerning man universally was put into effect in the representative person of the Lord Jesus, who was made sin in our stead. The whole race passed under the actual judgment of God in the Cross, and when Christ died, from God's standpoint, the race died under judgment.

Then the resurrection of the Lord Jesus comes in, as marking God's new beginning, a new relationship, where sin has been destroyed in judgment, and now, on the ground of sin having been destroyed and removed, there is a new relationship with God in Christ risen, in which relationship the Holy Spirit is given, the Spirit of the new creation. A new life is given—"... the law of the Spirit of life in Christ..."—and then in that new relationship, the purpose is embarked upon by the indwelling Spirit. Conformity to the image of His Son is the end. The call is that believers should apprehend that position of union with Christ in death, in burial, and resurrection, and by faith take their place

therein. That becomes the foundation of God's purpose. Without that God cannot even make a beginning.

That is the letter to the Romans in brief. Our position by faith has to correspond to Jesus Christ crucified, dead, buried, risen and receiving the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of sonship, to be led into God's purpose.

The first letter to the Corinthians takes us one step past that, and shows us the kind of person who will move on to God's end, to God's purpose, and what is necessary in believers in order that there may come about full spiritual growth. The key word in Romans is "in Christ": "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus..." That is relationship. The key word to the first letter to the Corinthians is: "He that is spiritual..." The whole of that first letter has to do with spirituals in men and in things. The first letter to the Corinthians, then, has to do entirely with what a spiritual person is, how a spiritual person will act and speak; or, by contrast, how a spiritual person will not act and will not speak. The whole letter, chapter after chapter, sets carnality over against spirituality, and says, 'Now this is carnality, and it blocks the way to God's end, and is the cause of spiritual arrest'. It is necessary that a man shall be spiritual in the innermost reality of his being, that he shall be spiritually minded, and that this spiritual mind, the mind of Christ, shall govern him in every consideration.

One mark of the carnality of the Corinthians was their divisions, their natural preferences, likes and dislikes amongst people. Paul says, in effect, 'If you were spiritual there would be none of that. If you are going on to full growth then you have to get clear of all that'. So you go through the whole letter, and find that the finger of the Spirit lights through the Apostle upon point after point, revealing carnality, and how it works out to spiritual arrest. They are seen to be full of contradictions, and full of denials, and full of limitation. He that is spiritual is not like that. Spirituality is essential to full growth.

In the second letter to the Corinthians the key word is "the face of Jesus Christ". By inference we are taken right back to the first creation. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness..." (the first act in the creation), "...hath shined into our hearts to

give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". What is the object of the creation? Jesus Christ is the object of the creation. Through Him, and unto Him, and by Him all things were created. But that object was not realised in the first creation, and whereas light came first, darkness soon followed on the disobedience of man, and so God's purpose in the face of Jesus Christ was not recognised; it was shut out. Now God begins His new creation: "If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation". What is the first thing that governs the new creation? "God...hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". That is the key to everything.

How shall we reach God's purpose, God's end? How shall we grow in grace? By the continuous unveiling of God in Christ in our hearts. It has to go on, and so the word there heads up into this: "We, beholding (the word indicates continuous activity, maintaining our gaze, fixing our eyes)...are changed into the same image..." We are coming to God's end, the image of His Son, by the Holy Spirit keeping in our hearts a growing unveiling of the Lord Jesus.

We have the purpose of God set before us, we

know what the calling is, we understand why we are urged to give diligence to make our calling and our election sure. We know that, while we may not fall from salvation, we may fall from the inheritance. We know that we may lose God's full purpose by not going on. Otherwise why this urge? We receive our salvation through grace, and I am quite sure that it will be the grace of God that carries us through unto the purpose; for who of us would get through, but by the grace of God? Nevertheless, for the inheritance unto the adoption as sons, coming to the government of the inhabited earth to come, there has to be an attitude of pressing on to full growth, lest we fail of the calling. It is the failure to recognise that which has led so many people into a fog, and into perplexity, and I think, into false teaching concerning certain things in the New Testament. It is the inheritance which governs. Until we are really governed by God's full purpose we do not understand a great deal of the New Testament. In the purpose of God we are "foreordained unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ", the placing as sons for governmental purposes in the ages to come.

T.A.S.

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# "A Witness and Testimony"

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## All Things in Christ

No. 10.

### The Heavenly Man and the Word of God

READING: Matt. iv. 4; John vi. 63, 68; viii. 47; xiv. 10; 1 Peter i. 23, 25; Heb. iv. 12-13; 1 John iv. 17.

You will notice that what is said in the first four of these passages arises out of the fact that the Lord Jesus was the Heavenly Man. In the temptation in the wilderness, as recorded in the passage in Matthew, we see that it was following the opening of the heavens and the attestation from the Father, "This is my beloved Son..." that the enemy made his challenge to all that this designation of Christ as the Heavenly Man implied. "If thou art the Son..." The temptations had their foundation in the fact of the heavenliness of the Lord Jesus. In the passages in John's Gospel the same feature is seen. As we have already noted, John keeps in view the heavenliness of the Lord Jesus all the way through, from the first words of his Gospel to the end. The challenge of the Lord Jesus carries that same meaning: "Believest thou not that I am in the Father..." The Heavenly Man is brought before us at this point in relation to the Word of God.

We closed our previous meditation by dealing with the vital principle of redemption, and we

were saying that that principle, which is eternal life, makes the redemption that is perfect in Christ, progressive in us. Redemption is introduced into us with the receiving of eternal life, and as the life operates, works, and increases, we come increasingly into the good of redemption. The real values of redemption become ours in experience by the operation of the life of the Redeemer in us, the Redeemer operating in us by His own life.

#### Christ the Beginning of the Creation of God

In John xx. 22 we have an incident recorded which has given rise to a certain measure of perplexity: "...he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost..." We perhaps want an explanation of that act, and of those words, and I think the explanation is that what He did and said was in pattern, and not immediately in actuality; that is, it was a representative act on the part of the last Adam. John xx. sees us on resurrection ground with the Lord Jesus. We remember that it is written, "The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor. xv. 45). That must, in spiritual reality,

relate to His resurrection. Not in the full sense was He a life-giving spirit before the Cross, neither was He the last Adam before the Cross. All that was represented by, and summed up, in Him, but in the sense of generation, this only begins on resurrection ground. There in the fullest sense He becomes the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. So on resurrection ground He performs this representative or pattern act, and utters these representative words as the last Adam, fulfilling in the spiritual sense the words of Revelation iii. 14, "...the beginning of the creation of God." In the literal sense He was that at the beginning of this world. He was the beginning of the creation of God. That does not mean that He was the first one created by God; it means that He began the creation of God literally then, as to this world.

In the new creation He is taking that place in the spiritual sense: "...the beginning of the creation of God." In the beginning of the literal creation there was a breathing into man of the breath of lives. Now, as the last Adam, as a life-giving spirit, He breathes upon them. It is a typical act. It is the last Adam acting in a pattern-way in relation to the first members of the new creation, the beginning of the creation of God. He is typically infusing eternal life into the new creation. It is only a typical act, because the Spirit was not yet given. The full expression of it came later at Pentecost.

### **The Heavenly Man in Relation to the Word of God**

Here is life in relation to the Heavenly Man in the full sense. We now come to bring all this life principle in the Heavenly Man into relation to the Word of God. The Word of God is very closely related to this life, and this life is very closely related to the Word of God, both of them as in the Heavenly Man, the life and the Word. So much is this so that they are not things in Him, but He is them. He is the Word, and He is the life; the life and the Word are in Him as His very being. Yet the Word is utterance as well as person. If you have taken the trouble to study the technique of the point that is raised in the use of the words "Logos" and "rema", you know how difficult it is always to differentiate between the two. You know how they run into one another, and how very often they meet and are one. So it is that the person

has the word and the word is the word of the person. There is a difference, and yet they are both bound up with the person. We shall see as we go on what it means.

#### **(a) Begotten by the Word**

In the first place, as we have been saying, the Lord Jesus as the Heavenly Man was begotten through the Word. The angel visited Mary and presented her with the word of God, and waited for her to respond to it before there was any living result, and when, after consideration and fighting her battle through the problem and the difficulty, and the cost of it, she responded, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word", then the living Christ was implanted.

#### **(b) Tested by the Word.**

In the temptation in the wilderness, it is clearly indicated to us that, in the background of things, it was the Word of God that was governing the Lord. Every temptation was met with the Word of God: "It is written..." Life was contingent upon the Word of God: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. iv. 4.). In the Heavenly Man the life question is bound up with the Word of God. If you take the opposite of that, you know that the earthly man dies because he refuses the Word of God; his life depends upon the Word of God and his attitude toward it. Here the last Adam is taken up on the same basis, and inasmuch as He met the three temptations with the Word of God, it is perfectly clear that His life was bound up with the Word of God. It was the Word of God that was governing this whole experience, and its issue. The Heavenly Man was being assailed with a view to tearing Him out of His heavenly life, as it were, by getting Him in some way to refuse, or violate, or ignore the Word of God. He maintained His position as the Heavenly Man in life on the ground of the Word of God.

#### **(c) Governed by the Word.**

Not only was He begotten through the Word, and tested by the Word, but in the third place, Christ was governed throughout the whole of His life by the Word of God. All the Law and the Prophets apply to Him. Said He to Jewish

leaders, "Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me" (John v. 39). The suggestion there does not immediately affect our consideration, but is worth noting. In effect He was saying: In your searching of the scriptures for eternal life, it is the Person in the scriptures that you need to know; it is in Him in whom the scriptures are gathered up that eternal life is found. That is the force of the statement: "...these are they which bear witness of me." Again, when with the two on the way to Emmaus after His resurrection, it is said of Him that "beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

We mark the fact, then, that all the scriptures applied to Him. He embodied and fulfilled all the scriptures. How often will He say, while here on the earth, concerning a certain movement, a certain act, a certain experience, a certain statement, "...that the scriptures might be fulfilled..." If you have never taken out every instance in which that occurs, you should do so. It is worth gathering up.

### **The Relation of the Holy Spirit to the Word of God and the Heavenly Man**

Now I want you to note this. The Lord Jesus, in the whole of His life, was being governed by the Word of God. How necessary it was, then, for Him to walk in the Spirit, so that the Word of God should be fulfilled. Now what does that mean? Take, for example, the Old Testament. Do you suppose for one moment that every statement in the Old Testament was always present in the mental consciousness of the Lord Jesus, and that when He went to do something He referred to His manual, and said: 'Now shall I do this, or shall I do that? What does the scripture say I ought to do?' Yet every part of the scripture was controlling His life, and there was a sense in which He was responsible for everything there. It all applied to Him. But He was not carrying all the scriptures in His head, nor even in a book, and referring to his memory or His manual for His conduct, His utterances, His acts, His experiences, for what He allowed and what He did not allow, for what He did and what He did not. Although the Word of God was with Him richly, although He would have had a great knowledge of the

scriptures—and that becomes perfectly clear as we read His utterances—that is not the way in which the Word of God governed Him; as though He had to call scriptures to remembrance on every occasion and to act accordingly. He was moving in the Spirit of life, and as He did so He moved according to the Word of God. When necessary the Spirit of life brought the Word of God to His remembrance, and He was able to use it. How He did use it! But apart from any quoting of scripture, and apart from any present memory of the particular passage which governed any given incident, the Spirit was moving with life, in relation to the Word of God. He was governed by the Word of God, so that even when, as Man, He was helpless upon the Cross, unable to do anything, it says of those very conditions, "...that the scripture might be fulfilled..." Again, it is recorded that when He was dead on the Cross, and they came to break the legs of those crucified, finding Him already dead, they break not His legs, "...that the scripture might be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken" (John xix. 36). That Man is under the government of the Word of God in everything because of the Spirit possessing, because of the Spirit directing, and the Spirit taking responsibility.

I can see a danger there, and am going to safeguard what we are saying, but let us first of all stress this law. If we are walking in the Spirit, and are moving according to the life of the Heavenly Man, our lives will be ordered according to the Word of God. Sometimes we shall not know the scripture that applies to a given moment, but we shall know of something happening; we shall know that at that point we were checked; it was as though within us something said: That is not right, you will have to correct that statement; there is a flaw in that, and you will have to make that good. How often we have known that. Afterwards we have discovered where we were mistaken. The Spirit of life does not let anything that is contrary to the Word of God pass, if we are walking in the Spirit. Surely that should be a great comfort to us, and a great help.

### **The Word of God Never to be Set Aside**

But there is a danger of which we need to beware. What we have said does not mean that we can take up a course of trying to walk in the Spirit, and neglect the Word of God. We cannot

say: Well, to walk in the Spirit is all we need and we shall be according to the Word of God; we need not bother about that. There are a lot of people who live in what they call their "spirit". They "get it from the Lord". They get something, and act upon it, and afterwards it is discovered that it is a direct violation of the Word of God. How often we have met that. People get things "from the Lord", and do something which they think they got from the Lord, and it is as clear as possible that the Word of God is positively against what they have done.

Thus the matter needs safeguarding. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom..." (Col. iii. 16) as a basis for the Holy Spirit. If, however, you are doing that you will not always have the exact passage to hand to govern the thing of the moment, but the Holy Spirit will be making good in you what He knows to be the Word of God, and holding you up. How true that is. Some of us have found that our natural memories have in great measure broken down. Very often a misquotation of scripture does not touch doctrine at all, but the point is this, that there is a governing Intelligence which makes us know the Word of God, though we may not be able for the moment to give a particular passage in its exact phrasing or call it to mind. We are governed by it if we belong to the Heavenly Man. "As he is so are we in this world" (1 John iv. 17). Here is the Heavenly Man governed by the Word of God, inasmuch as there was life in Him.

What is true of the Head, is to be true of the members. If we are joined to the Heavenly Man, we become parts of that corporate Heavenly Man, and that same life is in us, and we shall walk by the Word. We shall be governed by the Word through the Spirit of life that is in the Word, and that Spirit of life is all-knowing, all-intelligent. I wish that all the Lord's people lived on that basis. It would save us from all that deadly heresy-hunting kind of thing; from always being suspicious, little, doctrinal watchdogs, keeping a look-out for anything that is erroneous, and producing a blight of death over everything. If we were but living in the Spirit, we should know in our hearts whether a thing were right or not, without projecting our analytical minds into things; the Spirit would bear witness in our hearts. That would be life and salvation. The other is a miserable existence for everybody.

Now you see the Heavenly Man, eternal life, and the Word governing throughout. What a difference there is between being governed by the letter and being governed by the Spirit. We may have the book; may possess all the letter; and may be constantly exclaiming, "To the law and to the testimony!" We may thus become very legal, checking up on the letter all the time. The Lord Jesus did not thus act, nor did the Apostle Paul. Zealous as they were for the scriptures, for the Word of God, utterly governed by the Word of God, the thing which mattered with them was the living Word. Said our Lord Jesus: "...the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life"; "...the flesh profiteth nothing" (John vi. 63). We can kill with the letter. We can kill with the Word, as the Word. Surely we want to be delivered from dealing with the scriptures as words, as letters, and to be brought into the place where it is the Spirit in the Word giving life. What a difference there is between those two realms. One leads to nothing but death, paralysis, to the chilling and blighting of everything; the other leads to a positive condemnation, to judgment which is necessary to slay the thing that is evil. It does not leave things in that blighted state without any meaning, which is all too often the case when it is merely a thing of the letter.

So you get the twofold aspect of the Word unto growth in Christ. Firstly, the Word is a Spirit-breathed utterance. That is what the Word of God must be, and not just something that has been written. Secondly, the Spirit of life associated with the Word. This raises a very big question, a question that perhaps it is almost dangerous to open in public in these days, and to answer which maybe would require a good deal of explanation. The question is this: How far is the written Word, as it stands, the Word of God? This Book can be taken hold of and the same fragment used in fifty different ways at the same time. The same passage of scripture can be the basis of a dozen different things, all of which are mutually exclusive and contradictory. Which of these dozen or fifty is the Word of God? You can take scripture as the letter like that, out from this Book, and you can say: This is the Word of God! How are you going to prove it? All these different people take the Word of God, and get a different meaning with a different result, act in a different way, and justify a different course, and the same

Word has brought about terrific conflict and opposition between different sections of people. How far is it the Word of God as it stands? My point is this, that I believe that something extra is necessary to make that the Word of God in truth, in fulness, and that is the Spirit of life in it. That Spirit of life (we are thinking of the Holy Spirit now, not an unintelligent abstraction) must Himself use, and apply, that Word, to make it the Word of God. I do not believe that you can get any Divine result by simply quoting scripture as scripture. The Holy Spirit has to come into that Word, express Himself as in it, and make it live before you get the Divine result, because of the object in view. A living Heavenly Man is not made by mere words, even though they be words of scripture. That is what people have tried to do. They have tried to make the Church by words of scripture, constitute the Church by what is here as written, and so you have half a dozen different kinds of Churches, all standing on what they call the Word of God, and the thing does not live. It is a living, Heavenly Man that God has in view, and to produce that, the Spirit must operate through the Word. "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life," said the Lord to His disciples. "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." On the part of Peter, the spokesman of these latter words, this was a word of discrimination. The Scribes and Pharisees had the scriptures. They claimed that everything they had and held was in the Word of God. Ah yes, but they knew them not as the words of eternal life. There is a difference. This life is in His Son. It has to be in a living relationship to the Lord Jesus that the scriptures are made effective.

#### **The Sovereignty of God in the Creative Word**

That works, in the first place, sovereignly in the direction of the unsaved. You may take the Word of God as it is written and preach it, but you have to leave the whole matter to the sovereignty of the Spirit. Preach it to a crowd of fifty, a hundred, a thousand, and to nine hundred and ninety-nine of the thousand the thing is as dead as anything can be. They see nothing, they feel nothing, but one in the thousand is sovereignly touched. That word is something more than an utterance, than letters, that word is spirit and life. That is no accident, no chance, but a sovereign act. The Spirit of God has come

into the Word in relation to that one. That is the foolishness of preaching, in a sense, that you have to preach, and have no guarantee that the many will be touched by the Word of God. You have to commit yourself to the waters, and believe that God will somewhere come into the Word and touch some life, though the majority should be left untouched. That is the extra element, the Spirit of life in the Word of God, sovereignly acting in relation to the unsaved.

That, of course, is the creative Word, and brings us to see that in the Heavenly Man the Word of God is God's act, and not just God's statement. In the Heavenly Man the Word of God is never a statement alone, it is an act. We say many things, and then we look round for the result, with the thought in our minds, 'What is the value of all this?' You have never, never to look for the result of God's Word in the Heavenly Man; it is there. You may not see it, but it is there. The Word in relation to the Spirit of life in Christ is an act; something is done; and when that Word has come by the Spirit of life, those to whom it has been directed by the intelligent Spirit can never again be the same, though they may seem to go on in the old way: "...the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John xii. 48). Something has been said; the Word has come, and the thing is done, never to be undone. Sooner or later those concerned are going to come right up against that, and it is all going to be dated back to that hour when the Spirit gave expression to the Word. That is a tremendous fact. That is the value of giving the Word in the Spirit, because it is an act. It is creative. It is something done, not something said. Oh, to recognise that the Word in the Holy Ghost is something done, not merely something said. God's Word is always God's act: "...the worlds have been framed by the word of God..." (Heb. xi. 3). The Word of the Lord *is* a blessing. It is not just saying, The Lord bless you. It is a blessing in itself; it brings the blessing. It is an act.

#### **The Life Principle Established in the Case of the Saved**

In the saved there is another side. The first side is creative, sovereign. Now in the case of the saved, where those concerned are the Lord's people, the operation of the Spirit in relation

to the Word of God is no longer purely sovereign. In the case of believers the Word is not given with a view to bringing about creation, for that is done. We stand because of the Word of the Lord spoken sovereignly by the Spirit into our hearts, having thus been made His children, begotten by the Word of God. That is a sovereign act, but from that time onward, that which is sovereign ceases and growth is by the Spirit of life in the Word ; but upon a basis that there is life in us to correspond to the life in the Word. The life in the one, or in the company, concerned is the basis of growth according to the Word of the Lord, which has life in itself. Take a simple illustration from our use of natural food. No matter how you may feed a corpse, you will get no development, no kind of growth. It is of no use feeding a dead man. There must be some life in a man that corresponds to the life in the food, takes hold of it, works with it, co-operates with it, before there can be growth. That is what we mean by the activity which bears the mark of sovereignty in the main ceasing. The sovereign act is something apart from ourselves ; it is the grace of God to sinners who can give nothing back. Now that the life is in us our growth is on the basis of the life within us co-operating with the life in His Word. You can preach to people who have not much light, and preach in the Holy Ghost, and may not get very much result because of the limited measure of life that is in them. But you get tremendous response to a living word when people are all alive unto the Lord, when there is life in them. Growth comes that way, the life in us corresponding to the life in the Word, forming the Heavenly Man.

The Spirit-accompanied Word imparts life, quickens into life where there is a dead state, and does it sovereignly ; but the Spirit-accompanied Word requires a response in the spirit in the case of those who have already been sovereignly brought into relation to Christ through the Word. The same life in the Word governs our lives as governed our new birth. The Lord Jesus was begotten truly of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of life, but by the Word, or through the Word. Now, for the governing of His life, the same life through the Word operated as in the birth ; that is, the same life that brought into being must be in the Word which governs the life, to bring that being to full growth. It is the life principle which is so

important. It is this newness, this freshness that is of such account—if you like, this originality. Do not misunderstand ; we are not using that word in the natural sense. We mean that in the birth by the Spirit of life there is something that never was before ; it is original, new. We are a new creation in Christ Jesus. We call it the “new birth”. It is not just something fresh, recent, but something that was not before.

In relation to the Word it has to be like that. The Word must come with all the force of something that never was before. There has to be a sense of Divine originality and freshness about it that is bringing to wonder, amazement. Again, you can test that. When the Word is in the hands of the Holy Spirit, though you may have read a passage a thousand times, and have had something from that word, you can come back to it again and say : Well, I never saw that before ! Why, this is alive with meaning and value beyond anything before ! There is all the difference between that, and the stale stuff that we put into books as the result of our Bible study. The Lord would have His ministers in the realm where their handling of the Word of God is in life. It is the Heavenly Man being governed by the heavenly life in the Word, so that everything is constantly new, constantly fresh, constantly original.

How true that is to experience. There have been times when we thought we knew all about a certain thing in the Bible ; we have talked about it tremendously, and it has been our theme for a long time. Then a period of time has elapsed when we have left it, and the Spirit of the Lord has led us to that again, and it is as though we have never seen that truth before. We find that we can come back to the old themes, as they are called, with such a newness. Other people may not realise what is going on in us. They may hear what amounts to the old things again, but they say : ‘There is such a new meaning, a new grip, that it is quite clear the Holy Spirit has not finished with that matter, and has more to say to us about it’. We have to be careful how we react mentally to things like that. We are so often tempted to take this attitude : Oh, well, I have spoken of that so often that people must be tired of it ! The Holy Spirit is saying : You say it again ; do not take any notice of what they think ; if they have heard it a thousand times, you say it ! And when you do so, there is something done which,

with all the earlier utterances of the same thing, has never been done before. Be careful of pigeon-holing anything in the Word of God, and saying that we have exhausted that. If you are dealing with the themes of the Bible, as such, you may as well pigeon-hole the whole thing right away. If you are moving in the Spirit with the Word of God, there will never be a time when any part of the Word of God becomes obsolete. It is the same new life that never was before, which came into us to constitute us a part of the Heavenly Man, which is so governed by the Word all the way along, unto constant increase, constant growth.

Remember, then, that it is a matter of life. Remember that doctrine comes out of life, and not life out of doctrine. The Church comes out of life, and not life out of the Church. It is not attachment to doctrine, nor attachment to the Church, but attachment to the Heavenly Man in a living way that is the vital necessity; and then you will get the doctrine and the Church. In the Word as we have it, the doctrine came after the life. The Church existed before the doctrine of the Church was given. Attachment to the Heavenly Man produced the doctrine of the Church. The Church came about by a living relationship, not by taking up a revelation of what the Church was, and seeking to put it into operation. Life comes first of all, and where life is found the rest will follow. It is of no use trying to impose the doctrine of the Church, or any other doctrine, upon people, if they are not alive unto the Lord. The Lord knows what He is doing. You cannot go about the world anywhere, not even amongst Christian people, with your full doctrine, your full revelation, and have the assurance that, as you give it out, they are going to leap to it. You have to go where the

Spirit leads you, for the Spirit knows exactly where there is a sufficiency of life to have prepared the ground, and what can respond to that which you have to give. How we would like to go out into the world and talk to all the Lord's people of what He has shown us, and give them the revelation of the Body of Christ! We should go and organise great gatherings and get people together, only to find that they look at us blankly and exclaim: This is strange doctrine! You cannot do it like that. Increase has to be on a basis of life; because doctrine does not come first, but life. You cannot get the Church by trying to get it! There has to be life, and life by its working forms the Church, becomes the realisation of the Church. The reversal of that order only leads to Babylon.

What is Babylon? Babylon represents the loss of the authority of the Word of God as a living thing. It was in the reign of Jehoiakim, the king who took his pen-knife and cut up the Word of God, that Judah began to be carried away into Babylon. When he repudiated the living authority of the Word of God, all the vessels of gold and silver were carried off to Babylon. It is a parable. It means that the Lord's people came into bondage, into captivity, into death, are out of the place of the Lord's appointment, and the Lord's ministry is not going on in life, because the vessels have departed, have all been taken away. Right up to that time they were going on with their sacrifices, going on with their Levitical order. But that is not the point. You can have the form of things, the system, and yet go to Babylon. It is the Word of the Lord as a spiritual and living thing, which keeps you free, clear, strong, out of Babylon.

T.A-S.

*As this issue goes to press we learn of the respite from the war which has been hanging over our heads. Such a war would have meant serious curtailment to many means of spiritual help. We have asked the Lord whether the time had come for this. He has postponed, but has made us realise how quickly our testimony might come to an end on the earth. We must earnestly seek to apprehend all His Divine intention in this staying. What has the Lord yet to do? His interests govern His sovereign acts!*

Editor.

# Life in the Spirit

No. 5

## Filled with the Spirit

There is a phrase in the New Testament with which we are very familiar. I refer to the phrase, "filled with the Spirit". I have been struck with the fact that the phrase occurs only in Luke's writings, with but one exception, and that is in the letter to the Ephesians.

Luke's object in his writings is to present Christ as Son of Man, as God's perfect Man. That we know to have governed his taking in hand to write his treatise to his friend Theophilus, a Greek, whose whole mentality circled round the ideal and perfect man, and who, therefore, in his whole make-up would be looking for such a man. In accordance with that mentality Luke took in hand to write a first and a second treatise to his friend, and in so doing his whole object and careful purpose was to set forth Christ as that Man. So that both in the Gospel and in the Acts we have the Man, Christ Jesus, or the Son of Man, particularly referred to.

### Man According to God's Mind

It is significant that with but one exception every occurrence of this phrase, "filled with the spirit" is in Luke's writings, showing, I think, quite clearly and conclusively that it is being filled with the Spirit which makes man what God requires him to be; or, to put that in another way, it is man marked out according to God's mind by being filled with the Spirit. The Man that is set forth by God as His mind for man, as His ideal, as the Man which answers to Him, is the Man filled with the Spirit. To put that again in other words, it is essential to be filled with the Spirit before there can be attainment unto that manhood as represented by the Lord Jesus. If there is to be a marking out by God of that which satisfies His thought in humanity, it must be according to this Man, the Son of Man, filled with the Spirit.

The exception is also very illuminating and significant, because that exception occurs in relation to the corporate man. In Ephesians we have the "one new man" brought into view, the corporate man, and in that connection there is to be a filling with the Spirit. So you see the principle holds good, whether in Luke or in Paul. That filling with the Spirit is the way and the basis of the realisation of what God has in view for man.

With that before us we are able to proceed, and once more come to recognise or to take a view of what it is the Lord is saying to us.

### Man in the Throne

The point which we have reached is, firstly, that God has perfected, in terms of Sonship, a human nature which He took upon Himself, and has taken that perfected human life, human nature to heaven. That is the first step. It may be necessary to repeat that, in speaking thus, we do not mean that there was anything in that particular humanity that was sinful, but just as a babe may be flawless, perfect as a babe, and yet has to grow in every sense, inwardly and outwardly, to become a perfect man, so Christ was perfected, not by reason of any imperfection in Him in a moral sense, but by reason of testing unto the full development of those perfect powers in His humanity. So in that sense the full-grown Man is in God's presence, the fully developed, perfect humanity.

### The Descent and Work of the Holy Spirit

The second thing is that the Holy Spirit has come in consequence of that. The Holy Spirit could never come to do His real work in this dispensation until that was established, and in consequence of the exaltation, the glorification of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit has come. The

Holy Spirit, therefore, from the outset is bound up with the Lord Jesus in heaven in His purpose. He has come in consequence of that to do in the Man corporately a two-fold thing.

Firstly, His work is to implant that Man, Christ Jesus, in His perfected humanity, as the indispensable, the irreducible minimum for the new creation. Against that everything that the enemy can do, every device, every subterfuge, will be set. The devices of the enemy are very often religious devices, and we find that one of the things which more successfully subverts this essential issue is religion. Religion can be, and has proved to be, the greatest enemy to the essential purpose of God. What are we continually meeting? (You will forgive me if I speak of a certain realm of things that is the only realm that can come under our survey, our purview, and it is not with a view to striking at that thing in particular, but we take it by way of illustration). We are constantly meeting people who, when asked if they have been really born again, will answer that it is not necessary, that they have been confirmed, or they have joined the Church, or something like that. They were baptised when they were infants, and regeneration, new birth, as an experience, goes by the board. It is a fact, however unsavoury it is to speak of. In this and in many other ways the enemy's most successful means of diverting from the issue is religion. Very often what is called the Church is put in the place of the essential, and so by any means within the range of his sinister and diabolical and supernatural resource the enemy seeks just to turn things at that point of introducing Christ into the believer. Once Christ is within you have very God to encounter, the Devil has to meet all that God stands for. It is a tremendous thing to have Christ within. It is indeed the very hope of glory. But see what substitutes there are for that! They are numerous.

The Holy Spirit has come, in the first place, to introduce Christ—who as Man has all the Divine alliance with Him—into the believer. We ought never to be satisfied until we have good reason to believe that this has actually taken place in the case of any soul with whom we have to do; not mental assent or agreement or any such thing, but that real thing which is regeneration.

All that union with Christ means is gathered up into this simple form, and presentation, of Christ introduced within, or, in other words, it is

Christ dwelling within our renewed spirits. That is deeper and more inward than our souls. Christ's main residence is not in our souls, because we still go on with reasonings and thoughts which are not Christ; feelings, passions and desires which are not Christ; willings, choosings, and actings. That is all soul. Christ is resident deeper than that. It is of the utmost importance to recognise that, because there are many who for various reasons have lost their mental balance, and then that fact causes them to imagine, feel, believe, say, and do things which are utterly horrible. But nevertheless in the deepest reality they are still God's children. It is simply the outer human fabric that is broken down, perhaps by excessive nervous strain, and they get into asylums. Are we to say that by reason of these misfortunes, these things which come to our humanity, they cease to be God's children? Not at all. Christ dwells more inwardly than in our souls, namely, in our renewed spirits. That is why it is so necessary that the real transaction should take place, so that whatever happens outwardly, whatever forces we may have to encounter, physical or mental or spiritual, the deepest fact remains, that in our spirits Christ abides. That is where sonship is. It is a matter of spirit union.

The second thing with reference to the Holy Spirit's coming is that, because Christ is one, the work of the Spirit makes all believers one Body in Christ. The introducing of Christ into a believer or into individual believers is not the introduction of so many Christs into so many believers, not a matter of there being as many Christs as there are believers. Christ remains one, and inasmuch as Christ is one and indivisible, and yet is introduced by the Spirit into a million believers, the Holy Spirit, therefore, makes of the million believers one Body in Christ. The Body is one because Christ is one. "There is one body, and one spirit...one Lord..." The Holy Spirit is, therefore, not occupied with individuals as individuals. The individual only comes in as a part of the Holy Spirit's purpose, as a part of that essential Body of Christ in which He is to have the full expression of Himself in the ages to come. That Body is called the Church, and no other Church is known in the Scriptures. The only Church recognised by the Word of God is that Body of believers in whom Christ is resident, making them one corporate Body.

“As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is the Christ”. (1 Cor. xii. 12). The article is left out of the Authorised Version, but in the Greek it is there. It has been recognised that the Greek article in the New Testament is a thing of very great importance. Its presence or its absence means something far more than the presence or absence of a mere part of speech. It governs a far-reaching truth. What is the Christ as viewed from this standpoint? The Christ is a Head and members, all one Body

The Holy Spirit is here, firstly, to introduce Christ into the believer, and in so doing He is forming in all who believe one Christ, constituting one Body, and that is the Church as in the New Testament.

### The Believer's Primary and Comprehensive Obligation

When that has been recognised, then believers are committed to certain obligations in relation to Christ within. The first and comprehensive obligation (the obligation which includes a great deal more) is that the believer must forsake the pre-new-birth ground, and all that that means. That is only another way of saying that the believer must forsake the whole ground of what he is by nature. The Lord Jesus used very simple figures of speech to embody great truths. He could never say what the truths were that He was embodying because there was no spiritual understanding, the Holy Spirit had not come. Afterward, when the Holy Spirit had come there was illumination and enlargement of the fragmentary things that He said. He packed all this great truth of forsaking the ground of nature into a few brief words: “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me”. “Who-soever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple (taught one)”. “Deny himself”! You can take hold of that phrase and talk about self denial, and apply it to all sorts of things, whereas the Lord Jesus meant by that the repudiating of the whole ground of natural life, and not to be governed by it at all. It is Christ that has cut that off by the Cross, put the Cross against that, and by the meaning of the Cross said to all that is ourselves by nature, ‘You have no standing here, you

are not the governing thing here’. When you have done that you can become His disciple; that is, you can become His taught one, you can enter into His school to learn what it is not to live on that ground, but on His ground. That is our comprehensive obligation, to forsake the pre-new-birth ground and to abide on the ground of Christ.

Here again the Lord Jesus put into an illustrative form the great truth of having our lives on His ground. “Abide in me”. “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me”. The illustration is perfectly clear and simple, but you need all the illumination of the Holy Spirit through the later word to show what He was talking about. What is abiding in Christ? It is not abiding in yourself, it is getting outside of yourself on to His ground, so that He governs everything. That is very simple, but vital.

### Walking by the Law of an Inward Life

This also has several phases. One is that, since the Holy Spirit has brought Christ within, we have to live and to move henceforth by a new walk with the Lord. John said that we were to walk even as He walked, that we should walk even as He walked. How did He walk? His own statements about His walk are perfectly clear, that He abode in the Father, had His life in the Father, lived by the Father, did nothing out from Himself, but whatsoever the Father did. It was deliberate, persistent walking in the Father; in other words, by inward relatedness and communion, fellowship, oneness with the Father. That is how He walked. So that ours is to be a life in which we move in all things by an inward walk with Christ, as differing from walking by an outward order, an outward system of things. There is a system of Christianity to which we are expected to conform if we are Christians. It is the thing that is set up and established, and as Christians we are supposed to conform to it. That is not the first consideration, and that may be misleading. Our walk is not according to any outward rule or system or order in the first place. Our life has to be inward, with the Lord. We must recognise that everything is now to come from the inside, from the Lord within. That means a great deal more than the word may convey.

This can be illustrated by taking certain instances. There was the whole established

Jewish system with its headquarters at Jerusalem, and, as a Jew, it was expected of the Lord Jesus that He would be in complete conformity to that, and under its government. So at a certain time when there was a feast at Jerusalem His brethren said to Him that He should go up to the feast, and show Himself openly. 'If He had nothing to be ashamed of why should He remain apart in secret; and, in effect, He would be misunderstood if He did not, would be regarded as a disloyal son of Abraham'. From every standpoint of human reasoning He should have done it. There was everything to support His doing it from the outward standpoint. Truly He would be misunderstood. But there were, in addition, all the other considerations of how others might be led astray, and made to stumble should He not do so; and, after all, was not that the system which God Himself brought into being, did not that originate with God? His answer was: "You go up...I go not up..." When they had gone up, then went up Jesus also. It is so plain, you cannot miss the significance of it. It simply works out in this way, that He refused to be governed by any established thing on the outside, and stood His ground to be governed by the Lord, by the Father. His position was this: Father, do you want Me there? Not, Is it expected of Me? Is it the thing that is done? Is it a matter of conforming to the accepted and established order of things? He refused to move until He knew that the Father wanted Him there, and when He knew that He went up, and not before. It did not matter what people thought about it, He was governed inwardly by the Father, and not by something put on Him which was the common and accepted and established thing.

Christ dwelling within puts the believer upon that basis, henceforth not to be governed by Christianity as something which has been constituted as a world order and system, but by the Lord within. The Holy Spirit has come to do that, to bring that about, that we should live from the Lord within. That means, of course, knowing the Lord within.

### Submission to the Holy Spirit

Secondly, this means for the believer that he (or she) must submit to the training of the Spirit of the Father, by which we come to sonship, or to maturity, which means, of course, spiritual

intelligence, spiritual strength, spiritual fulness. That is a large statement. Let us break it up.

We must submit ourselves to the training of the Father through the Spirit. The Spirit of the Father would deal with us as with sons. The Holy Spirit will take up this work of training. It is called chastening in the letter to the Hebrews. It simply means child-training. That work will be quite definite. The Holy Spirit will deal with us if we are going to accept this life of inward union with the Lord, and we shall not graduate in five minutes. The trouble with so many is that they foreclose the matter because it seems so slow. Let us remember for our comfort that the Lord usually hides from the individual concerned what He is doing in that individual. If you knew that you were getting on and getting so much better, you would begin to glory in the experience, make something of the thing, and God only knows how this self impinges upon His holy things, and how in its horrible pride, which is such an abomination, it is always ready to spoil the precious fruit, to take and have for itself. So the Lord usually hides from us, and our sense is of getting a great deal worse rather than a great deal better, being a great deal less rather than a great deal more. May it not be that the fact that we are not feeling just the same as we did feel, but are feeling worse, feeling less, feeling poorer than ever, is a mark that the Lord is working.

The point is that we must submit ourselves to this training work of the Holy Spirit, concerning living on Christ's ground and not on our own. It will be a process, a long-drawn-out process, which may never be finished while we are on this earth, however long we stay here. There may be a great perfecting to be added in the moment in which we are translated. Nevertheless, whether much is crowded into a short time, or whether this means that the Lord has to take account of our slowness of response, and perhaps rebellion, and has to spread it over a long period, the fact remains that the Holy Spirit is going to teach us, if we will let Him, the difference between living on our own ground and living on Christ's ground.

We must submit first of all in one inclusive act, and put ourselves into the hands of the Holy Spirit, and then as He goes on with His graduated process we shall be called upon again, and again, and again, to say, Yes! to the Holy Spirit. We shall be smitten; we shall fall; we

shall stumble ; we shall fail in this matter, but the Holy Spirit will use those very things for our education. We shall learn, just as children learn, not to do certain things by the suffering which comes in doing them.

All this is leading to maturity, that is, to spiritual intelligence. It is very important to the Lord to have spiritual intelligence in His people, in His children. That is mainly because of responsibility that is going to rest upon them. There will be responsibility in this life, the helping and enlightenment of others ; for in the process we are even now coming to a priestly position, and the office of a priest, you will remember, was always to instruct. A priestly position is bound up with sonship. It means spiritual strength. Oh, that we had a clearer perception of the difference between natural strength and spiritual strength ! So often the greatest spiritual strength comes through the naturally weak, in those who have been most utterly weakened by God in themselves.

The Lord's end is fulness : " ...the fulness of him that filleth all in all " ; " Ye are made full in him ". Experimentally this comes by the teaching and training of the Holy Spirit, to which we must submit ourselves. That submission is something that we must recognise from first to last. We shall only defeat the ends of the Lord's dealings with us if we are other than submissive to Him.

#### The Believer's Relationships

The next thing is that our relationships are to be governed by Christ within. You notice that at the beginning we divided between the individual and the corporate. Now we have been speaking about that which relates to the individual ; we pass on to recognise that which relates to the corporate. Because Christ is within by the Spirit our relationships have to be governed by that fact. This means two or three things.

Firstly, it means that a basis of relationship must be recognised, laid down, and settled as a final governing law. Christ is within all believers. If they are truly born anew Christ is within by the Spirit. We must, as believers, have it clearly settled that this is the basis of our relationship. As we look at each other, we must not be governed by what we see on the outside. It is an established law that our relationships are now on the basis of Christ within us. That is where we start.

That means, in the outworking, that we must keep to that basis, and not be moved by people's natures. That works in two ways, according to the kind of person that is met with. All is very easy, of course, when people are nice, and kind, and considerate, and gentle, and thoughtful, and open. It is not difficult to go on with them. But that has very often carried people on to a purely natural level and has been disastrous. Much havoc has been wrought in lives by that. The nice kind of people become the centre of a circle, and others attach themselves to such because they are so nice, and in the end it means disaster. In our going on with one another we are not to be carried away by the niceness of one another. We are not to be influenced by that at all. That is very dangerous. Beware that nature on that side is not the ground of relationship. Absalom was a very nice fellow, and he won the hearts of the men of Israel with kisses and fair words, and was probably a fine fellow to look at ; but you know the result of that.

On the other hand, we are not going to be governed by what believers are naturally in the opposite way. Our relationship is not to be governed by what we see in one another which is so difficult, that against which we naturally revolt. We are not going to wash our hands of one another and say we cannot get on together. Now this is very practical. It is going to demand something from us. That is not the basis of our relationship at all.

We are not to be governed by people's natures, one way or the other, if they are the Lord's children, but on the basis that Christ is within.

#### The Importance of Growth for Fellowship

Then further, there must be spiritual growth for spiritual fellowship. You can be related without the more positive thing of fellowship. The relationship remains, but now you are moving in fellowship, and there must be spiritual growth for real spiritual fellowship. Fellowship is intended to be the outcome of our relatedness, and a relatedness which does not lead to fellowship is bereft of its beauty and its fruitfulness, and of its real purpose. We cannot go on with one another beyond the point of a common basis, a common ground. I cannot go on with you simply on the ground of your wanting to go on with the Lord, while all the time there is the preponderance of yourself ; and you cannot go on with me on that ground. We can only go on

together in so far as there is a common ground of Christ. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" It is not a question of, Can two be related except they be agreed? Yes, they can. You can have children of the same parents, in the same family, and thus related by one blood, yet they may not be walking together. The question of walking together is a matter of going on, making progress. You can only walk together in so far as you are agreed, as you have common ground. If one stops short and the other goes on, fellowship is limited between those two to the point of advance. If one goes on in the flesh and the other goes on in the Spirit, at the point where their both going on in the Spirit ends their fellowship ends, not their relatedness. We must not be governed by people, though they be Christian people. We must not be governed by a system of Christianity, Christian system though it be. We must be governed by the Lord the Spirit in everything.

That is where fruitfulness is. If we get that ground of moving together in the measure of the Spirit we shall be on the ground of absolute effectiveness. There are so many things involved in this. So often a person sees something mentally, grasps something, gets it from someone else, and essays to go on in that, but that thing has never been wrought into their being, they have it secondhand. It has never been wrought in their being by chastening, discipline, training of the Holy Ghost, and come forth from within them. We want to be sure in such matters that the thing is inwrought of the Holy Ghost.

It may seem difficult. You may think this is going to mean a lot of thinking out, and always being on the alert. No. These are the issues, this is the working of things. You need not take hold of all these details, all this technique of life in the Spirit. The secret is that the indwelling Lord governs, and that is possible to everyone. We

have here put before us spiritual facts, and then it is for us to give ourselves to the Lord to make those things alive in us. All this is the outworking of a basic thing, and it is only intended to point out the basic thing, because of the dangers of artificiality, unrelated, false positions, which will inevitably lead to disaster. We must give ourselves to the Lord to teach us, it may be slowly, and through painful experience, nevertheless unto the greatest value to Him and to all His interests, what life in the Spirit is. That involves a great deal more than the phrase itself would convey.

What is life in the Spirit? If you take that as a phrase, as an idea, then you may feel that it is a sort of power in you just swaying you this way or that. That is not good enough. What is the Holy Spirit doing? To what is He working? What is He after? The Holy Spirit only operates in relation to glorifying the Lord Jesus, in all the meaning of His Manhood at God's right hand, and it is His to bring that Man, Christ Jesus, that Divine Man, into us to take our place. It is the constituting of another Person in us, other than ourselves, with His own thoughts about things, His own ways of doing things other than ours, and we, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, have to come to the place where, steadily and surely, by our submitting to the operation of the Holy Spirit, He takes our place. It is a process, but that is what the Holy Spirit is after, to put Christ where we have been in that sense.

Remember that everything is to be governed by Christ within, and everything will be determined as to its value, its genuineness by the measure of Christ that is in it; not by what we do for Christ, but by the measure of Christ Himself in it. Everything is determined by that, and must be so.

T.A-S.

Lord Jesus, Intercessor,  
 O teach us how to pray:  
 Not wave-like, rising, falling  
 In fitful clouds of spray.  
 The mighty tides of ocean  
 A deeper secret know,  
 Their currents undefeated move  
 Whatever winds may blow.

Lord Jesus, Intercessor,  
 Creator of the sea,  
 Teach us the tide's great secret  
 Of quiet urgency.  
 Spindrift of words we ask not;  
 But, Lord, we seek to know  
 The conquering patience of the tides  
 Whatever winds may blow.

# The Testimony of God as Seen in the History of the Ark

## A Précis of Spoken Messages

The ark in the Old Testament is known both as the "ark of covenant" and the "ark of testimony". The word "testimony" is well known in the New Testament sense, but in the Old Testament it is quite differently used. We are accustomed in thought to "the testimony of God", "the testimony of the Lord", "the testimony of Christ", or "the testimony of Jesus". In the Old Testament the testimony is given in connection with the ark.

The two tables are the testimony (Ex. xxxi. 18; xxxii. 15; xxxiv. 29). The tables of the testimony are put into the ark, and the ark becomes the ark of testimony (Ex. xxv. 22; xxvi. 33-34; xxx. 6; xxxi. 7; xxx. 35; xl. 3, 5, 21.).

The ark was set behind the veil, and because of that the veil became the veil of testimony (Lev. xxiv. 3).

Because of the tables, and the ark, and the veil, the whole tabernacle became the tabernacle of testimony (Ex. xxxviii. 21; Num. i. 50; ix. 15; x. 11).

The testimony is the law. We are accustomed to associate the word "testimony" with witnessing and testifying on our part, and have forgotten something about the testimony which is purely God's. In Psalm cxix. the Psalmist said that he rejoiced to obey God in His command, His law, His precepts, His statutes, but he also said he rejoiced to *do* the testimony of God.

*This testimony is a testimony to the nature of God.* In one place the testimony is associated with the holiness of God. It is firstly the testimony to what God desires of His people, that is, absolute holiness. God demanded something far greater than the immediate "ten words", the decalogue. No one can come to God producing something less than absolute holiness.

*The testimony of God is that it cannot be contained in anything other than Christ.* Those two

tables could not be found anywhere except in the ark. It is only in that ark that you have the gold, and *our* wood is not acacia. No man can do the will of God out of his own heart. It is in Christ Jesus that you find the perfect will of God is fulfilled, and so He is the only one who could say, 'My delight is in the will of God'.

Those tables in the ark are primarily God's testimony, not *my* testimony. But how can I enter into this testimony? We say we are going to be witnesses for Christ. We can be witnesses by being joined in Christ, by being united into Christ, and by having His will fully worked out in us. Then the testimony of God will become our testimony.

That is why there are two aspects of the testimony in the Word of God. In the Old Testament the aspect is primarily that of our obedience to Him. In the New Testament it is what we set before others. The whole must be worked out in us, and then we shall find that we can bear this testimony to others.

### The Foundations of Testimony

Then you have two things which have nothing to do with the covenant: the pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded (Ex. xvi. 33-34; Num. xvii. 3-4, 10). They were both put into the ark. It is distinctly said that the manna was put before the testimony, and that the rod was put before the testimony. Manna speaks of the death of the Lord. The Lord in John vi. spoke of the manna as a symbol of His flesh and blood. So manna is typical of the food of the children of God secured through His death. The rod of Aaron typifies resurrection. It is a simple, dead staff, put before the testimony, and it budded, and blossomed and bore fruit. It is a life out of death. Manna speaks of life out of death. The rod speaks of ministry out of life. This is the basis of all testimony for God.

Before God the testimony in the ark is but the two tables, but here is some food of the Israelites and the rod of a man entering into the ark. Our part in the testimony is not something we have by nature, something we can do or be ; it is in the death, and based on the resurrection, of Christ.

In the beginning of the work of God, God must be the originator ; in the course of things God must be the worker ; then in the end of the work you will find it to be quite natural that everything is for the glory of God. Our trouble is this, that knowing that the beginning of the work must be according to the will of God, and that the end is to glorify God, we forget that in the course of its outworking all must be from the power of God.

It is a testimony for God based upon power coming out from death to resurrection. The natural rod will not naturally bud. It must pass through a state of death, and then life is given by God out of death. The trouble with us is that we cannot endure that night before the end ; we want to keep going ; we want to have resurrection life before that night comes upon us. But the rod has to be put before God for a whole night. For us that night may extend to months, and perhaps years, doing nothing ; but that night will be a real basis for God to carry out His resurrection purpose in us. Praise the Lord, we have nothing to do with this testimony ; it is altogether of Christ Himself. All we have to do is to carry Him along. I like to think of the floor of the tabernacle, which was desert sand. It is here the testimony of Christ is to be borne. It all concerns our pilgrim life before the Lord.

Throughout our pilgrimage we must have the staves in the rings of the ark. We must not have the staves packed away in some place, but they must be in the rings all the time, so that throughout this desert life we have a "ready-made" testimony. I do not think any Christian can bear a testimony without its being ready-made. You cannot hurry up and do it when the time comes ; it must be ready-made.

May the Lord lead us on to know more and more what His testimony is. It is His Son, our Lord Jesus.

### The Ark of Jehovah

After the wilderness journey the tabernacle with the ark was brought to rest in Shiloh.

*Josh. xviii.* 1, 8-10 : In the time of Joshua, Shiloh was definitely chosen by the Lord to be the centre of the camp in the land of Canaan.

*Judges xviii.* 31 : In the time of all the Judges the tabernacle of God is in Shiloh.

*I Sam. i.* 9, 24 ; *iii.* 3 : The tabernacle was in Shiloh and the ark still in the tabernacle.

With these in mind we return to something else :

The Israelites have the tabernacle of God in their midst and the ark of God in the tabernacle. Everything in the tabernacle depends on the ark. It seems impossible to imagine the ark could be dissociated from the tabernacle, but history shows that this was so.

In the time of the Judges the Israelites sinned, and in the first book of Samuel you find, on the one hand, Eli, a man with a real faith in God but not much life, and he is an illustration of dead orthodoxy. Then, on the other hand, you have two of his sons, illustrating worthless ministers of the Lord. Then you have the whole of the Israelites serving strange gods.

So the people are not living up to their privileges, and the ministers are either in dead orthodoxy or are worthless to the Lord by their sinning against the ministry.

Then you find there is a war going on, and the Israelites, instead of humbling themselves and finding the cause of their defeat, brought the ark of God out from the tabernacle and sought to bring it into battle, because they thought they could win in that way. They thought they could despise God in their part of the covenant and yet expect the Lord to fulfil His part of the covenant (*I Sam. iv.* 3). Before they did this they lost 4,000 men, and after they brought out the ark 30,000 were smitten, and the ark was carried away into the land of the Philistines. (*I Sam. iv.* 10-11).

In chapters 5 and 6 we see the ark did something to the Philistines which the Israelites themselves could not do. God is out for vessels, but when He cannot find a vessel He will do something Himself.

Many times we fail, which means there are idols somewhere, and then God hands us over to defeat. We think that God for His glory must deliver His people, but God is keener to vindicate His holiness than to uphold His glory

before men. When a servant of God has failed terribly we would ask the Lord to cover it up for His glory's sake, but God will let His people be defeated in the eyes of the world to show that He is not associated with unholiness. He is willing to let His ark be taken, to show He is not associating Himself with the cause of His people when they have done something contrary to His holiness.

Once the ark of God left Shiloh it never returned. The tragic thing about Shiloh is that there you have the tabernacle of God, but without the ark. It is a type of what is going on to-day. The tabernacle (the Church) proclaims the death of Christ, the power of the Spirit; that the Lord Jesus is High Priest, the food and the light of His people; but the people are not serving God wholeheartedly, they are "every-one doing that which is right in his own eyes" (Judges xxi. 25). On the other hand the ministers are worthless to the Lord. We must not think the ark is still in the tabernacle. Organised Christianity as such has no testimony to-day.

The ark when it came out of the tabernacle went to different houses, to individuals. The testimony is now there with a few. If you want a big thing go to the tabernacle in Shiloh, but the ark is not there. The place of the presence of the Lord Jesus is where the testimony is to His Name. The saints have to choose to-day between a big tabernacle and a small place.

Psa. lxxviii. 56-60: "God forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh" (verse 60). The ark is out, so the tabernacle is useless. As soon as you lose the testimony of Christ the system is dead.

Jeremiah vii. 12-14: Here God is going to forsake the temple as he forsook the tabernacle, because the people persisted in the same thing.

Jeremiah xxvi. 6, 9: "I will make this house like Shiloh". Shiloh has been a warning to the whole House of Israel for many years.

Where are we staying? In Shiloh, priesthood is still going on; there are still offerings; there is forgiveness of sins. There are still those in the organised system who receive forgiveness of sins, and some who personally know a sense of the holiness of the Lord; still some have a little light (the lamp shining in the Holy Place); to some the Lord is still food. If there were nothing at all in the organised thing it would be easier for us. But there is something beyond, and those who have known the testimony of God concerning His Son will find that organised

Christianity will not satisfy. Then you will say, 'Lord, I am willing to follow the ark, although I have to forsake the tabernacle'.

Solomon built the temple, with a new altar, a new sea, a new table, a new lampstand, a new incense altar; but there was one thing which was not new, the ark. The tabernacle is that which is in the wilderness, a tent; moveable, not fixed, not settled. The temple is in Jerusalem, the capital city, and it is something fixed, settled. One is the Church of to-day; the other is the Church in the millennium.

Solomon is the king of peace. Everything that is millennial is typified by Solomon. In the millennium we shall have much more of the preciousness of Christ. Thus in the temple there is a new altar, a new laver (known as sea), a greater appreciation of the power of the Spirit. To-day we only have the earnest (represented in the tabernacle) of the coming age. In the temple everything is enlarged, but there is something which cannot be enlarged, and that is the ark, the testimony of His Son. He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever".

The ark is coming to rest finally in the temple, where it will have the central place, but to-day the question is, What are we going to do with the ark?

David found out the value of the ark. Then he brought it to Jerusalem, out of the house of Obed-edom and put it in a tent (I Chron. xv. 1).

I Chron. xvi. 39-40. The tabernacle has been removed from Shiloh to Gibeon. In Gibeon worship still goes on "according to all that is written in the law of the Lord", but the testimony is elsewhere (ch. xv. 29).

Then David passed away, and Solomon came in, and he went to the tabernacle in Gibeon, although the ark was in Jerusalem. (II Chron. i. 3-4). There are still some Solomons going to the tabernacle!

That night when Solomon was in Gibeon the Lord appeared to him (verse 7). Similarly there is still a measure of Divine things in organised Christianity. The Lord answered Solomon's prayer by giving him wisdom, and then Solomon returned back to Jerusalem. This is the first thing he does after he has got wisdom (verse 13).

When a soul is really taught of God to-day, has wisdom from above, he will see that the most important thing is the ark of covenant, which is the ark of testimony, which means the eternal purpose of God in His Son.

Our testimony is nothing less than the Son of God—even more than His works. “Strength” and “glory” are used to describe the ark. There is something about the Lord which is altogether above His works, and there you have the ark. Unless we are brought into that we are still living in Gibeon. The ark is going to be in Jerusalem for ever. In the millennium God will have the whole thing done, but the faithful soul to-day will put the testimony of the Lord in its original place. Although we cannot have a temple to contain it, at least we can have a tent.

We must not wait for everything to happen in the millennium. The whole must be carried out by us in principle and in spirit. In the millennial kingdom there will be enlargement to the whole universe, but to-day the kingdom of God is with individuals. The kingdom of God will only come by those who introduce it to-day. Are we pitching a tent for Him in Jerusalem, before the actual temple comes? This is what is known to us as overcoming.

W.N.

## The Sanctuary of God

From a Series of Meditations in the Book of Exodus

READING : Exodus xxvii. 1-8 ; Hebrews x. 3-10 ; Romans xii. 1-2 ; I Timothy ii. 5-6.

### The Great Altar

We come now to the next thing in the order as set forth in this part of the book ; that is, the great altar, and we notice that we move now from the door of the sanctuary right to the gateway of the court, the first place of any contact with God, and that is at the altar.

That movement is a complete movement. There is that which, as we saw in our last meditation, stands between, a thing of very great importance, but it is not mentioned here. We are taken right from the door to the altar, and that carries its own great spiritual significance.

### The Goal is First Brought into View

God has from His side commenced with the sanctuary, because God always begins with His end. That is to say, He brings His final object into view, and then works toward that. And so He has brought the sanctuary first into view, set it forth and dealt with it, and then He moves out to deal with that which leads to it.

The Church—Christ and his members in perfect union and glory—is God’s supreme object. That is God’s end, and with that God begins. You will notice that whenever you are contemplating things from God’s side that is His method.

When things are contemplated from our side the method is reversed. You take the letter to the Ephesians, for instance, and there you have everything contemplated from God’s side, that is, from the heavenly standpoint. This, indeed, is the difference between the writings of Peter and Paul. Peter’s writings contemplate us as pilgrims and strangers on the earth ; Paul’s writings contemplate us as already seated together in the heavenlies in Christ. One is the earthly aspect of things, and the other is the heavenly. The one presents things as viewed from our position ; the other presents things as viewed from God’s position. So that when you take up the letter to the Ephesians you are viewing things entirely from the Divine standpoint, and what you find right at the commencement of that letter is the Church as represented in completeness before the foundation of the world. You must remember that all that is in the letter to the Ephesians bears a corporate character. It is a corporate law that governs the whole letter, and while it is of individual application, all that is said there is said in a corporate and related sense. Thus when it says at the outset we were “chosen in him before the foundation of the world”, it is a reference to the Church. It is the Church that was chosen in Him before the foundation of the world ; from the Divine standpoint you have the end

at the beginning. Before anything else in the way of process is dealt with you have the end presented, and God always starts with His end. He always introduces what He is finally after and then begins to work toward that. So in this order in the book of Exodus, the first order as unfolded here (for you will have the order changed later) it is God speaking, not man making. You have the sanctuary mentioned, and then you move to that which points to the sanctuary, the way into the sanctuary.

### **The Cross (Altar) the Way of Realization**

The point is that the Church is God's supreme object. That is God's end. But now the Church is only possible by the Cross. The Church demands the Cross both for its existence and for its character. It is the Cross which makes the Church possible as an entity, and it is the Cross which gives the Church its essential character. In other words, the Church is based upon what the Cross means.

Now that is our great point at this time ; to that we have to come back ; with that everything is related. The Cross issues in the Church ; otherwise it has missed its meaning. It is intended to lead on to the Church. The Church is based upon the Cross ; otherwise it is not God's Church, not the Church according to God's thought. We see, then, why there is this direct movement from the door of the sanctuary right through the court to the very gate, where we find the great altar.

The altar is said to be the place where God comes out to speak with sinful man. It is not the same speaking as in the Most Holy Place, where it is a matter of fellowship, communion, and the revelation of His heart to man for man's government, for the direction of his life, for the bringing of man into all the thought of God. That is the speaking in the Most Holy Place. But here it is another kind of speaking, shall we say, a more elementary speaking, a speaking that has to do with foundations. You will see this if you turn to Exodus xxix. 42-44. This is what is said : " I will meet with the children of Israel there ". It is God coming out. In the case of the Most Holy Place it is man coming in, but this is God coming out, and the altar is the place at which God comes out in grace to sinful man. The very dimensions and constitution of the altar speak of that truth. He speaks in grace to sinful man.

Now the altar is five cubits by five cubits, and three cubits high, and it is made of brass. Five is the number that typifies grace, as we have seen, three is Divine perfection or Divine fulness, while brass stands for judgment unto righteousness. There are all the terms of grace. God (that is three) ; grace (that is five) ; brass (that is judgment unto righteousness). God speaks, but He speaks, as that passage in Timothy shows, in connection with one who has mediated between God and man by the offering of Himself a sacrifice, one who has given Himself for sin, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God. So that what God says at the altar, as He comes out to sinful man, is concerning righteousness provided on the ground of sin atoned for. Pardon, peace, reconciliation, are the words of grace in which He speaks to sinful man in the great altar. This is the foundation of the sanctuary, the first thing in relation to the Church. The Church is built on that ; the Church takes its character from that ; the Church has its existence because of that ; that leads to the Church, makes the Church possible.

But that is not all. We have to get inside all that and see really what it means, and note how comprehensive and inclusive the altar is.

### **The Supreme Meaning of the Altar (Cross)**

In the first place it is the altar of whole burnt-offering. Other kinds of offerings will also be offered upon it, as, for example, the sin-offering and the trespass offering, each having its own significance, but it is primarily the altar of whole burnt-offering. The whole burnt-offering was one which all went up to God. Nothing was reserved from this offering, but all was consumed. The one and only issue of every such offering was that God smelled a sweet savour, that a cloud of smoke went up to God, and that is all there is of it. After that only ashes remained ; it was a whole burnt-offering. We are speaking of the comprehensiveness and inclusiveness of this altar.

Then the size of it is also significant. It is not a small thing. To convey some idea of the size of this altar, let me remind you that all the vessels of the Holy Place could be placed inside this altar ; the table of shewbread, the candlestick, the golden altar, all could be fitted inside this brazen altar. It was large enough to comprehend them all. That is not merely a technical fact, but there is a relatedness in this ; for all those things

are spiritually found to be bound up with this altar. They have their place in this altar, and in a spiritual sense they are the outcome of this altar. All that the table, and the lampstand, and the golden altar stand for comes out of this great altar, has its virtue there. This is a comprehensive thing, and an all-inclusive thing.

What, then, is the meaning of it? What is the comprehensiveness? Hebrews x. explains what the comprehensiveness of this altar is. Verse 8 presents a summary of our Lord's judgment of the order He found on His coming into the world. "Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifice for sin thou wouldest not... which are offered according to the law". That is a reference to this repeated offering of sacrifices under the law. "Then said he..." When? When He recognised that this sort of thing was not getting to God's end, was not effecting God's purpose. All these offerings, and the blood of bulls and of goats, were not taking away sin, nor producing a conscience void of offence toward God. All this was only typical, and without real inward virtue, power, dynamic. There was no deliverance, and really it was not bringing man to God. Then, when He recognised that, when He knew that, "Then said he (now He is coming to put something in the place of all that, to do something which gets to the end appointed by God, indicated by all that, but never reached by it) Lo I come to do thy will, O God". What is the great altar? What is the inclusiveness and comprehensiveness of the great altar? It stands to speak of God's will wholly and perfectly done.

Now that is comprehensive. It says this: The will of God involves, implies, carries with it, utterness for God. All goes up to God; there is nothing left but ashes; all is utterly for God. That is the altar, and that is the will of God. The will of God is a comprehensive thing. It bounds the universe. God projected His will concerning His Son, and there was another will which rose up in this universe against that will of God and said, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God"; "I will be like the Most High". That was the expression of a will that is against the will of God concerning His Son. The asserting of that other will against the will of God meant the rending and rifting of a heavenly order, and Satan in whom that other will was found was hurled down with his hosts. Now the next appearance is of Satan coming to

God's creation, to man, and by way of the mind and the heart, the reason and the desire, reaching the will of Adam. He besieged the will. Adam surrendered his will to Satan, and so the whole race in Adam had introduced into it a will that is contrary to the will of God, and it is manifested and expressed in this way, that man is not controlled by God: he is for himself; and that means that he is for the Devil. There is another will, and we cannot get away from the fact.

It does not matter how far we go on with God, even though it be to the point of our becoming the most saintly, we never reach the point where, in some further revelation of God, making increased demands upon us, it is not necessary for us to surrender our will anew, to have a new dealing with God in the realm of our will. To put that in the reverse way is to say that right to the end it is possible for us to have a reservation from God, and to choose another way. There is that other will in this universe.

Now the Lord Jesus came into the world deliberately in relation to the will of God as against that other will, and His whole life is marked by this principle, this law, "Not my will, but thine"—"I delight to do thy will, O my God": "I am come to do thy will". It is not just a question of seeking to know the will of God in daily affairs; it is an attitude of heart which says comprehensively, embracing all details in its sweep, 'I am here in relation to the will of God, and I am utterly abandoned to that great will of God; and that means that God must have everything'. That is the whole burnt offering. God must have everything; not a place but the whole place, not things but all.

That is the meaning of the Cross. That is the meaning of the altar. It is upon that the Church stands, and from that it takes its character, and it is in relation to that the Holy Spirit assumes control. The Holy Spirit assumes control of the believer on the ground of the Cross, and He assumes that the believer is consecrated wholly to God and proceeds accordingly. If ever He comes up against any hitch in us He says, in effect, 'Well, I was simply going on with what I have come for. If you do not want Me to do that, then our relationship in a practical way must be suspended until you come to the altar, until you accept the real meaning of the Cross which you profess to have accepted'. The whole will of God is fundamental. It is not something that we come to later in life, and which we term the

higher life, or the life of holiness, or the deeper spiritual life, or something like that. It is fundamental. From God's standpoint the Cross means utterness for God, and it is this the Holy Spirit assumes when we accept the Cross, and He deals with us accordingly.

This word in Romans xii. 1-2 comes right to the point: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God (the mercies of God are because of His having found a propitiation for sins, a mediator between God and man: upon that ground, because of the mercies of God I beseech you) to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service (spiritual worship); and be not fashioned according to this age: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may *prove* what is the good and acceptable and perfect *will* of God".

### The Whole Burnt-offering and the Believer

Now you notice that there is a difference here. The Apostle is not saying, 'You must do what Christ did, and on the same basis'. Christ presented His body a living sacrifice as an atonement, a propitiation. The Apostle does not say that we are to do that, but He marks the difference in this way. He says that when the Lord Jesus did that He did it to perfect the will of God concerning man, to make the will of God perfect in a Man. Now to us he says, 'You present yourselves upon that basis, not as a propitiation, an atonement, but as a freewill offering, as a praise offering, your spiritual worship, something that is presented to God upon the basis of Christ's full offering'. Then what will happen is that you will come to know that the will of God is not something irksome, difficult, hard, painful, but good, perfect, acceptable. You come into the blessing of the will of God on the ground of Christ having perfectly accomplished that will through suffering. But the point that the Apostle brings out is this: You have to come alongside the Lord Jesus, and be as it were the complement of His sacrifice, His offering of Himself. He offered in relation to the will of God a propitiation, an atonement: you enter into that perfected will of God in Christ, and you find that the will of God which before was so hard, so costly, and against you all the time because the will of God was not in you, has now become a life, a blessing. The will of God has

been done by one Man, and you come into the good of a perfect will of God.

I wonder if that is clear. I think we can leave the detail, at any rate in the outworking, and note this, that we are called upon here by the Lord to stand right into the good of what the Lord Jesus has done in relation to God's will. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice..." That is to say, come alongside the Lord Jesus and enter into all that He has done in presenting Himself by presenting yourself. In so doing you come to inherit the good of a perfectly satisfied will of God, and you find that the will of God is now a thing *for* you and not *against* you, a thing working in you and not in opposition to you. You are in the will of God. We are called upon to stand in exactly the same position as the Lord Jesus stands in to-day; that is, of a whole, and utter, and entire abandonment to God.

### The Will of God Absolute

Note this verse in Hebrews: "The offering of the body of Christ once for all". Then mark the similar expression in the letter to the Romans: "the offering up of the Gentiles". The altar is in view. On the one Christ is offered to God for God's pleasure, for God's satisfaction, in relation to the will of God, which must not be regarded partially but as God's complete right in the universe. On the other it is man coming into that offering of Christ and being offered to God. The offering up of the Gentiles in Christ, to be wholly for God, is being wholly in the will of God. Now that offering up on the part of Christ makes it possible for us to know how good, perfect and acceptable the will of God is. God's will is all-governing, and from the Divine standpoint there are no degrees of the will of God, it is absolute. The matter of spiritual progress is another thing, but let us remember that God always starts from His end, and that sanctuary represents God's end reached. Now He comes to work, as it were, to His end, but His end is fixed. God will never leave anyone at the altar, if He has His way. God will never leave anyone midway in the court. There are no degrees in the will of God. God starts from the absolute and works in relation to the absolute, and one of the tragedies of the Lord's people is that they have not really seen that, when they have *but* accepted parts, fragments; when they have come to the Cross and accepted the atonement for their sins, pardon, remission, the privilege

of reconciliation and peace with God, and have stopped short there. That has become the measure of their life; they have no more than that; they have not gone on. That means that the Holy Spirit has not been able to go on with His essential work toward God's end. Do remember this, that God's end is the sanctuary, not the Cross. God's beginning is the Cross, His end is the sanctuary, and He begins from His end. When we speak of the sanctuary we mean that in which God has fully expressed His mind, His purpose. And God by His Spirit would call us on, ever on. The trouble with the Hebrews was not that they had failed to lay the foundation, but that they had progressed no further. "Let us...press on unto perfection (full growth), not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God", and so on, was the exhortation that was addressed to them. The way of God is that we should go on to His end, the end with which He started.

Do not let us be content, however glorious and great may be what we call the evangel of sins forgiven, of acceptance with God, the atonement and assurance of heaven. That is only the beginning. There is an infinite fulness beyond that to which God is calling His people. The Cross is essential to that, but the Cross is meant to take us to it, not to hold us to itself. Although all the way along in the progressive experience the Cross will be applied to bring us to God's fulness, nevertheless the end which governs is God's full end, as set forth in the sanctuary.

The challenge of the altar at this time is, Who is going to have us? And how much of us is God to have? That is the question at the altar. Whose are we, and how much of us is going to be possessed by the one to whom we give ourselves? That is the challenge of the Cross, the challenge of Calvary, and there we have to decide in a conclusive and inclusive way: God is going to have us, and God is going to have us utterly,

and we are never accepted on any other ground. It is a denial of the Cross to be what is called a worldly Christian. It is a denial of the Cross to be a selfish Christian. Christ is the example of what the Cross means in life here: "utterly for God".

Now what we are saying is that we have to accept that fundamentally, and that is what we profess to have done in our baptism. In being baptized we have declared that we are now utterly for God. We have stood on those words of the Holy Spirit through the Apostle: "We thus judge, that one died for all (in the stead of all), therefore all died (in him); and he died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him..." Now our baptism has been our public declaration of that: 'not unto ourselves'; 'henceforth unto Him'. We mean that in an utter way. Well now, the process and the progressive thing is that God is going to work that out. Our thought must not be of accepting that in the future; our acceptance of it is made already, and we have to stand by it, and at every new crisis we have to say, 'Yes, but this was included in the initial act. Lord, I meant this when I first took my stand, so there is no room for any reservation. I meant it; You work it out, Lord'. And the Lord will simply be working progressively now in relation to the inclusive thing which He meant and which He took us to mean. He will work it out until the point is reached where our wills are utterly one with His will. That is the altar.

May the Lord have less difficulty with us in bringing us to the place which we have accepted in our acceptance of the Cross; but may He bring us right through by that way to His fulness, and His working of the Cross in us be unto His working of the fuller and ever fuller life of His glorified Son in us.

T.A-S.

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## Special Gatherings

(If the Lord wills)

at Honor Oak on November 5th & 6th.

# Spiritual Maturity

No. 5.

## Christ Formed Within

**READING:** Galatians iii. "...I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you". Galatians iv. 19.

### The Resistance to Divine Purpose

As we continue our meditation in relation to spiritual growth, spiritual full growth, recognizing, as we have sought to do, the very great and serious place which the matter occupies in the Word of God, and how important the Lord evidently regards it, there is the other side to that fact which must impress us, namely, the way in which this matter of spiritual growth is fraught with opposition. You never touch upon it but what you find yourself in the presence of something set against it. It is never presented in passive conditions. It is always encompassed by active opposing elements and forces. You find that the exhortation, the encouragement, the admonition is all of the most positive character as over against something. Whenever God has moved in the past toward spiritual increase, there is always present some counter-move, some antagonistic element. You can see it through the Word of God again and again.

When the Lord would bring Israel from the bondage and limitation of Egypt, at once there was bitter conflict. When Israel was at last brought into the land, almost immediately there was an Achan to arrest the whole movement and bring to a standstill that development unto the fulness of which the land spoke, and for the moment it was effectively done. So you may see it in a great number of instances in the Old Testament.

When God brought His Son into the world, which was a great movement toward spiritual fulness, there was to begin with a Herod, and then the Jews in their prejudice. Let us take note of the fact that prejudice is always set against spiritual progress. Prejudice never does give God a chance. It is a closed door. If one

thing more than another marked the Jews, in the days when He who was God's fulness came amongst men, it was prejudice, and it was that which limited them, and robbed them of God's full purpose.

When the Day of Pentecost was fully come, and a mighty move toward fulness was made—that which the Apostle later refers to as "the fulness of him that filleth all in all"—hardly has the Church started upon its course before you find a suitable instrument to the enemy's arresting work in Ananias and Sapphira. Then you move on to the great Apostle Paul, and always dogging his steps everywhere are the Judaisers.

So it is, that every movement of God is met by a counter-movement. Every step towards spiritual enlargement finds something present from the other side to check it, to arrest it, to frustrate it.

### The Letters of Paul

Thus these letters of Paul bring up into view a large number of things which Satan has produced, very largely through the flesh, as counter-movements to God's end, full growth. As we have seen, in Corinth it was carnality, and also in Corinth, as is made perfectly clear in the early chapters of the second letter to the Corinthians, and among the Galatians, it was the Judaisers. Theirs was a very unworthy way of going to work. One of their great strokes against what God was seeking to do, was doing through His servant Paul, was their attack upon him in person; that is, their attack upon him as the vessel being used by God, an attack in ways unworthy of those who professed to be seeking the interests of God.

It is always so. When God moves and takes up a vessel for the increase of Christ in His people, for spiritual enlargement, Satan raises up an attack upon that vessel, and seeks to

frustrate the purpose by prejudicing that purpose through the vessel in some way. He will misrepresent, lie—oh, he will use every kind of movement to discount the instrument, so that the Divine object may fall into disrepute or be brought under arrest.

Now here is a letter (the letter to the Galatians) which is full of terrific conflict. Martin Luther was a fighter if he was anything, and he said he had betrothed this letter to himself. But what did Luther say further in relation to that? 'Beforehand I was in quietness and comort, in rest and acceptance, but since, I have surrounded myself with a solid block of enemies'! That is significant because of what this letter stands for. Would to God that Martin Luther had seen all that it stands for, instead of only its beginnings. However, here we are in the presence of conflict, and the point is for us to recognise that if God is moving toward the enlargement of the measure of Christ in the saints, that movement encounters all hell's antagonism, and the vessel used by the Lord to that end will come under the massed assaults of the enemy, both vehement and malicious. He will stop short at nothing in seeking to render that vessel inoperative, to paralyse it, so that it cannot fulfil its Divine mission. I always take the Apostle Paul as a personal representative of the truth which was committed to him, as a vessel, one in whom all that related to that truth was wrought out in his own history; and in this point, as in so many others, it is quite manifest that Paul was raised up as a special vessel in relation to the full, eternal purpose of God concerning the Church, and there was not another man in the dispensation who so met the force of hell, in its endeavour to paralyse and destroy, as that man. He stands to show us in his own history, and in his own person, what we may expect if we are linked with God's full purpose.

This should be enlightening and encouraging, looked at from one standpoint. It should explain things, and it should set us on our feet. The danger so often with us, when there is a mighty uprising of spiritual antagonism and we are made to suffer, and are suffering intensely, is that we should regard that suffering as something in itself, seek to attribute it to natural causes, to feel that it is something in the course of life which has come our way. We think we are just sufferers, and fail to see that, however the thing may appear to be like that, it is related definitely

and directly to the purpose with which we are occupied.

It may be that you are not able to enter into this, because you are not in the experience of it, but others will understand. Believe me, that if you have betrothed God's full purpose to you, if you are married to God's full thought for His people—for yourself and for others, especially for the Church—you are going to meet the Devil's attempted frustration of it in every conceivable way; the frustration of yourself, the frustration of your ministry. You are going to meet it physically, you are going to meet it in your soul, and you are going to meet it spiritually. You are going to meet it inside yourself, and you are going to meet it outside yourself. You are going to find yourself in a battle. And what is true of the individual will be true of any company that is standing in relation to God for that purpose.

#### **The Form of the Attack among the Galatians**

So we find ourselves in that very atmosphere immediately we open this letter to the Galatians. Paul wastes no time here. He uses very few words by way of nicety. He introduces himself, and his introduction is an attack. He opens the battle in his first sentence. "Paul, an apostle (not from men, neither through man...)" That is an attack. The battle is joined. Judaisers have been at work, and they have persuaded these Galatians that Paul was not an authentic Apostle, but had set himself up as something; he was not one of the twelve, but was self-appointed. "Paul, an apostle (not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)." You see, that is accepting the challenge. How it goes to the heart of things! It takes hold of the sword of the enemy and turns it right round and pierces himself. The Judaisers say I am not an Apostle by recognition of Jerusalem; I have not been ordained at headquarters; I am not one of the authentic twelve; I have not received my credentials from the ecclesiastics, those who are called pillars. I agree! But I take my apostleship higher; I received it "through Jesus Christ, and God the Father..." What can you say to that? How are you going to handle that?

Now that is only just to point out that you are in the presence of conflict, and to establish the fact that where God is seeking to move

toward the bringing of His Son to full formation in the Church, Satan is always most active to defeat that end by any means possible. Bear that in mind at all times. The Lord help us to do it. If we remember that, it will be to our salvation.

What the Judaisers sought to do is perhaps something which we need not consider in detail. Had they had their way, this is what the effect and the outcome would have been, namely, that the Galatians would have returned to, and have become settled and fixed in, religious formality, in ceremonial and ritual, in tradition and external religious works at the cost, firstly, of life, and ultimately of God's eternal purpose. The Apostle takes up the battle for life in this letter, and makes it an issue of life.

Now we can clearly see that the method of the enemy was not restricted to the Galatians, for it had gone on before their day, and it goes on still: formalism, religious formality, ceremonial, ritual, religious traditions, many outward works in the name of God, all that in the place of, firstly, spiritual life, and then, finally, in the place of God's full intention for His people. That is very true. Of course, the enemy always knows where he has a salient point, where he has a vantage ground. These Galatians were mainly Gentiles, and they had come out of paganism, and in their pagan religious system there were many rites and ceremonials, many religious ordinances. There were all those performances and outward activities which constituted their form of worship of their gods, and to the natural man, the man of soul, such things are indispensable. He must have what is tangible, he must have helps in religion; he must hear something, see something, do something, handle something. All these accompaniments of religion are essential to religion, and his religion would be a poor, starved thing if you took those away. Take the artistic away, take the aesthetic away, take away all the externals that come to our senses, and those means by which we express our sentient life, and what is religion? This pure, spiritual life of faith without anything of that is an uninteresting thing to the soul, and is very vague. Yes, what an unreal thing it is! These Galatians had come out of all that other thing, and had turned to the Lord. Then the Judaisers had come along with the Jewish order, and said, 'Except you are circumcised you cannot be saved, and what you need is to come back

to the Jewish ordinances'. If you are at low ebb spiritually you are not able to stand up to that sort of thing very well, when there are plausible arguments and strong constraints, and when there is a turning upon the instrument which has been used to you and the pointing out of all the flaws and weaknesses in that one, and the showing of how that one has set himself up to be something which is contrary to the accepted position at Jerusalem. These leaders in Jerusalem had known Jesus Christ personally, in the flesh; they had been with Him, and they did not agree with this sort of thing, they still believed in these Jewish ordinances. 'So you see Paul is all wrong; he is just one by himself, no one agrees with him', was what they urged.

It was all so subtle, and thus Satan had his point with them in relation to their old form of life, working on that uncrucified soul-life, and they came under the spell. "O, foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" As we have pointed out, the literal words there are, "Who did cast over you the witch's spell?" A spell is a nice sensation, till you wake up. A spell is usually cast over a person in order to rob him of something, and that in fact is what happened in the case before us.

#### Spiritual Apprehension of Christ

Let us, then, recognise the point, namely, that in Christ we are called out of that whole thing. That is earthly, that is of man, tradition, religious system of rites and ordinances, of days, times and seasons. We have been called out of that into a heavenly life in Jesus Christ by faith. When you really do get through you never have any inclination toward that other thing again, you are spoiled for it. But that is just the point of Galatians iv. 19: "My little children for whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you". Paul was not saying at this point that he was in travail in relation to that end when Christ should be fully formed in them in the purpose of God. Of course, it had its bearing upon that, it was related to that ultimately, but that is not what he is meaning here; not that full conformity to the image of Christ, not that full development of Christ in them. What he is saying here is this: 'I am in travail until Christ takes definite shape in you'. It is the difference between the embryo and the fully formed child. He said he was in agony about that. The trouble with them was that they had

not clearly seen Christ, not clearly apprehended Christ; Christ was not distinctly defined in them, the meaning of Christ had not become definite in them. Something had happened. They had been begotten from above, they had received the Spirit, by faith they had turned to the Lord Jesus, but it has become evident that they have not grasped the significance of Christ. Paul said, "I fear lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain". What is labour in vain? Oh beloved, in relation to God's purpose, in relation to God's full thought, it is far from being enough that we should just believe on the Lord Jesus; it is essential that we should see who and what Jesus is, and what He means.

If you want proof that this is the point here between Paul and the Galatians, recognise this, that the personal name of the Lord Jesus Christ occurs forty three times in this very brief letter. It is not the descriptive title, as so often elsewhere. It is the personal name, the Man Christ Jesus thirty nine times out of the forty three in this letter. Why? Why should he bring such a tremendous number of references to Him into this letter? Well, it is self-evident. Hear his exclamation, to this effect: "Before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth, crucified", placarded openly, and you have not seen! Four times in this letter the Cross of Christ is referred to in relation to the biggest things with which we have to do. We are not going to stop now with them, but those four statements about the Cross of the Lord Jesus in this letter are the greatest things that could be said about the Cross, and they all have reference to the end of the personal ego: "I have been crucified..."—the all embracing fact; then, by the same means, severance from the law—"I...died unto the law"; severance from the flesh—"They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof"; severance from the world—"Far be it from me to glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world." "Before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified", and you have not seen the implications.

If you had but believed (Galatians and all others) you would have once for all been delivered from earthly religious systems, earthly orders, rites, ceremonies, traditions, and all that sort of thing, and you would be in a heavenly place; for Christ crucified means that. To

apprehend Christ means absolute emancipation out of everything here, even in a religious way, after a religious kind. It is that which represents the whole question of maturity and immaturity. You ask, What was it that constituted immaturity amongst the Galatians? It was that, under persuasion, influence and argument, they were ready to drop back so easily and so quickly into an earthly religious order with which the Cross of Christ had finished, which the Cross of Christ had brought to an end. Oh yes, the law of Moses, and all his order, and his ritual ended in the Cross of the Lord Jesus. It served a purpose, but reached its fulfilment in Christ, and Christ crucified marked an end. In Christ risen, all that it pointed to, is taken up in a spiritual way to heaven, and now we are united with Christ in heaven. He fulfils all the values of that for us. He is our High Priest, our sacrifice, our precious Blood, our meeting place, our righteousness, our approach, our access to God, our acceptance. Everything shadowed in the types and figures is carried up into Him risen and exalted, and we have it all in spiritual value. Yes, you say, but it is all so far away, and unreal, and we want something that we can handle and see and hear. Ah, that is immaturity, that is spiritual infancy. Children always want something (and rightly so) that they can see and hear. But the Apostle in this letter plunges the Galatians right into the place where all those infant things are finished with. He says, 'You must begin sonship from the beginning'. It is remarkable how far advanced he is in his point of view in this letter.

While the placing of sons lies in the future, while the inheritance lies there, the Apostle says, we are all sons of God by faith in Jesus Christ, and we are expected now to begin to live upon the sonship principle. We do not want toys to play with on the earth, picture books to look at, object lessons, but we have come in spirit immediately to an apprehension of Jesus Christ, and a living fellowship with Him, so that all that kind of thing is passed. The Cross of the Lord Jesus in this letter is not set forth merely in relation to what we would call gross sin, but is set over against all religion in the flesh, and when Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me", he further adds: "and that life which I now live in the flesh, I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God..." You notice

the context. It is the difference between life in the law and life in the risen Christ; not the difference between the religious life of the Jew as such and the religious man as such. All that is one thing, and the Cross cuts that off, and the "I" that is in that is brought to an end. Now I live, he says, "yet no longer I, but Christ...and that life which I now live I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God..." It is a kind of life. The Cross brings out to that kind of life which is the life of the Son of God lived by us through faith. That must be reserved for further consideration. We will stay with the more obvious points in the letter.

### **Christ Formed Within, A Question of Supreme Importance**

I think we can be content to dwell for a little while longer upon those words in chapter iv. 19.

"My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you."

It is the anguished cry that believers should come to a place where they are fixed—"Christ be formed". It is the place where there is some definiteness in them as to the Lord Jesus. It is a settled thing. They have *seen* the Lord Jesus and they are settled. You cannot move them; that is, they have the root of the matter in themselves. Christ has taken shape in them.

Now, if Paul agonizes, groans, travails in that connection, how important it is, and what serious consequences must be related to a Galatian condition. The crying need amongst the Lord's people is that they should come to a fixed and settled place and position in consequence of the meaning of Christ having come home to them in clearness and in definiteness; that they should be settled and grounded, not easily moved away, not easily falling under the witch's spell. They know the Lord, and you cannot move them. You do not have to nurse people like that. You do not have to keep picking them up and putting them on their feet. You have to supply no crutches. You can count on them. You know that they have that basic knowledge of the Lord, that they will not be moved away easily, that they will go right on. They see what this means; they have grasped the significance of Jesus Christ, and you can count on them to go on. You will agree that this is a very necessary state to God's end, which is full growth; to have an initial and fundamental grasp of the significance of Christ, and to have become fixed

in relation to Him. It is because that is lacking that there is such spiritual poverty and limitation, weakness, defectiveness and defeat everywhere. It is a matter of seeing the Lord Jesus.

That is why the Apostle uses, with all his might, his own personal case as a case in point. He opens this letter, and takes up the battle. He declares his apostleship as from heaven, and not from men. Then he goes on with his own case, and before long he will say, "It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me". When that happened, he says, in effect, 'I went not up to confer with flesh and blood at Jerusalem; I had the root of the matter in myself by direct act of the Holy Spirit'.

### **All is by the Spirit**

Go through this letter again and count the number of times that the Spirit is mentioned. You will find everywhere it is the Spirit, and it is this inward work of the Holy Spirit in the heart that makes him see the Lord Jesus. I am not talking about seeing a figure, not about seeing a person as such; I am talking about seeing the meaning of God's Son, the meaning of the Man Christ Jesus, how He gathers up everything that has ever been, or ever will be, in His own person, and becomes the embodiment of all God's thought, and God's intention, and the fountain head of every resource in relation to that purpose of God: and He becomes that to him. Paul needs no Jewish altars, no Jewish priests, no Jewish blood-shedding and sacrifices, no Jewish temple or tabernacle. Jesus Christ is all that and infinitely more to him. Paul does not live by those things, Jesus Christ is his life. He does not need guidance from those things, Jesus Christ is his guidance. It is what the Lord Jesus is to him that is the sum total of it all.

When you have that you are out, you are free. Oh, no one need say to you, You must do this, and you must not do that. That is the law. You are out, you are free, you have no life in that; you have rest, and liberty, and power, and peace in Christ, in communion with Him, in fellowship with God in Him. Think of the terrific fall this was on the part of the Galatians. Paul appeals to them: 'Oh you, who began in the Spirit, do you think now you can be perfected in the flesh? You who came into the way of all that by the Holy Spirit, do you think you are going to reach God's full end, be made perfect by coming down

to fleshly religious activities' ? It is unthinkable. No wonder you find Paul amazed, perplexed, bewildered and vehemently angry that anybody would so undo the Cross of Christ, so set aside the life in the Spirit. Spiritual maturity is that the Holy Spirit has revealed and is revealing all the meaning of *Christ in us*, and we are living on Him. Spiritual immaturity is that we must have all these external religious things to help us to be good, and with a very unsatisfactory result. Do you see the point ? Read the letter again in the light of this word : " Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba... " In the original languages of the Bible, the Hebrew and the Greek, when you read that particular clause you are using exactly the word that the Lord Jesus used when He prayed to the Father. When He prayed He did not say in English, Father ! He said, Abba ! I do not see any particular value in it coming down to us like that, but it is strange that the Holy Spirit has preserved that, and given us the original word and then the translation, as though He would bring us right into the closest touch with this thing, bring us there

in spirit to the very heart of the Lord Jesus.

Just as Jesus Christ said to the Father, Abba ! so the same Spirit as in Christ is in us causing us to know the same relationship with the Father as He had : " Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba... " That is where life in the Spirit begins —Father ! It is by the Spirit of His Son.

You see God's purpose, God's end, that we should be conformed to the image of His Son. The Spirit of His Son in us crying " Father ", revealing Christ in us. " It pleased God...to reveal his Son in me ". That puts everything on the inside from start to finish, the beginning and the end ; the first step and the fulness is bound up with that. " Reveal his Son in me " ! That stands over against all externalities of religion. The difference is between life and death, earth and heaven, time and eternity. And so Paul calls this liberty, " the liberty of the sons of God ". " Stand fast therefore in the liberty... "

May the Lord make this all clear, and bring it home to our hearts, that we may know Christ.

T.A.S.

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