

The Battle for Throne
81, 126.

A Witness and a Testimony.

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"Fear not... be glad and rejoice:
for the Lord will do great things."
Joel 2.21.

Behold, I make a
Covenant: before all thy
people I will do marvels
Exod. 34. 10.

"The God that doeth wonders"
Psa 77. 11.

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In Touch with the Throne

Some Considerations on the Prayer-Life

The Divine Basis of all Acceptable Prayer.

I HAVE it on my heart to say a few things on the matter of prayer, and I think it would be most helpful if, just at the outset, we were reminded of the Divine basis of all acceptable prayer. Before we come to what may be more technical, we must recognise the spiritual foundation of prayer, and that has to do with the ingredients and the sacredness of the incense which was to be burnt upon the golden altar referred to in Exodus xxx. ; from the 34th verse.

It is not my intention to take up these ingredients for exposition, but simply to note that the Lord stipulated for the sweet spices certain things, and then made a very strong statement in relation to them. ".....ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof ; it shall be unto thee holy for the Lord. Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people." That is the basis of all acceptable prayer. The sweet spices, the ingredients of the incense, as we know, typify the moral excellencies of the Lord Jesus ; His graces and virtues, and merits, and worthiness. The incense is not the prayers of the saints. The incense is the merit and worthiness of the Lord Jesus put into the prayers, mingled with the prayers, becoming that which brings the prayers in effectiveness and acceptance to the presence of God. There is completeness here inasmuch as the ingredients are fourfold : the completeness of the graces and virtues and moral excellencies of Christ. And then, as you notice, salt is to be mingled with these other ingredients which always speaks of preserving things in life, and it seems to me to suggest that even the presentation of the moral excellencies of the Lord Jesus is always to be free from merely cold formality, which means death, and must remain a living and vital thing. It is so possible that a contemplation of the Lord Jesus should become a mechanical thing, and a formal thing ; that we accept the thing in our minds as necessary and as true, and we come mechanically upon the merits of the Lord Jesus, when the Lord wants the thing to be con-

tinuously alive. With every fresh coming to the Lord there should be a fresh appreciation in life, of the Lord Jesus. The salt is to keep things from death, to keep things in life, to keep things fresh, to keep things keen, and we are required to have an abiding keenness, aliveness of appreciation of these excellencies of the Lord Jesus. If it is so, prayer is acceptable and effectual. The salt is not one of the ingredients, but something added in. That something is that which is incorruptible. And then the very definite stipulation that nothing like this was to be made by man himself or for himself. There was to be no imitation of this, and there was to be no private and personal appropriation of it by man ; it was to be held always unto the Lord, holy to the Lord ; and an infringement of that rule meant death. As we know, on one occasion the offering of false fire resulted in judgment and death. So here we are told that if this thing were made by man, an imitation of it for himself and for his own personal ends, he would be cut off from among his people. The moral excellencies of the Lord Jesus cannot be imitated, and man cannot have them in himself, and anything feigned is unacceptable to God. There are no excellencies, there are no glories like those of the Lord Jesus.

Here we have God most definitely and positively saying, in effect, that there is a uniqueness, an exclusiveness about the character of the Lord Jesus which is unapproachable by man, which is altogether apart from the very best that man can make, of himself. God sees in the Lord Jesus that which is not anywhere else, and for any man to come in imitation merits of the Lord Jesus means death. There is no ground of approach to God in our moral glories, and herein is the awful blasphemy of saying things about the sacrifice and the laying down of life on the part of men for their fellow-creatures being on a par with the laying down of His life by the Lord Jesus. That is utter blasphemy, and that must come under the most utter judgment of God. No ! God sees nothing like the moral excellencies of His Son, and forbids us to try and bring anything which is an imita-

tion of that, or a man-made thing, not recognising the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus. Now the ground of all acceptable prayer is that the moral excellencies and glories, and graces, and virtues, and merits, and worthiness of the Lord Jesus is that upon which we approach the Father. That is very simple but it is basic, and before we can get anywhere in the matter of prayer we do have to recognise that.

The Five Aspects of Prayer.

Now we are able then to go on with the subject of prayer itself. In the first place I want to say a little about the nature of prayer, that which makes prayer, from its different standpoints. And while there may be many other aspects, I think we may say that prayer has five main aspects; and they are, communion, submission, petition, co-operation, conflict. Prayer is each one of these, and prayer in its fulness requires all of them, or involves all of them.

Prayer as Communion.

Firstly, prayer is communion, it is fellowship, it is love opening the heart to God, and that is the foundation of all true forms of prayer. We may liken it to the two main activities of our human bodies. When we speak of the activities of these physical bodies, we speak of what is organic, and then of what is functional. Organic trouble is a very serious thing; a functional trouble may not be so serious. And prayer as communion takes the place of the organic in our bodies. One part of our organic make-up is our breathing, what we call respiration. Now, you never stop to think about that. You never reason that out and say: "Shall I take another breath?" "Shall I breathe?" or "How many more breaths shall I take today?" You may do that over your meal; that is functional. You never do it over your respiration, that is organic. You may discuss whether you will walk, or talk, or think, and you may tell yourself that you will stop thinking, or walking, or talking; that is functional, that is controlled, that is deliberate, but you do not do that over your breathing, over your respiration; it goes on. But, if your respiration gives out your talking would give out, and your walking would give out, and your thinking would give out; so that respiration is basic to everything else.

And prayer, as communion, is, in the spiritual life, what respiration is in the physical. Com-

munion with God is a sustained thing, it is a thing like breathing which goes on, or should go on. It differs altogether from those functional periodical activities such as feeding. Respiration is quite involuntary, it is not just deliberate. We may call it a habit, and a habit is something which easily eludes the full consciousness of the one who is addicted to it. We do things habitually without being aware at the time that we are doing them. When a habit is fully formed it is just an unconscious part of our procedure, and communion with God is that, something that goes on. Prayer as communion is just that, that we are in touch with the Lord and spontaneously and involuntarily we open our heart to the Lord. That is the first foundational thing in all prayer, and that is something we shall have to give attention to. While we never discuss the question as to whether we will breathe or not, there is such a thing as developing right breathing, and in this sense we shall have to give attention to our breathing.

I think of all the people that ever I met, who exemplified this organic life in fellowship with God, Dr. F. B. Meyer was outstanding. It did not matter where he was, what the circumstances were, he suddenly stopped, perhaps dictating a letter, in a conversation, in a business meeting, and just said: "Stop a minute," and he prayed. And that was his habit in life, he went that way; he seemed at any moment to be in touch with the Lord. It was like breathing to him. I believe it represented one of the secrets of the fruitfulness of his life and the value of his judgment in the things of the Lord, and only those who had close touch with him, especially in difficult executive meetings, know the value of that spiritual judgment which he brought to bear upon situations, and it seemed to come to him just like that, as out from the Lord.

Well, that is prayer in its foundation. It is communion, it is fellowship, it is the spontaneous opening of the heart to the Lord. It is not the whole range of prayer, but it is life lived back of all deliberate activities, in touch with the Lord, and it is a very, very valuable thing and makes all other prayer so much more effective if we have that. It is so different from life being just a matter of prayer in emergencies. Emergencies are very often much more critical than they need be because we have to find our way back to God instead of being there. I think very often the Lord allows

emergencies to come and restore fellowship with Him which has been lost, and then the abiding fruit of such an emergency in the Lord's mind is that we should not lose that touch again which He gives us from the emergency, we should keep hold of it.

Prayer as Submission.

Then, secondly, prayer is submission; and here we must be aware of the possibility of a contradiction in terms. Prayer is submission. Passive inaction in what is called trust, is not prayer. We have heard people speak of trust, which for them means just passivity, inaction; but it is not prayer. Submission is always active, it is not passive. And submission always involves the will, it does not dismiss the will. Now carefully keep hold of that. To many people just trustfully leaning on the Lord is thought to be submission, and their address to the Lord takes its character from such a state; but that is not prayer. Unquestioning acquiescence in things as we find them is not submission, and it is not prayer. Submission means getting into line with the Divine mind. That may mean conflict. It will almost invariably mean action. It will bring in the volition. Prayer, from whatever standpoint you regard it is always positive, it is never passive. Trust is another thing, it does not come into the realm of prayer. Faith comes into the realm of prayer, but faith is always an active thing and never a passive thing. Faith may require a battle, it very often does, to get to a place of rest, but the rest of faith is not what we have called unquestioning acquiescence. The rest of faith is the last stage of adjustment to the Divine mind reached. Submission is not merely the suppression of desire, but it is the bringing of desire into line with the Divine will and if needs be changing desire. Desire may be a very strong thing, a mighty propelling force, but a propelling force ought to be so under control that it can be switched into the direction of an arresting force. I mean that to propel a train a tremendous amount of power and force is represented, but a modern train is so arranged that the mighty propelling force which carries it on, can in a moment be switched on to its brakes to pull it up, to stop it; and in prayer, where submission is in view very often that is what has to be done, that strength of desire has to be arrested in one direction and bring us into another direction, perhaps from propelling us

forward to bringing us to a standstill in the will of God. That is submission. You see it is an active thing, it is a positive thing—is submission. I anticipate that there will be more questions in this connection, but it is a very important thing to recognise that prayer in its second aspect is submission, which is a positive thing. It is not just collapsing before God and saying: "Well, I trust that everything will turn out all right, and I just acquiesce in things as they are and leave it with the Lord." It is coming positively into line with God's will, God's desire, God's mind; that is submission, and very often it represents the deepest conflict and sometimes heart-break, but it is submission and it is necessary. We will touch that again at another point later.

Prayer as Petition.

Thirdly, prayer is petition, request or asking; whichever word you prefer, it is all the same. And here we touch what is in the activity of prayer, perhaps the major aspect. Undoubtedly it has the largest place in Scripture, and it really defines the meaning of the word prayer. From a Scriptural standpoint, prayer is rightly taken to mean petition, and if you go through the Word of God you will find that by an overwhelming measure prayer represents petition. Perhaps we here do not need very much argument along that line to prove, or persuade that it is so, but I am quite sure that before we are through we shall see that a note of emphasis is necessary and important; for after all, our main problems come up in the direction of asking. Practically all our problems arise in the realm of petition. We shall go on praying, of course, and we shall go on asking, in spite of them all—I trust we shall; but it is as well for us to have the ground well laid for petition, for request, for asking, and for us to recognise clearly, and be fully assured that there is an objective efficacy in prayer. I do not doubt but that all of us at some time or other have a little catch in our prayers of request and asking because of a little mental something that comes in and undermines certainty. What I mean is this; the objective efficacy of prayer—that is, that prayer has power to change things objectively, and not merely to have an influence upon us inwardly; prayer which brings answers outside of ourselves—petition, request, asking, is set over against all those false arguments, such as—Divine omniscience makes prayer unnecessary; God knows

everything, He knows the end from the beginning, He knows what He will do, He knows how He will do it, He knows the end of all things from the beginning, then why pray? Or again, Divine goodness makes prayer superfluous, God is good, compassionate, merciful and long-suffering, He will only do the best, He is love; prayer is *superfluous*. To petition the Lord to do good, to be gracious, to show kindness, to do the best for us, to ask: why not trust the goodness of God? Prayer is superfluous. Or once more, Divine foreordination makes prayer *useless*. If God has settled things eternally, predestination holds good, it is therefore *useless* to pray. Or, running alongside of that—Divine sovereignty—the fact that God rules and over-rules and He is in the throne of government and has all things in His hands and in His power—makes prayer lack of faith. Why ask, why pray, why petition, why request when all things are in God's hands and He is ruling and over-ruling, governing, directing in His sovereignty. Once more, the Divine vastness of law and purpose makes prayer *presumptuous*. It is presumption to ask God to change things when He has fixed everything according to His eternal laws and things are moving in correspondence with a set order. It is presumption to expect the Lord to go out of His order, to ask Him to do so.

Now you may not have put things like that, those questions may never have arisen in your minds in that way, but I venture to suggest that whether those words have been in your mind or not, whether you have put things like that or not, from time to time what is contained in them has subtly crept into your prayer-life and affected it and taken some of the grip out of it. That when you have been praying there has been an indefinable something creeping in, a sense—"Well, the Lord knows what He will do, why should I beseech Him? The Lord is good and gracious, why should I ask Him? The Lord knows the end from the beginning, why should I not just trust Him? The Lord's purposes are fixed, why should I begin to wrestle with Him to change things? He will work out His purpose, He is of set mind, who can change Him?" Prayer is affected, if not by the actual framing of the language mentally, by that sense of contradiction which comes in. All these things creep into the mind or heart and have a tendency to deter or weaken in the matter of prayer, and we have got to deal with these more fully as

we go on. We must recognise that the modernism of our time does set aside the objective efficacy of prayer, and only gives to prayer the place of a subjective value, of its salutary influence upon the one who prays in making a change, perhaps of demeanour, of mind, and reason, by certain qualities of reverence and such like.

Now before we take up some of these things more fully, let me say that there are two things to bear in mind always in petitional prayer. The first is the basic need of the other two, communion and submission. For petitional prayer, in which after all that I have said, we believe, and with which, after all, we shall go on, nevertheless the basic need is communion with the Lord, so that prayer does not resolve itself into merely asking God for things, but it comes out of a heart-fellowship with Him. And then submission, so that our petitions are not for our own ends, personal desires, but by submission we have been brought into line with the Divine will, that petition is based upon oneness with the mind and will of God. You will find that I am only putting in another way what you have in the Word of God made perfectly clear, namely, "if you shall ask anything according to His will," that is submission. Then the other thing to bear in mind in petitional prayer is that in view of all the aforesaid mental difficulties, petitional prayer becomes pre-eminently an act of faith. It is these things which very largely make petitional prayer an act of faith. Yes, argue if you will along all these lines; about the sovereignty of God and predestination, etc., nevertheless, we believe that God will change things. In spite of all the arguments which would undercut prayer and weaken prayer we are going on asking. That makes petitional prayer pre-eminently an act of faith. You may say that that is a very cheap way of getting out of it. Well, we have not finished yet, but that is the conclusion we have to arrive at. We do not want to get out of this cheaply.

Prayer as Co-operation.

Now there are yet other two aspects of prayer, one of which we will deal with at the moment, and the other we will leave for another occasion. The fourth is, co-operation, and this is the governing object of prayer. It gets behind everything else and will set us right as to praying and as to prayer in all its aspects. Communion, submission, petition, conflict, all

are adjusted and set right when we recognise that prayer is co-operation: all these other aspects and phases of prayer are for co-operation. Co-operation is the motive, it is the truth, it is the life, it is the liberty, it is the power, it is the glory of prayer. The motive of prayer is co-operation with God. What prayer is in truth is co-operation with God. To have life in prayer, we have to recognise that it is co-operation with God, and you get life when prayer is entered into as co-operation with God. If you are not in co-operation with God you may be sure you will have no life in prayer. If you are really co-operating with God you will know, you have life in prayer. Liberty in prayer comes along the line of co-operation with God, and it is not until we get that adjustment, that coming into line with God's purpose, that we "get through," as we say. Immediately we get into line with the purpose of God and actively co-operate then we get movement, there is liberty. In the same way power, the power of prayer is related to co-operation with God. Co-operation with God is power in prayer. Think of Elijah and others coming into co-operation with God, resulting in the effectiveness of their prayer; what it accomplished. And then, the glory of prayer. Prayer becomes a glorious thing when it is really intelligently, spiritually, a matter of co-operation with God. Co-operation eliminates selfishness and everything that is merely personal. That is one of its chief values. It means that prayer should bring us into the Divine plan, the Divine method, the Divine time, and the Divine Spirit—that is, disposition. All these things are important. Not only to know the plan, but God's method of fulfilling His plan; not only to know the plan and the method, but to come into God's time; and then not only to be on that executive side, but to be in a right spirit for the thing when the time has come, to do it in the Spirit, the demeanour of the Lord. All that is co-operation. We may be in a right thing, in a right way, at a right time and yet not be helping the Lord because we are in a wrong spirit that is not the Spirit of the Lord. And prayer in co-operation is to make adjustment in all these

matters.

There are three factors which are essential to prayer. Firstly, desire; secondly, faith; and thirdly, volition, will. I just make that statement and leave it as it is.

Then when we put together communion, submission, petition, we have co-operation. When they go together, when they are adjusted to each other, in line with each other—communion, fellowship, submission—in line with the Divine will—then you have co-operation.

Perhaps in closing that phase of things we might remind ourselves that very often the Lord calls for an initial exercise on our part before He comes in on His side. He very often requires an initiative from us in the matter of desire and faith and volition. It is like the drop of water that you put into the old-fashioned pump which produces the stream, and you do not get the flow until you have given the pump something. And the Lord just calls for that on our part which may be in comparison, a very little, but which makes it possible for Him to come out in His fulness. So, very often prayer at its commencement represents exercise of will, and faith and desire on our part, and then the Lord responds to that. May be that the Lord does not respond until He sees the desire put into faith's deliberate action of the will to get through to Him. There is a good deal of discouragement met very often at the commencement of prayer, and the danger is that we should peter out too soon, that we should give up because we do not seem to be getting anywhere—the Lord is just asking for that drop of water to start the flow!

We have so far only mentioned four aspects of prayer, and referred to some of the difficulties which arise in connection with them. We have not cleared up those difficulties. We shall next give a whole chapter to the fifth aspect of prayer, and then proceed to deal at greater length with the difficulties, by way of seeking to answer them. These difficulties, however, are really only in the realm of the mind, and, while they may sometimes get in the way of faith, faith will triumph over them, and leave behind a history of mighty things in spite of them.

T. A.-S.

Foundations

(Continued)

READING : Psalm xi. 1-4.
I Cor. iii. 9-17.

As we proceed with our consideration of foundations there is a third thing. In the first letter to the Corinthians we have another way in which foundations are virtually destroyed, at least in a very real measure. It is by what is put on them; the building that is placed upon them. Not utterly and altogether and finally are they destroyed by this means, but they are robbed of their supreme value, and thus they are in their main virtue destroyed. You will see what I mean by the Apostle's words: "I laid a foundation; and another buildeth thereon. But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon." And then Paul proposes that some build with certain materials and others build with other materials. Then a testing fire from God comes to try out that superstructure; and the wood, hay and stubble material goes up in smoke, and when it has all gone the question is: Well, what was the value of that foundation if when all is said and done nothing is on it? In that way the foundation is in its supreme significance and value destroyed. The Apostle tells us that those who do that sort of thing may be saved people, and, because they have Christ the foundation is there; they themselves may not lose their salvation, but then they were not saved just to be saved. Christ did not come into them just to be there. He was not the foundation just to remain the foundation. A foundation presupposes a superstructure, it points to it, implies it, necessitates it; and there is no justification in having a foundation if you have not a superstructure. The superstructure is the justification of the foundation. What would you think of a builder who went round everywhere putting down foundations, and then you went round the earth seeing a lot of foundations and that is all you saw; foundations put in year after year and as you passed on, you saw nothing but foundations. You would say: Well, that fellow did not justify his existence, he did not justify his labour; the only justification for putting those foundations in is that he put something on them.

The justification of our salvation is that there

is a superstructure; for our salvation involves that, and we are not justified as saved ones until God's building is up. God is justified in saving us when He has His building. That is the justification of the grace of God. So the Apostle goes on with the language about God's temple: "Ye are God's building." *God's building.* Now what we are putting upon our salvation, what we are building is either going to justify the foundation, or to, virtually, for all Divine intents and purposes, destroy the foundation; that is, render it vain in the full purpose of God. That is plain. Do you see what I mean? There is a way of rendering even the Divine foundation well nigh valueless, and robbing it of its real virtue by putting up something not according to Christ. Now that is very simple and very elementary, but it will help us on a little.

The superstructure has to be in keeping with the foundation. It has to be spiritually and morally of a piece, it has to be alike. What the foundation is, the superstructure has to be. The building has to take character from the foundation. The foundation is said to be Jesus Christ and the whole building has to take its character and nature from its foundation. Think of de-rooted foundations after an excavation down to the bottom-most depths of hell; for that is where Christ laid the foundation. He excavated down to the very bottom-most depths of sin; He touched rock-bottom to lay the foundation of our salvation. Deeper He could not go. He ploughed through hell to lay the foundations of our eternal redemption. Now think of putting up a flimsy wood, hay, stubble building upon that. Does that justify those foundations? Something worthy of Christ is required, something worthy of the work that He has accomplished, something which will speak of the greatness of His grace and His glory. That is God's building.

When we have said that, and seen that, we can come to this letter to the Corinthians and let the letter itself explain that to us. You remember that we are thinking of destroying the foundations in this sense, that something not worthy of Christ is put upon them.

Now take up your letter to the Corinthians

and we will cover some familiar ground. Remember this whole letter represents the problem which confronted the Apostle as he contemplated visiting Corinth. There was a situation there with many sides which represented for him a problem calculated to break the heart and destroy the faith of any one whose foundations were not well laid in themselves. I am quite sure before we are through you will see that to face a situation like that, you will need to have foundations well laid in yourselves.

The Wisdom of the World and the Things of the Spirit.

The first chapter introduces you to the first phase of his problem. Before you are through that chapter you discover that in that assembly of believers at Corinth the spirit of the world outside, the Corinthian spirit had gained access and taken hold. The spirit of the world at Corinth was the spirit of worldly wisdom; it was a centre and citadel of philosophy. They had no better entertainment than to discuss the latest phase of philosophy, the new thing in thought. And Corinth was a place where human reason had full play and everything was determined in its value by the reasoning powers of the mind; argument, debate, discussion. It was a world-centre of rationalism, and that had crept into the assembly of the Lord's people. And what we find is that the Lord's people in that spirit, in that mind, had taken hold of spiritual things, heavenly things, things of God, and brought them down to the level of mere human argument, debate, discussion, and reason; applying all the time the test of human reason to them and seeking so to handle them by the intellectual faculty as to bring them within the limited compass of man's own power of mind. Thus they were discussing what the Apostle calls the things of the Spirit of God, and bringing heavenly, eternal, spiritual things down there; dragging the things of eternity into the school of worldly rationalistic discussion, debate, argument. Of course, that was not exclusively the way of the Corinthians of Paul's day. There is plenty of that to-day. Again and again we have come up against people whose one great obstacle to the things of the Spirit of God is their own head. They will get their head in the way; and what they cannot reduce to their own intellectual comprehension, they reject. And when you say: Look here, you will have to stop arguing, discussing; give God a chance along the line of

faith; they will answer: Why have we got brains? That means our brains are the capacity of eternal things. If that is so, God help the eternal things! Well, that was the first phase of Paul's problem; no little one. Those of us who have met it even in a little way know what a big difficulty it is.

Human Predilections, Sympathies, and Antipathies.

Pass into chapter two and we find the same thing carried on for a bit, and then as we move on and begin the next chapter we find we come into the realm of human preferences; human likes and dislikes in the direction of teaching and teachers, preaching and preachers, the messengers of God and their messages. One school says: Now Paul is the man we like, and Paul's line of things is the line we like. You may like Apollos or Peter, but as for us, well, Paul is our man. Within the same assembly another company are saying: We prefer Apollos and his line of things. You may have Paul, and you have Peter, but we like Apollos. The third company were saying: All right, if you like Paul and if you like Apollos you may have them, we will stick to Peter. There was a fourth class who said in a superior way: Well, if you like to have Paul, you Apollos, and you Peter, you may, but we belong to Christ (something quite different from the others, of course). That is the implication, you see, making Christ a party. You know when human preferences run riot they are awfully difficult things to handle. That was there; their sympathies and antipathies: and these are deeply rooted things in human nature. It takes a lot of grace to get over them. Of course, that was their condemnation. If it does take a lot of grace to get over these things, and you have not got over them, you have not got a lot of grace. That was Paul's problem, the thing which Paul had to face and deal with and for which he had a responsibility before God.

The Tragedy of Arrested Growth.

In chapter three again you find a state which is perhaps more difficult; that of unduly delayed maturity. After some considerable time of being God's people and having the things of God in their midst, Paul says that he could not speak to them as unto spiritual but as unto carnal, as unto babes: that is a tragedy. There are perhaps few more

pathetic tragedies in human life than to see arrested growth in infancy while years go on. That is how things were at Corinth. Paul says it was carnality which had caused the arrest; and carnality always does cause arrest; and when they ought to have been mature they were still helpless, dependent, spiritual infants, without understanding, perception, capacity to take spiritual responsibility. A very difficult thing to deal with that. Beloved, that was not peculiar to Corinth, or Paul's day. Multitudes of the Lord's people are like that to-day. Oh, yes; it is a pathetic situation to find people who have known the Lord for years, decades, who are still without their spiritual faculties developed to a state where they can take spiritual responsibility, where they know and have not to be told! There are multitudes like that. The reasons are not always the same. It is true that carnality is the cause of that very often, but I am afraid poor teaching is also responsible for that in many cases. They have not been fed and nourished. It is a tragic situation with which we are met to-day; but there it is, whatever the cause. In this case it was their own responsibility, their own fault, their carnality.

The Shame of Spiritual Pride.

You pass to chapter four and find the Apostle speaking with language which indicates spiritual pride. It takes this form. The Lord had blessed them with spiritual gifts and done very gracious things for them; put them in possession of His spiritual riches, and they were boasting of those possessions, boasting of these things as though they had acquired them by their own ability, had achieved them by their own efforts: and the Apostle says: ".....if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" In other words: Why are you trying to make people think that your possessions spiritually are the result of your own spiritual ability, that you have by your own effort attained unto this? Why don't you recognise that it is all the grace of God, and that you are the humble dependants upon the Lord. They were boasting of their spiritual gifts as though they were their spiritual attainments and not *gifts*. Spiritual pride is a terrible thing. Ordinary pride is bad enough, always the hall mark of ignorance, but spiritual pride is a far worse thing.

Then there is the next phase of the problem confronting Paul. That alone would dis-

hearten a good many, but put them all together! Chapter five. Here we dare not tarry. "It is actually reported that there is fornication among you....." Amongst believers? In an assembly of the Lord's people? Yes; a tragic story which has been repeated again and again through the ages. But oh, the heartbreak to any man who had any real sense of spiritual responsibility for souls, to come up against that.

Chapter six. Believers, members of the Body of Christ dragging one another into the courts of earthly judgment, having writs issued against one another, summoning one another before the magistrate, charging one another, law-suits before the ungodly. Fellow members of the Body of Christ! Oh, what a misapprehension of the Body of Christ. That is, they were standing up and fighting for their own rights.

He goes on. You come soon upon some terrible disorders at the Lord's Table. One was that they were turning the Lord's Table into a revelry, a feast. People better off in this world's goods were bringing to the feast luxuries, and people who were poorly off could only just bring their little, and there was the class distinction, and all that sort of thing. The Apostle says: Have you not homes? If you want to glut yourselves at least have the decency to do it in your own home in private; do not do it as an assembly of the Lord's people. You see they often turned their common meal into a sacrament. They met together, eat and drank together and then as spontaneously as if it were the natural thing they made of their meal a testimony, but this thing had so degenerated as to make it a commonplace, as we have mentioned, and all the glory, beauty, sacredness of the Body of Christ and Blood of Christ had been dragged down to this. No small problem that in itself to have to deal with. There were other aspects of this matter which we will not deal with.

You pass on still further and you come to disorders in the assembly in general. People usurping authority, and you know what the Apostle has to say about disorder in the House of God. The place of men is under the sovereign Headship of Christ in a spirit of subjection, fulfilling their ministry in the House of God. But here men were taking authority themselves and not leaving their authority in subjection to Christ. And then women, out of their divinely appointed place, upsetting the whole order of the assembly. The Apostle tells them what

this means. You get out of your Divine covering and get into touch with the evil spirits who deceived Eve. The Devil is out to disintegrate this assembly along the same line, and you are giving him the chance he wants by this disorder. The whole matter was one of order. The Lord has an order for His House, and all may fulfil their ministry—women and men—if they keep to His order.

I think any one who had not the foundations in themselves well established would give up this situation, abandon it, run away, do what the counsellors advised David to do, flee to the mountain. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Surely with a situation like that the foundations are destroyed? Not a bit of it! I come back and see that after all Paul does not run away, he does not accept that the foundations are destroyed; but he does see that those foundations are being robbed of their value by all this. This is the thing which destroys the foundations in their real virtue.

The Natural and the Spiritual.

Now do you want an exposition of what Paul means by wood, hay, stubble? That is it! The Word interprets itself. What did he mean by putting upon the foundation a superstructure of wood, hay, stubble? He meant all that. Divisions, schisms, worldly wisdom, intellectual glorying, and all the rest. This is something which will be destroyed by the fire. What will you have left? When you are building with that material you cannot be building with the other at the same time, therefore you will have nothing left. Do you want an exposition of what Paul means in the second chapter by the spiritual and the natural? "Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged (discerned)." Natural and spiritual. We know that word natural, in the Greek, is the word soulial, or soulish man, and he is set over against the spiritual man. What is the soulish man? One Corinthians tells you; all that. The man who is handling spiritual things with natural wisdom, he is the soulish man. The man who is influenced and actuated by his own natural likes and dislikes, preferences, sympathies and antipathies—Paul, Apollos, Peter—that is the soulish man. But over against him is set the spiritual man. The man who is not actuated

primarily by his own worldly reason, but looks to the Lord the Spirit for his understanding in the things of the Lord. The spiritual man is never influenced or governed by his own likes or dislikes for people or teaching or anything else. He is actuated by what the Lord likes. He does not say: I prefer this man to that, this line of teaching to that. He says: Has Paul got something of Christ? has Peter got something of Christ? Well, I will have all, it is Christ I am after. Never mind what kind of a vessel, it is Christ I am after. There are no divisions in the spiritual man, no preferences in the spiritual man. He may know secretly what naturally he would like, but he does not allow those things to come, to prejudice his mind or in any way affect his relationship. The spiritual man does not go to law with a believer to fight for his own rights. The spiritual man is not guilty of fornication. The spiritual man does not bring disorder into the House of God; it is the man of soul who does that. You see you have got a clear exposition with the whole letter of the meaning of the natural or psychical and spiritual.

How Paul Won at Corinth.

Do you see what I am getting at? It brings me right back to my beginning. What kind of a building is to be suitable to the Divine foundation? Well, we have seen how Paul faced his problem. Oh, magnificent example of how to face a spiritual problem! I am not coveting to face a problem like that in one assembly. God forbid that it ever should be; but I do see here the most magnificent example of how a humanly impossible situation is faced, met, dealt with, and triumphed over. I am so glad Paul won through. Read the second letter and you see he has won, he is on top, and they are out with him. Everything was in a state of suspense so far as ministry was concerned in his first letter. The second letter is the letter of ministry. "Therefore seeing we have received this ministry, even as we obtained mercy, we faint not: but we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Then a wonderful chapter on Godly sorrow leading to repentance, and what the fruit of that repentance is. But he has won, that is the point; solved the problem from every standpoint.

How did he do it? Open at chapter one again. I see Paul away there with this whole problem spread out before him. Yes, bowed, concerned; praying, saying: Lord, this is a terrible thing, only You can meet it, but something must be done, this does not glorify You: give me the key to the situation, put into my hand the key to the whole thing. And as he sought the Lord, it flashed into him, and perhaps he shouted: I have found it; and sat down to write. Chapter one; put your pencil under every reference to the Lord Jesus and you will have seventeen blue pencil marks in thirty-one verses, an average of more than one to every two verses. Gather that all up into the grand statement: "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." What is the solution? Giving the Lord Jesus His full and right place! Put the Lord Jesus into His place as absolute Lord in the heart, in the life, in the assembly, and all these foul birds will go out before the light. If the Lord Jesus is dominant in our hearts divisions will go. You will not have to clear them up, they will go. What we need for all our divisions, our lack of love, our schism, our likes and dislikes, is a fulness of Christ. Christ as Lord, Christ as Master, Christ reigning. And like evil creatures in a dark cellar scuttle away when the light comes on, so will divisions and schisms, and all that makes for them, go, when Christ comes into His place. It is the cure for everything.

If the foundation is to be justified it must be justified in a superstructure after its own kind. Christ at the root, and Christ the stem, branches, and fruit. It is all Christ. We have something to think about. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Destroyed in this sense, that they are made void by what is being put on them. What can the righteous do? Well, there is nothing to be done but one thing, but that one thing will do all the rest; that is, bring the Lord into His place. Oh, Paul must have had a wonderful faith in Christ; facing a situation like that, beloved. Sit down with any one phase of it and see how you would like to tackle it; and then taking the whole thing—more than I have given you—and realising you have a spiritual responsibility for that situation, you want a mighty faith to believe that whole situation will yield if only the Lord Jesus can be brought

into His place. It will do it, and it will again. There is no problem, no difficulty which cannot be solved by the enthroning of Christ. All the problems in this world, and of all the nations, are going to be solved by the enthronement of Christ. There is no other solution, but this is the sure solution. God has bound up everything to that, that all things are going to be settled when His Son has His place. But judgment must begin at the House of God; it must start with us.

I have used all this by way of illustration. It may have an application to us in some way or other. Whether that be so or not is for us to determine before the Lord. Whether we are guilty of any of these things in spirit, in principle, if not in act. If it does not come home to us in any specific application, surely the grand truth should help our hearts. How are we going to face our problem, either within ourselves, or without, in others? Only in one way. Seek to have the Lord Jesus exalted in your own heart, and in the hearts of others. Bring Him first into view and then with Him in view all the other things can be dealt with.

I have only touched one aspect of this chapter. I will not go further with it. Paul said: "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." You will see what the foundation is composed of. Jesus Christ as the foundation in this letter includes Christ crucified, the meaning of His death for us: Christ Risen, Christ exalted in the place of Sovereign Head. Those three things comprise the foundation. When we know what the death of Christ means so far as we are concerned, Christ crucified; we died when Christ died. how can we have the natural man then, the carnal man then? He has gone. When we know what it is to be risen with Christ, that is, alive unto God, only unto God; unto no other being or interest, and certainly not unto ourselves, only unto God; when we know what the absolute Lordship of the Lord Jesus means to bring us into His government, how can it ever be; I am of Paul, I of Apollos, I of Peter. They cannot come in there if Christ is all. You find these threads running right through this letter. The Spirit tells you of the Christ Crucified, Risen, Exalted. That is the foundation, and the superstructure must be according to that.

Let the word lead us to glory in Christ, for that is where chapter one ends: "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." T. A.-S.

Some Perils of the Way

THE Word of God is strewn with instances of how good people were either caught in traps and snares, or were just saved from such by a small margin.

There is no doubt that the Adversary is out to cripple, spoil, or make havoc of the work of God by any means in his power, and where he cannot do so by direct methods, he will attempt it by the indirect course of deception, and subterfuge.

The servants of the Lord have no small amount of warning in the Scriptures in the direction of watchfulness. Sometimes lessons of the most vital importance can only be learned by painful experience, but there is something to be gained from the experiences of those who have gone ahead, as well as from a spiritual grasp of the teaching of the Word.

If we did but see the spiritual factor in the things recorded, we should see how frequently history repeats itself, even if the outward form is not always the same.

We take three instances for the moment, and we are sure that all servants of God who have any measure of experience will recognise how true to life are the perils therein constituent.

1. The Peril of Mistaken Glorifying.

It was Hezekiah who fell into this snare. Hezekiah had been ill with an illness which, but for a Divine intervention, would have been fatal. By such an intervention a lease had been added to his life. Just at that point, when God had done a great thing for him, and made possible a further period of valuable ministry, the Enemy seized the occasion and the overjoyed state of Hezekiah to lead him beyond the limits of discretion. It was a cleverly laid plot, and came along the line of human sympathy. A ruler from far off Babylon who had heard of his sickness sent messengers with tokens of friendly congratulation, if he had heard of the recovery, or of sympathy because of his sickness. This was, apparently, a kindly act, but it must be borne in mind (and this is where Hezekiah failed) that friendliness with the

nations round about was always a matter of serious question with God as to Israel, and there could never be eliminated the element of treachery, though unrecognised, which would rise to take advantage of friendship (?) when the occasion made it an advantage to do so. There were other factors, but Hezekiah was caught in the trap of sentimentalism, and uncovered all the glories of the holy things to such as could only value them carnally, thus stimulating a desire to exploit them for the ends of the flesh. Read the story in 2 Kings xx, and you will see what place this injudicious act had in the tragedy of Israel's later history.

Those glories of the gold, silver, precious oil, spices, armour, etc., were the secret glories of the inner life of a people in specific spiritual relationship with God. They were the wrought things of fire, and suffering, and the Holy Ghost. The flesh has not right to look upon them, and they may not be displayed to the carnal mind. Then, again, they may not be gloried in as things in themselves; like blessings, spiritual qualities, spiritual riches, and spiritual gifts. They must always be kept sacredly in closest relation to Him Whom they represent. They are His excellencies, and they are not for boasting, or showing off. They are not for advertising, or for making use of for an impression. There are many things which come out of deep exercise with God which cannot be explained to the unspiritual, neither can they be used to entice patronage or favour. There is a right kind of glorifying in the Lord, and a proper chastened magnifying of His works; but there is also a dangerous uncovering to the uncrucified, un-circumcised, desire of men. The Lord Himself, knowing what was in men, would not commit Himself to them, and there are often times when the enemy will use spiritual information given to the flesh as a means of destroying the true testimony. The only way to rightly possess the riches of Christ is that of the Cross, and if we give the knowledge of these things without pressing home the absolute necessity for the flesh, in its desire for power, glory, influence,

position, reputation, and possession, to be utterly set aside by crucifixion with Christ, then we shall see what we have uncovered only used for the destroying of the true spiritual value of the testimony.

2. The Peril of Unspiritual Solicitude.

Our second instance takes us into the Book of Ezra, chapter iv. The building of the House of God as a place for the expression of His thought in fulness is not going to be carried through without every kind of opposition which the Enemy can bring against it. When that is finished he will have no more place. He will neither have anything more to do, nor will he have any more opportunity for trying it. Hence, by every means, he must interfere with this work.

Amongst the almost countless methods used by him, one of the most effectual has been, and still is, what we have called Unspiritual Solicitude. That is, the help (?) of those who are not walking in true fellowship with the Lord.

Argue as you may for getting people interested in good things, and thereby getting them "saved," the flesh and the natural man never can build a spiritual house. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh," and it will never be anything else. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven." A spiritual state by being born of the Spirit is indispensable to doing spiritual work.

We do not say this without a good deal of experience in the matter, and we know that, in the long run, what was done by the unspiritual has not stood the test. But worse, the mass of the trouble, disintegration, discord, division, weakness, and dishonour to God in Christian work has been the fruit of the uncrucified flesh, and unspiritual people. Like those in the chapter above-mentioned, the evil is so often hidden in an outward solicitude and sympathetic interest, often with a confession of oneness in the interest and the object of the interest.

It is always a dangerous thing, and not at all in keeping with the principle of Scripture to allow some from without whose spiritual qualities and walk with God have been unproved to take up the sacred responsibilities of the work of the Lord. This is not meant to apply to the point of suspecting everyone who comes along. But service should grow out of fellowship and life together in the Lord.

From what the Holy Spirit shows us in

Ezra iv., we are able to see that those who came in such a sympathetic (?) way were after all enemies; and while all who come in solicitude may not be consciously or deliberately set upon mischief, the principle holds good that, all who are not truly in fellowship with the Lord in life and walk will prove to be an adverse factor in His work sooner or later, and the cause of weakness.

3. The Peril of Untried Workers.

For this further illustration we turn to Acts xiii. In this chapter we find ourselves at a point in the journey of Barnabas and Paul which brings out from obscurity a secret flaw in their method. It is in Perga in Pamphylia. One—John (Mark) whom they had taken with them for the work, broke down and returned to Jerusalem.

There are one or two things in the background of this young man going with them which ought to be investigated. Primarily this, that we do read of the Holy Ghost saying, "Separate me Barnabas and Paul, AND John Mark unto the work whereto I have called them."

The inclusion was one of a purely personal and arbitrary character, and apparently of a very casual order.

John Mark was evidently a young man of some earnestness and apparent promise. He had a Christian home, for it was in the house of his mother that the prayer meeting was held when Peter was in prison. These things evidently led Barnabas to think of him as being promising and, perhaps, a useful addition to the party.

But when all is said, he was an unproved worker, and sooner or later it was inevitable that the weakness should make itself manifest.

Now, it is true that every worker has got to be tested somewhere, and many who were no more proved beforehand than was John Mark have gone forth and made good. But here is a case where so much depended upon the workers being men who had been tried, and where it was so very necessary that the Holy Ghost should do the selecting. The issue of this matter was not just that John Mark returned from the battle, but that confusion and an abiding cause for sorrow and shame arose out of it in the very beginnings of this great epoch. It is useless to try and settle who was right, Barnabas or Paul, in the subsequent refusal of him for a second journey of these two men. Probably they were both right. Paul was right

in not exposing the next journey to the possible further weakness and further breakdown. Barnabas was right in taking the position that because a young man had failed once, he should not be deprived of a second chance. But then the two positions cannot be made one, and so it must be, either that a measure of positive right on one side or the other is surrendered, or you must admit that there was a mistake and weakness in the first place.

The sequel to this episode which is given us by Paul in his letter to Timothy shows that Paul stuck to his original position. He had taken the attitude that in such work as that to which he was called those who took a place should be proved and known. When, after years, John Mark had proved himself, Paul was quite ready to have him as a fellow-worker and companion, and instructed that he should be brought to him.

It is tremendously important that for the sake of the testimony, the necessity of unbroken fellowship in the case of those whom the Holy Ghost has brought together for a great work, there should not be the jeopardising element of the unproved and unestablished worker.

The Assembly ought to provide an ample testing-ground for all who are to go forth. If the Assembly is constituted and governed by the Holy Spirit, all the weaknesses of its members will come to light. The fact that it

is so in many local "families" of the Lord's people, is intended to result in moral and spiritual training for the time when the members will have to stand against common foes without the spiritual home-life immediately around or behind.

There are terrible tragedies on the "mission field" in the way of broken relationships which were intended to be very fruitful for the Lord, because the training and proving in a home-fellowship was not adequate. This whole thing is spiritual. It is not just getting on happily with other workers in the more or less comfortable conditions of organised work at home. It is being in a spiritual testimony, against which the devil is positively set. Here there are met factors which are not just ordinary social difficulties, however unpleasant. It is the devil out to ruin the testimony by setting the Lord's people at variance, and anyone who has not learned to triumph in the matter at the home end is not safe to be sent forth to the realms where the devil has so much more of his own kind to play with, and so much more in every way by which to cause pressure and strain.

Any "training" in a college ought to be but an adjunct to equipment, not THE equipment. The real training is spiritual, not academic; and this is only possible in a spiritual Assembly.

There will always be a serious loss in any life if it has not had a true Assembly background.

T. A.-S.

"To love our Captain so, makes for a perfect comradeship. 'And the three brake through': they knew that they could count upon one another without reserve to the end. We had learned already that unhindered prayer together was not just expedient, but vital, and nothing kills that kind of prayer so swiftly as even the lightest flicker of uncertainty in one about another. Perhaps that was why we were first shown the crystal quality of loyalty, for our prayer-life together was to become the chief thing with us all. And it meant depth of conviction about certain matters, and singleness of mind, the opposite of a scattered life with affects nothing: 'Better plough deep than wide.'"

From 'Gold (ord.)'

I Will Build My Church *R*

I.

READING : 1 Peter ii. 1-12

Matthew xvi. 16-18.

WE turn to the Word of the Lord in Matthew xvi. 16-18 ; the fragment of that passage which is basic to our meditations is that in the 18th verse : "I will build my church," and we will immediately seek to explain what we have in view. And it is, that which issues from the death and resurrection of Christ, and its real nature. It is here called by Him : "My church," and that embraces matters no fewer and of no lesser importance than the Person of Christ, the death and resurrection of Christ, the heavenly position and activity of Christ, the advent and vocation of the Holy Spirit, the coming again of the Lord Jesus, the new birth, the warfare with Satan, and the vocation of believers in the ages to come. There you have a catalogue of the magnitudes of the Word of God, and these are all included in that phrase : "My church." So that it will be seen at once, that to be occupied with what the Lord Jesus calls "My church" is to be occupied with no small thing—not that it is my intention to deal with all these matters, but I simply want to have you impressed at the outset with the great importance of this matter.

Our specific object at this time is the nature of what Christ effects and brings into being in His resurrection ; and we shall consider this in two ways. Firstly, what we may call contemplatively or objectively, and secondly, introspectively or subjectively. That is, on the one hand we shall look *at* its nature as it is presented to us, and then on the other hand we shall look *into* it and see its deeper nature and content.

Peter's Explanation of what Christ said to Him.

To begin, then, with the contemplation of "My church." We have read a passage which defines for us what Peter—the one to whom the statement was specifically made—understood it to mean : ".....upon this rock I will build my church" ; he did not understand it at the time. That is quite apparent from what he said a few minutes afterward, but he did come

to understand what the Lord had said to him, and he gives us what he understood to be the meaning of that phrase : "I will build my church," or : ".....upon this rock I will build my church." Listen again to his own definition and explanation of those words : "Unto whom coming" (that is, of course, the Lord Jesus) "a living stone....." What was the rock ? "Unto whom coming a living stone, rejected indeed of men....." Look again at Matthew xvi. and you will find immediately after the Lord Jesus had said those words to Peter : "From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things.....and be killed....." "Unto whom coming, a living stone, *rejected indeed of men*, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones are built up a spiritual house....." "I will build my church." ".....built up a spiritual house....." That is Peter's explanation and definition : ".....built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Because it is contained in scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious : And he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame." There you have what Peter understood to be the meaning of the Lord's words in Matthew xvi. 16-18.

When we turn to the letter to the Ephesians we have what the Apostle Paul came by the Holy Spirit to understand to be the meaning of such words. We shall leave that for a little while, returning to it later, bearing in mind as we go on, that what is before us is the nature, not just the object, but the nature of that which Christ brings into being in His resurrection.

Christ is the Builder.

Let us study this passage in Matthew a little more closely, and see what is implicit in the statement. We begin with the personal statement of the Lord Jesus : "I will build my church." "I" ; that carries with it two things quite clearly. One is that Christ builds the Church. That is discriminating and important. Christ builds the Church. No *man* can build the Church. Christ is the Builder. "And the

Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved." No *man* can add to the Church. No *man* can constitute the Church, no company of men, no committee of men. This is something which is the Lord's doing, and if the Church is eternal, only the Lord can build it. What man may do will be but for time. The second thing in connection with that "I" is this; that in view of the imminent cross, the statement—"I will build my Church"—means that the Risen Christ will build His Church. He looks right across the grave, He looks right through death, He looks to the other side of Jerusalem, His crucifixion and all that was about to take place there, He looks through it, beyond it, and says: "I will build my Church." It is the absolute confidence and certainty that He will go through, that He will come out on the other side; and He will be as truly on the other side of Calvary and of death and all that that means as He is here and now on this side of it; and now as One Who has already in faith and assurance and certainty passed through it, He says: "I will build." That is the faith with which the Lord Jesus faces the cross. It is a challenge. It is as though He were saying: "Let Elders, Scribes, Pharisees, Rulers, men and demons, and all the power of spiritual death do their work, and their utmost. I will build My Church; I face the Scribes, Pharisees, Elders, Rulers, people, devil and death, and I will build My Church in spite of them all!" That "I" is a tremendous "I" as it comes there with the cross clearly in view, imminent.

The Cross essential for the Church.

Now that leads us to three other things. The cross and the resurrection mean, firstly, that the cross *accomplishes* something. You look at it this way and you will see what I mean. Here is the Lord Jesus standing with all that in view, and yet with an object which is the object for which He came, the object which has been in the Father's heart, the Father's thought and intention from eternity; the object which is the dominating object of His very Being: "My Church": "I will build," and yet before He can build that Church there must be this thing, this death, this cross, and this resurrection. It is not just some incident in His life, it is not just something which comes in the order and progress and programme of things; it is something which is basic to that object, without which that object cannot be, because this cross and this resurrection is to be the scene and the

occasion of accomplishing something, apart from which accomplishment that Church cannot be. So that the cross and resurrection of the Lord Jesus accomplished something. They are a part of a scheme; a definitely arranged order of things in which they take a very vital and important place.

I have to remind you that we are working towards seeing the nature of the thing that results from His resurrection, and therefore it is important to see that that character, that nature is resultant from His death and resurrection: that the death and resurrection, the cross of the Lord Jesus, give character to the Church. And that is why they fulfil a purpose and are a part of the whole design, because that Church cannot be without them, inasmuch as it derives its very quality from them. You see the Lord Jesus, although He was set upon that object, could never have realised it by leaping over from Caesarea Philippi to the resurrection; that is, leaving the cross out. It was essential to His end because it had got to yield certain features which would constitute the Church. Those things we shall see later.

Secondly, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus means a new ground by reason of a new state. Something has been left behind in the death. Some whole realm and order of things has been dismissed, put away, and entirely new ground is taken in the resurrection, and that new ground represents a new state, an entirely new state; and it is on that ground that the Church is built.

Then, thirdly, the world is put aside. In the cross, the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the world is put aside, is left behind. Oh, the stress that the Lord Himself laid upon that truth as we have it brought before us by John in his Gospel xvi. 16-18, 20, 21, 22, 23. "In that day"—now go on to chapter xvii. 6, and He strikes that note continually in the 17th chapter: "I am no more in the world..... I come to thee." "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." The world is left behind. The world is ruled out, new ground is taken, and on that ground the Church is built. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Galatians explains the meaning of that so far as spiritual experience is concerned: "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." And when you and I testify to our union with the Lord Jesus in His death and

burial and resurrection in the waters of baptism, we spiritually accept the position where the world is ruled out and left behind, and we take new ground ; and that is the ground upon which the Church is built. In a word, the Church is built upon the ground where the world has no place. It is outside of the world. In saying that, we are, of course, saying something that is very familiar to most, but something which is growingly important in our time. The nature of that which comes out in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is that it has left the world behind, and that it is outside of the world, in that sense in which the Lord Jesus used the words in His prayer : "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "..... even as I....." You cannot now associate the Lord Jesus with this world ; you cannot ! And in exactly the same way you cannot associate His Church with it, and the church which is associated with it is not His Church.

Eternal Purpose.

Secondly, ".....will build." We have seen a little of the implications of that personal pronoun "I." Now secondly, ".....will build," and for our present purpose we note two things. This means that the Risen Christ will be marked by purpose. "I *will* build....."; marked by purpose. I do not merely mean determination to do something ; but characterised by a spirit, a power of purpose. I wonder if you have recognised that feature which comes spontaneously into the life of everyone who becomes vitally joined with the Risen Lord, that that life immediately assumes a spirit of purpose. If it never had a sense of purpose before, it has now. If it was a wandering, indefinite thing before, without object or aim or direction, the one thing that marks that life now is a sense of purpose, a sense of object, a definiteness of direction, a poise ; and although as yet all that that means may not have broken upon the understanding, there is a sense that has come, and that sense has come out of eternity, that life has come into the eternal, and by its union with Him has reached right back into the before times eternal, into the counsels of the Godhead, and has received now its character from those eternal counsels of the eternal purpose of God. As that life goes on with God it will move more and more to the place and state represented by the words of the Apostle Paul : "This one thing I do....." It is a sense of purpose. It is the purpose of the

Risen Lord. This statement of His says to me, as I meditate upon it : "I am set upon My Church and I give Myself utterly toward its realisation ; the building of it and the consummating of it dominate and govern all My thoughts, and draw out all My resources." "I am occupied with this thing ; this is My purpose." And you know that when you come into the Ephesian letter that that is what you come into at once. ".....quickened us together with Christ..... and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together....." You are in the realm of the purposing of God concerning Christ, from eternity. "I will build My Church." An atmosphere, a spirit, a sense of purpose. And, beloved friends, there is, I think, much room in many of the children of God, for that spirit, that sense, that dominating consciousness of purpose, so that they shall become absorbed, engrossed, dominated by one thing, the end which Christ has in view, and be burnt up with His objective. There is far too much indefiniteness, and it is that indefiniteness, that lack of vision, that lack of absorbing devotion, that lack of dominating objective, which leaves room for so much of the scattering, destructive weakening, paralysing work of the Devil. There is no greater defence against the Devil than for your whole being to be dominated by one object. We leave far too much room for him to come in by being like David, on his bed when the time came round that kings went out to battle. The Devil played havoc with David that night and David was weakened to the end of his days, and never recovered, because at that moment he was not taken up with the real business of life. The Lord would have us in union with Him in this sense, that we have this feature of His marking our lives clearly : "This one thing I do" : a sense of Divine purpose eating us up ; the zeal of His House. "I will build My Church" is a statement which carries with it the spirit of One Who has one all-inclusive and governing object in view, and when you come to your later New Testament you find that that is the thing which marked apostles and believers.

Read the Thessalonian letters again and you will see that that is the spirit of believers in general there. And read the letters of the Apostles themselves from the standpoint of the Apostles, and you find that their hearts are eaten up with this one object. Hear Paul : ".....that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." That is something which has

drawn out his whole being. Oh, that we should be one hundred per cent on the Divine purpose, pouring ourselves into it without any reserve. That is union with the Risen Lord. That is to be the nature of the thing which comes up in His resurrection. It is something governed by one object—purpose and action. “I will build My Church.” We must remember that the Lord Jesus, from the day of His resurrection until now is in action. There is a sense in which He has sat down. That sense is that He has accomplished all the work necessary to secure the consummation of His Church. He is now at work by the Holy Spirit in the outworking of the accomplished work. He is still working. “He ever liveth to make intercession.....” is one picture of Him in action. “I will build.....” He is building, He is in action, and He would have all who are in union with Him, not only characterised by a sense of purpose, but definitely in action under that sense. It is just possible to have a sense of purpose, and it lies in to-morrow, that elusive never-arriving to-morrow, to-morrow that never comes. When we are a little more qualified, when certain things have taken a certain shape, or transpired—there is always that will-o-the-wisp future which we never reach, but when we will do what we purpose doing ; but we are not doing it. The Lord Jesus not only has an object, but He is actively engaged upon His object, and we are the proof of that. Union with Him means that we are in action, definitely stretched out in action under a mastering purpose out from eternity ; for the eternal element arises with the Risen Lord. Temporary elements have passed in His death. “I will build My Church.....” Then we must be governed by a sense of purpose in this regime of the active Holy Spirit. Of course, the nature of the Church which He will build has been seen in Peter’s words : “A spiritual house.” It is a spiritual thing.

The Church is Christ’s.

“My Church.” There you have the implication of relationship and proprietorship. The Lord Jesus builds His Church, that which is peculiarly His in the sense that He has purchased it, He has made it His own by right of eternal choice, creation, and redemption. It is His. It belongs to Him. And there again we have the importance of taking account of the fact that the Sovereign rights in and over the Church belong to the Lord Jesus and are vested in no one else.

It is not given to man or men to lord it over God’s heritage ; to have the supreme government of the Church. It is *His* Church, and He is Lord of the Church, and the Church which He builds is that which represents the absolute Sovereign Headship of the Lord Jesus, to order, to govern, to direct, control, to have the first and the last word, and every word between. It is where Christ is Lord. That is simple ; perhaps too simple and too familiar, but we are working on toward our object.

The Church’s Victory over Death.

“.....and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” That phrase is explained in the Old Testament to mean “the house of death.” “The house of death shall not prevail against it.” In Acts ii. you have an explanation of that : “.....thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption,” the first statement. The second, “.....whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death : because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.” “Holden,” in the grip, the mastery, the dominion of death ; the house of death. The words : “.....shall not prevail.....” more literally are : “Shall have no power of mastery.” “The house of death shall have no power of mastery.” That related to the Lord Jesus, and that relates to everyone in that union with Him as a part of His Church. He went into the house of death ; the house of death closed upon Him. We must remember that death is always a thing of positive antagonism. There is a lot of romancing and sentimentalism about the friendliness of death ; but the Word of God never suggests the friendliness of death. Death is always an Enemy in the Word of God and always stands in positive opposition to God’s intention, to God’s purpose. It is the opposite, and that actively so, of what God eternally intended, and at last death as the ultimate Enemy will be destroyed. It was necessary for the Lord Jesus to go into the house of death, representing all those who, because of the fall, have been enclosed in the house of death. But He went in in the power of something which no other who ever entered there possessed, and while the house of death closed upon Him as representing man in sin, it found that it had closed upon something else as well, which was more than its master, and : “He tore the bars away,” and “Up from the grave He arose,” and death, the house of death could hold Him

no longer. "I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I became dead, and behold, I am alive unto the ages of the ages, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." In virtue of that, though the house of death may close upon you and me, if the Lord tarry, those gates of the house of death shall not have power to prevent our being there in the perfected Church, in the consummated building of Christ. The house of death will have no power to retain you and me when that trump shall sound. He has the keys, that is, the authority, over the house of death, and death will not be able to frustrate the realisation of His intention, His purpose. The gates of Hades, the house of death shall not prevail, shall not have power to prevent. That applied to the Lord Jesus, and that applies to the saints.

And now to close, for the moment; the implication of this statement of the Lord Jesus reveals the oneness of Christ and His Church. "I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" means, if it means anything, that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is essential to the very life and being of the Church. To prevent Him from rising would be to prevent Her from having an existence. If Christ rises then it is unto the realisation of His Church, so that He and She are one by reason of one mighty victory over death. And that, I believe, is why, above all other things, there has been such a dead set through the ages against the testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Why, immediately you come to the testimony of the Risen life of Christ you become the object and target of all hell's assaults; and the one thing of which you become more acutely conscious than anything else is of the spirit and power of death, death working as a force against spirit, soul, mind, body. Why? Because the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the greatest thing in the

Bible, and upon the resurrection of the Lord Jesus everything in the Bible hangs. The purposes of God from eternity, before ever a page of the Bible was written, hung upon the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. It is the central and supreme thing in the history of the ages since man has fallen. And that testimony to have an expression in individual lives, and more, in a company, the Church, is therefore, the one supreme thing which rouses hell to its depths. Hell cares not about our systems of teaching, whether they are true or whether they are false; but hell does care about our living in the power of His resurrection. It does not matter to the Enemy how wonderfully accurate we may be in our Biblical interpretation, but the Enemy does, with all his might, withstand our Biblical expression in a life triumphant over death. It is for that that the Church has been brought into being. It is that which is the Church's object here on the earth, to show forth Christ in Risen life and in Risen power. Very often the teaching can become the very thing which covers over and blankets and damps and numbs that life. You and I, beloved, have got to be very careful that we never become so interested in Christian doctrine and truth that it becomes the thing which occupies us pre-eminently. What you and I have to be occupied with more than anything else is the living of a life which is triumphant over death. That is a far more difficult thing than studying Christian doctrine; it is the battle of the ages. The nature of that which comes up with the Risen Lord is that it is a living expression of the fact that in Him to the full, and in Him initially and progressively, the gates of Hades, the house of death has not prevailed and cannot prevail. We are called for that. The Lord lead us into the nature of that which He calls "My Church."

T. A.-S.

(To be continued.)

"MEN'S HEARTS FAILING THEM FOR FEAR"

A little booklet on the present situation as pointing to the nearness of Christ's return

BY S. ALEXANDER

For free distribution,

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The Anointing of the Holy Spirit

(Continued.)

The Assembly as the Anointed Vessel.

READING : 1 Samuel xvi. 13.
2 Chronicles v. 1, 9, 13, 14.
Exodus xxx. 22, 25, 26.
Luke iv. 16-18.
1 Corinthians xii. 12-14.

CONTINUING our occupation with the matter of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, we are now turning to that aspect of this great truth which brings the assembly of God into view; and what we have before us is **The Assembly as the anointed vessel.**

By linking together passages as we have done above we are only bringing counterparts into view. We first of all saw David anointed personally. Then we were seeing the great inclusive, all embracing purpose of David's life, and his anointing in relation to the whole testimony. In the passage in 2 Chronicles we see that purpose realised and that anointing which was upon him personally now manifested upon the temple; shall we say a collective thing: out of the personal anointing has come the collective anointing. The one leads to the other, the second is the justification of the first. The glory of the Lord filling the temple, the cloud taking up residence in the whole comprehensive order of things in the temple is the explanation of its full intent as to that individual or personal anointing which was upon David at the beginning. Then we have brought other two things together. The Lord Jesus anointed personally, separately; declaring the Spirit of the Lord is upon Him; that is Christ Personal; and alongside of that 1 Corinthians xii. 12, 13, the one Body and the one anointing definitely mentioned, with its tremendously striking and impressive statement that: ".....as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is (the) Christ"—the definite article there: ".....*the* Christ." It is no new thing perhaps to most of us, but it has to be brought again before us in this particular connection; for what is clearly said there is this, that this anointing upon the Lord Jesus is a collective and cor-

porate anointing, and that for present and future universal purposes Christ is so vitally one with all His members that the members, joined to the Head, have the effect of being one Christ. Not meaning that Christ ceases to have a personal and separate existence, but now, for the manifestation and expression of Himself, and for the full realisation of Himself, He is no longer just a separate individual entity, He is the Head of a Body, and He is Head and Body by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has made the Head and the members one entity, which is called "the Christ." "For in one Spirit were we all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit," the Spirit of the anointing, the Spirit of the Anointed, the Christ, one Christ, the Christos, the Anointed—a tremendous statement! Thus the assembly becomes the anointed vessel, the Body of Christ, anointed in union with Him: "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." Now to give a single emphasis to that I read the passage from Exodus xxx. in connection with the making of the holy anointing oil and underline the clause: ".....thou shalt anoint the tent of meeting." Everything else in it and about it was to be anointed likewise, but I select the inclusive and comprehensive thing: "—thou shalt anoint the tent of meeting," that is the assembly. It is the tent of meeting, the tent of the congregation, the tent of the assembly, and it is to be anointed.

Corporate Anointing.

Now let me just say a few words on the matter of corporate anointing.

This matter of corporate anointing with which many of us are so familiar has to be brought into view as the Lord leads. Let me say the simplest thing about this, that the New Testament knows nothing of merely separate, individualistic anointings. I did not say individual anointing, I said individualistic anointings. Of course, you will have to understand

the usage of words to appreciate that distinction. The anointing does come upon us individually as members. We are not all one member, but many, and every member is anointed, but there is a difference between an individual anointing and an individualistic anointing. That which is individualistic would mean that the member is a separate thing, something apart, detached. That is what we mean by individualism, which is one of the isms that is not recognised by the Lord. It goes into the category of false teaching; individualism. That is, that which makes any man or woman something in themselves apart, a law unto themselves, a separate entity; one by themselves doing their own work, thinking their own thoughts, even religiously and spiritually. There is no such thing in the eyes of the New Testament as individualistic anointing. Let me put that in another way. There are not so many anointings as there are individual members of the Body of Christ. While every member will receive the anointing, it will always be *the* anointing and not his anointing or her anointing; it will always be the one anointing. You do not receive one anointing and I another. I can put that more plainly. You do not receive one Holy Spirit and I receive another Holy Spirit. There are not so many Holy Spirits as there are believers. There is one Holy Spirit. "There is one body, and one Spirit.....One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all....." The anointing is one anointing and that anointing is not, in the first place, given to the members. That anointing is made to reside on and within the Lord Jesus as Head of the Body. It is the Head which receives the anointing always. The rest of the Body gets this benefit by reason of its relation to the Head, comes into the good of the anointing by being organically united with the Head. And the anointing is upon the Lord Jesus as Head of the Body the Church. Our receiving of the anointing is as we come into the Body of Christ and under the sovereign Headship of the Lord Jesus as anointed. This one anointing is for all members, but only by reason of corporate and organic union with Christ as Head. So that the anointing is one anointing and not many anointings. All the members share in the anointing, but never do get a separate anointing from the rest, in the thought of God. Now that has a very wide range of meaning.

God is against Division.

That, in the first place, means that God recognises no independence, spiritual independence on the part of His people. God never goes with a spirit of independence. God never goes with a spirit of separation. God never goes with a spirit of detachment. Now I am afraid I must come back and be very elementary in explaining that. I am saying "a spirit of detachment," "a spirit of separation." There are times when by reason of denial of foundational verities of the faith there has to be withdrawing, but that is not a spirit of separation in the sense in which I am using the term. I mean that disposition to be exclusive, to be separate, to be detached, to work apart, to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, to work and act independently of other believers with whom the Lord has joined us in Himself; the spirit of separation. The Lord is not with that, and never goes with that. The direction of the Holy Spirit is always toward fellowship and oneness; for this reason, that the Holy Spirit has come in relation to the testimony of Jesus. That which He did in His Cross is a very vital part of the testimony of Jesus, that which He did to destroy the disintegrating effect of sin and the Devils' interference with God's creation. The whole direction of Satanic activity is to divide, to split up and cause friction, warfare, conflict. That has been the effect of sin and Satan. God's one unity of a universe was broken to fragments by Satanic interference, and the whole universe was shot through with discord, with schism. Calvary sees that work of the Devil dealt with, and that is why the Lord Jesus right on the threshold, the verge of His cross, just as—as it were—He was stepping on to the altar, prayed the prayer of John xvii: ".....that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." That is the prayer with which He goes to Calvary, and that prayer was answered in Calvary. That prayer has been wholly and fully answered in the cross. Beloved, you and I *in Christ* will never be more one than we are. You say that is a poor look-out! In ourselves the oneness may be weak and lacking but in Christ you and I are organically one, sharing one life. In the Christ Who is at the right hand of God there is the unity of the born anew ones which can never be improved upon. That is a testimony in heaven. The Body is

one, says the Word ; it is one in Him, in the Head. The Holy Spirit's presence in all the members of the Body constitutes a oneness deeper than consciousness, reason, feeling, recognition ; a very life basis, a oneness is constituted deep down in every child of God like the oneness which exists between the Father and the Son, and when we get to heaven although then we shall enjoy that oneness to the full without interference of this old-man-clement which divides and limits the fellowship now, when we get to heaven and enjoy it we will not be more one then in reality than we are now. It will be manifested. We are never commanded to make the unity of the Spirit, we are exhorted to keep it, to guard it. That means that first of all we must take it as existing. The body is one, so also is the Christ. He prayed that prayer as He went to the cross, and in the cross that prayer was answered. The testimony of Jesus includes that great truth that by His cross He has conquered the Enemy, and destroyed that part of the Enemy's work which brought disruption into God's creation. And in the new creation that spiritual, organic oneness is not only recovered but established beyond the reach of again being destroyed. We shall come to the enjoyment of it only as we come to heaven, as we leave earth. I am not speaking literally, I am speaking spiritually. As we are linked with anything on this earth which is of a dividing character, then we miss the glory of the oneness of the Body and the oneness of Christ. The more earth-bound we are religiously, ecclesiastically, the more we fail of that heavenly reality of the oneness of the Body. Or to put it the other way, the more we come to our heavenly position the more we find it impossible to allow man-made systems, which divide believers into groups, to operate and govern our lives. We are out of it, set free because the unity is in the Head in heaven and as we come to the heavenlies we come to Ephesians where the Body is seen in its oneness. Now the Holy Spirit has come as the Spirit of that testimony and, therefore, one Spirit making one Body, and the Body becomes one by the Spirit.

Organic Oneness.

I have often illustrated these spiritual things by the human body and its double system of control. This body of ours physically is a unity. While it has many members, organs and functions, yet it is a unity, and it is made

an organic unity, one thing, by a double system of control. One is the blood system, the other is the nerve system. The blood system makes the body a whole as an organic living thing. Strangle any one member, stop the circulation, and before long that member ceases to be an active part of that organism. The whole blood system makes the body a single active living unity. The other is the nerve system. We know that every needle point of this entire physical body is governed and controlled by the nerve system. Now this whole nerve system has its base in the head, so that we cannot touch the most minute point with the finest needle without touching the head and registering that touch by reason of the head. The head it is that registers all that. We know it by reason of the base of the nervous system in our heads. We have said that if you take a needle and you understand the brain, and with a fine needle go from point to point in the brain you can put out of action any member of the body. You can put the right hand completely out of action by just touching with a needlepoint in the brain. You can put out the whole of that side by touching a point in the brain. Now the Body of Christ is a counterpart of that spiritually.

Oneness in Life.

The blood system which makes our physical bodies one organically while in action, has its counterpart in the Divine life that is given to us in new birth. We receive life in Christ and that life in the whole body is one life. The great circulation of Divine life through the Body is the basis of, not only the oneness, but active oneness in relation to Christ. If the life is strangled, if that circulation is interrupted, then the wholeness of the Body is spoiled. If two members only, brought into relationship in the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit, indwelt by the Divine life, should come to a place where one of them has violated the spiritual laws of Divine life and thus arrested the circulation, those two will no longer be able to work together, they will no longer be able to co-operate and help one another. There has come about an arrest upon the active principle of corporate life in the Body. So that an Achan can arrest the progress of all Israel on the principle that Israel is a corporate whole governed by one life ; and when one member violates the laws of that life all the Body is brought under arrest. To put it the

other way round ; when all the members have a full tide of Divine life flowing uninterrupted and unhindered, then you get a mighty corporate movement. That is how it was at the beginning. Now Ananias and Sapphira represent the Enemy's effort to interfere with that corporate life and to check the movement of the whole Body, and it was said to be a sin against the Holy Ghost, and the seriousness of that thing is just this, that Satan had interfered and they, in complicity with Satan, had threatened the entire movement of the Church in those days. Now you have in Ananias and Sapphira a literal outworking of that passage in I Cor. iii. 16 : " Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." I Cor. vi. 19 : " What ? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you....."

What I want you to notice is that those two passages do not refer to the same thing, they are not to be put in the marginal reference as synonymous. This passage in chapter vi. 16 refers to our human physical body, as you notice the context : " Flee fornication.....but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What ? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you." Clearly the physical body is there in view. Well, sin against the physical body as a temple of the Holy Ghost is a very grievous thing, but this is an even more solemn thing in chapter three. " Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy ; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." That is collective, corporate, ; that is the assembly. That is not the physical body. That is the plural, not the singular ; the " ye are " there is the House of God. Now note what God says : " If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." See how jealous God is for the Body of Christ, the House of God, the Assembly. Saul of Tarsus came very near destruction on the Damascus Road. Ananias and Sapphira came to judgment in death because in truth the Devil had captured them to arrest and destroy the corporate testimony in the House of God as it was launched on its way in the beginning. It was a blow against the oneness of the Body under the one anointing, and that met this word : "him shall God destroy."

Beloved, it is a terrible thing to put our

hand upon the assembly, it is a terrible thing to touch the Body of Christ. Psalm cv. puts that very plainly : "yea, he reproveth kings for their sakes ; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." Now the assembly is the anointed vessel and we see that the Enemy is out to thwart the mighty effect of that one anointing, to interrupt the progress of it. The one life is seen there corresponding to the blood system. This is the one life by which we move, which is our energy ; Divine life given to us.

Oneness in Intelligence.

But then the nervous system in our physical body has its parallel in the corporate Body of Christ in the Holy Spirit ; He is the Spirit of life. These two things cannot be separated, but there is a difference. The Holy Spirit is the intelligence of this oneness ; the nerve system it is by which we are made aware of things. We have the intelligence of the whole Body by the nerve system because that is registered in the Head ; and the Holy Spirit, the one Spirit makes the Body one in action by a registration of the Divine mind. How important it is to have spiritual intelligence in order to have the Body perfectly functioning. These two things go together. The eyes of the heart had to be enlightened by a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in order to see the full meaning of the Body of Christ. That is the Ephesian position. The Apostle is praying " that.....that.....that." Notice the successive " thats " governing his petitions, and all those petitions are in relation to the Body's union with Christ. The basic thing is : "having the eyes of your heart enlightened " there being given " a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." We shall blunder on and make all kinds of messes and confusions if the Lord does not give us spiritual intelligence ; if we do not recognise that the anointing is meant to bring to us intelligence as to the Lord's mind. I John ii. 20, 27 comes in again to our help. " And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things," and of that is said, "and is true and is no lie." That chapter, I John ii., is a chapter of antichrist and Christ, Christ and antichrist. Many antichrists shall come and declare themselves to be Christ, assume the garb of Christ, the language of Christ, the phraseology of Christ, the doctrine of Christ, many of the ways of Christ ; but still antichrist,

so subtle, so impossible of recognition by the ordinary intelligence even at its best. Over against the antichrists—with their well nigh perfect counterfeiting of Christ—is Christ the Anointed; but the antichrist is the christ without the anointing. How are you to know where the anointing is, that is, where the Christ is? The anointing in you tells you whether the anointing is there or if the anointing is not there. The anointing is one anointing and recognises His own expression, and where He is and where He is not. Have you got that? The anointing is one. Some one or some system comes and poses as Christ the Anointed, but is not the Anointed. How are you going to know that the anointing is not there? By the anointing which is in you which is one anointing, which does not have any fellowship with *that*. But when that which is of the anointing is present the anointing in you flows out to that. That is something only the anointed ones have, something we cannot define, and is not something mental. You are not able to sit down and put it on paper, where the antichrists are wrong; it is the anointing in you that tells you before you can reason or analyse. That is not misjudging, but you know because the anointing in you teacheth you. “How do you know?” “I cannot tell you, but I know.” That is, the Lord in me does not let go to that, does not flow out to that, does not give liberty and sanction to that; and I must wait until the Lord does; sooner or later I will have the explanation of this. There is all the difference between that and our natural suspicions and prejudices.

Oh, that the Lord's people would know the Holy Ghost and be delivered from all that bondage which comes along the line of eternally suspecting everything with which they come into attack. Beloved, if in your heart the Holy Spirit witnesses to the fact that I also am a child of God, that is all you want as a basis of fellowship and we ought to flow together; and to refuse, that is, to violate the principle of the oneness of the Spirit. Well now this intelligence which corresponds to the nerve system is all linked up in the Head and that is what Paul means when he says: “We have the mind of Christ.” How do we have the mind of Christ? The anointing! It does not mean that any one of us has reached the place where we immediately know the Lord's will about every detail in our lives. The anointing does not work out in that way immediately.

There are many things about which you and I are not sure as to the will of God, but we do know this, that if we are walking in the spirit and the anointing is free within us that if we take or assay to take a step out of line or out of time with the Lord the Spirit does not go with us and we know that we go on our own to do it. This is simple but it is true. We have to get on with it. The Spirit of Jesus suffers us not. It may only be a matter of time; it may be a matter of finality, that that is not the Lord's will for our lives. The intelligence of the anointing is the Holy Spirit Who would give to all the members the one mind of Christ. I cannot conceive of an organic unity having half-a-dozen contradictory and conflicting minds. You say, well how do you account for so many godly, consecrated people being entirely different in their attitude towards certain vital things? I do not know that I am called upon to account for that, and certainly I am not called upon to judge any man, but I do venture to say this, that it can easily be accounted for by the measure in which the cross of the Lord Jesus has been wrought into those lives. Which means this, that still there may be a clinging to something of good which is not the Lord's best, and that means that the Holy Spirit is not free to lead out of the one into the other; and there you get the difference. We are not saying who may be right or who may be wrong, but that there are differences, and it may be accounted for usually by the cross not having been wrought sufficiently in one or the other. I am certain of this, that the deeper we are baptised into the death of Christ the more we shall know of the oneness of the Spirit, because that is the ground upon which the Spirit operates, the death of Christ. Well now, that covers some ground as to the corporate nature of the anointing. It is only perhaps by way of illustration, but I think it is useful in bringing to us the fact with which we are dealing, that the anointing is one, the Spirit is one, the Body is one.

Anointing and the Divine Order.

Now there is a further aspect. That means that by the one anointing we are brought into a Divine order. If you like another word which is not as good a word in some senses, and yet conveys its own meaning, we are brought into a Divine system. Some people do not like that word system, and it is always used by them in a bad sense, but I want to redeem the word

from that realm and I want to say that there is a Divine system, there is a heavenly system, there is an order of the heavens. The tabernacle was a pattern of things in the heavens, which means, as "Hebrews" tells us, there are the other things themselves which are a heavenly system and order; a system comprehensive, detailed, minute; and the tabernacle is only a reflection, a type of the heavenly system beyond which must be the heavenly order and system.

Now note, Christ and His Body are not only a "One new Man," they are an order, if you like—a system. Christ is represented by the tabernacle. Christ is represented by the temple, and there you have a very detailed exhaustive system put into operation, but both the tabernacle and the temple are figures not only of Christ separate, but Christ and His people, one people, one Body. So that the tabernacle and the temple clearly represent the Church as a heavenly system. Not man-made, not man-conceived. Remember that in the tabernacle and the temple not one fragment was left for human ideas. All human ideas about that system were ruled out. Man's thoughts and judgments about this thing had no place whatever. When it says that the Lord filled Bezaleel with the Holy Spirit unto all manner of workmanship, that means that the anointing ruled man out and left no room for man's judgment in this; that every detail to a thread was by government of the Spirit; what was to be used, how the thing was to be used, how the thing was to be made, the thing to be made, everything by government of the Spirit. It is a heavenly system in which man has no place for his judgment. Christ is that. The Church which is His Body is that. And what you and I have to look for, beloved, is the spiritual principle back of everything in the Scriptures, a heavenly principle. If we simply take the Scriptures as they are written and begin to put them into operation, what shall we have? We shall have an Old Testament temple system with priests, vestments, rites, and all that sort of thing. If we put the New Testament as it stands in the letter into operation we shall have an earthly system.

Sisters in the Assembly.

Supposing we simply take hold of certain injunctions in the New Testament and give them out *as such* to be obeyed. Women must wear their hats in the assembly; that

is in the Word of God. But supposing that is as an injunction made a law for meetings? I venture to say you will not get very much spiritual value out of it, probably you will kick about it. You can have Christian legalism just as much as you can have Jewish legalism. When the Apostle talks about having the head covered and uncovered in the case of the woman and the man, and when he talks about women not teaching or usurping authority over the man, and all those things, if you put those into operation as merely cold injunctions you will have a formal system with very little life and profit in it. There will certainly be no unction, it will be "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not." And you will apply that with the rigidity of Romanism and it will resolve itself again to a matter of priestcraft and man domination. Get back of those things and get the spiritual principle. There is a spiritual principle behind a woman wearing a hat in the assembly. One of the most glorious principles, which will lift out of rebellion on to a level of being willing to wear a hundred hats! What is the principle? Christ is set forth as Head of the Church which is His Body, everything is subject to Christ and by reason of being subject to Christ derives all its good. There can be no gain to anybody by not being subject to Christ. All good comes that way, all blessing comes that way; the absolute sovereignty of the Lord Jesus over us and we completely surrendering to that is the way of blessing. He is the Head of the man. "The head of every man is Christ." ".....and the head of the woman is the man." Man is the head of the woman as Christ is the Head of the man. "Now wives be in subjection to your own husbands." "Husband, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it." What is the principle? That by not usurping authority over the man and assuming the office of teacher, that is, taking the place of sovereignty over the man, there is the upholding of a heavenly principle. There is given to sisters in the assembly the tremendous honour of representing the heavenly principle that all profit comes by subjection to Christ, and that is illustrated in the assembly by their taking that place. It really elevates them to being literally personal representations of the principle of the Church's subjection to Christ. There must be here some practical illustration and outworking of a heavenly order. That is why the Lord has given us these various means of expressing a

heavenly order. It is a matter of the Lord's way of fullest blessing, and not one of law or comparative value.

Baptism and the Lord's Table.

We have baptism. I have often been argued with on this wise. "Well what is the need of the water, of the baptistery? It is a spiritual thing after all; our death with Christ, our burial with Christ is a spiritual thing, water can make no difference to that, and in spirit we enter into it; the water is not necessary." Does the New Testament teach that? The New Testament teaches that that way is the Lord's way, and that that water, while it has no virtue in itself, while in itself it makes no difference, that is, the water does not put us away for ever, that instant we disappear under the waters does not mean that we go out of sight for ever; nevertheless, it is the means of a testimony, that we, as a part of that old organism, that old creation, have disappeared with it from the eyes of God.

I am not holding a brief for a mere method, I am simply saying this is a figure, and the Lord has given it to us as a way of testifying to a great spiritual reality; but He asks for that testimony. It is a part of the universality of this work of the Lord Jesus. We have the Lord's Table. None of us believes that the loaf literally is Christ, and that at a given moment Christ actually enters into that piece of bread, and that when we take that bread we literally take Christ. Or that the wine is changed into the blood of Jesus Christ, which we drink; we do not believe that. We might argue, as many do, that we receive life from Christ spiritually and that it is all unnecessary. Is it? The Word is: "Till He come," The Lord is asking for a representation of a heavenly order, of a heavenly thing. It is not the thing in itself, but it is the spirit that is in the testimony. It is not an ordinance, it is a testimony. Now you come to the testimony which has to do with the corporate nature of the anointing, spiritually. In the baptism we have disappeared as a part of the old creation from the sight of God. After that God never looks upon a truly baptised one as a part of the old creation. He does not look at you or me as a bit of the old creation however much there may be of the old man remaining. In the death of Christ we disappeared as a part of the old creation. In my baptism I took that position. I have come to understand more about it since I was baptised, but on the basis

of my amount of intelligence then the Lord accepted the whole and undertook to lead me into it, and therefore it is not necessary to be baptised every time new light is given. In that we passed out of the old creation. In coming up we are typically raised together with Christ as a part of a new creation. But what is the new creation? The new creation organism is not like the old creation organism which was an organism all upset; every joint in that great body was dislocated; every function was operating in the wrong direction, it was a reversed peristalsis, all working the wrong way.

The Laying on of Hands.

Now in the new creation, in resurrection union with Christ it is an organism, not an organisation, which is the Body of Christ. When you have testified to the fact that you have passed out of the old in the death of Christ, and passed into the new in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, you find you come to the place where there is a testimony to the corporate nature of that organism as under the One Spirit, the one anointing. Ananias is sent to Saul of Tarsus and the two things go together. Saul's baptism was a testimony, and Ananias laid his hands upon him as a testimony. Later, two or three years, when Paul was going out on his life-work for which he has received the anointing, they at Antioch laid their hands upon him. Why? Was that a mere form, just a kind of courtesy? No, that is a Divine principle. And we find these hands stretched out again and again—not always by apostles, but by representative members of the Body of Christ, acting only in a representative—not an official, or ecclesiastical capacity—but in a representative capacity; that is, acting for the Body; reaching out their hands and laying them upon this one and that one. A testimony to what? The one Body! This is an act of identification. The hand is given as an act of oneness; being laid upon the head it means that that one has come under another Head, the Headship of Christ; coming into the one Body under the one Head, the one anointing. That laying on of hands is invariably associated with the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Spirit is associated with it: which means that the testimony to the oneness of the Body which is borne by that act of identification, is a testimony to the one anointing, and the Holy Spirit Himself witnesses to that one anointing; so that Paul, great man though he was, an elect vessel as he

was, with the commission that he received in such a wonderful way, cannot, with all, commence his life-work without being made by the Lord to recognise that that life-work is the life-work of the Body of Christ; his ministry is the ministry of the Body and not his; and they, representing the Body lay their hands upon him and in effect say: "This means that you are going out to our ministry and we are with you; we shall always be with you in it spiritually in prayer." Never think of yourselves as men who have gone out from the Church to fulfil your own life-work, but as those who go out with the church to fulfil the ministry of the church. There is a great deal of difference, and that truth is to be maintained.

We are often charged with having extraordinary phraseology. There has got to be a good deal of correcting of phraseology, and it is not that the phraseology which we use is wrong phraseology. Again and again we hear people talk about the Chinese Church, the African Church, the American Church, the English Church; that there shall be established a Church in Africa, or a Church in India, or a Church in China. That phraseology is wrong to the root, and absolutely contrary to the New Testament, and Paul never used phraseology like that. The Church, the Body of Christ, is one, and the only right way to speak of it is to say, the Church in Africa, the Church in China, the Church in Egypt; one Church, one Body. You say there may not be much in phraseology? There is a lot in phraseology! If the New Testament principles had been maintained what a strength there would have been. Supposing every man and woman that had gone forth with the Divine commission had gone forth with the whole Body of Christ behind them, what a different story would have been told. If the Body of saints had committed themselves to stand with those two as they went to different lands, what a different story. There is spiritual value in that. That was the meaning of the laying on of hands as they sent them forth; they said, "We are going with you, this is not your ministry it is ours." It is a Divine order, a heavenly order, and we have

to look back of things for spiritual principles; and here is the principle of the oneness of the Body back of all. As we recognise that, and come into line with it, then the anointing is manifested. Do we want to know the real value of the anointing? We can know it if we come into the heavenly order. If we violate the heavenly order and begin to organise the Lord's work and do things as men do things in the Church, if the Holy Ghost does not choose and appoint, but we do it by ballot, or in any other way, we may miss the anointing. It is the Holy Ghost Who should choose the elders in the House of God. "Separate me"—different from: "Let us have a committee and ask so and so to do this and that and something else." A heavenly order carries with it the anointing; violation of the heavenly order means we have to take the responsibility ourselves.

These things are important in order that we should know the blessedness and greatness of the anointing. The anointing is power. Now the Old Testament men were anointed with a horn of oil, and the typology of the Old Testament makes a horn always to be the symbol of strength, and the oil a type of the Spirit. "The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward," because Samuel had taken the horn of oil and anointed him. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you:" but remember the coming of the Spirit carries with it the fact that we have parted with all orders made by man and come into the heavenly order. That is involved. And so the power of the anointing is expressed on the ground of very definite laws, the law of a heavenly order, and Christ represents that heavenly order, for after all it is only learning Christ. It is not so much a study of principles as coming to know the Lord, and to know the Lord is to do things in the way the Lord would do them, and not as man would do them. The more we know the Lord, the more we realise the difference between the way that man does things and the way the Lord would do them.

T. A.-S.

The Bible Study Course

BEFORE the next issue of the WITNESS AND TESTIMONY the second set of papers for the above will be due. We rejoice to have had such a large and hearty response to the course, and trust that those who have taken it up are finding that the work is worth while. We have heard of a few who find the Genesis and Romans papers a little difficult, and we are preparing a paper in connection with these by which we hope to make things easier, and to help in getting more immediately to what was in our mind in setting those papers. If any who have enrolled are decided that they will not go on with the next papers, we shall be glad if they will let us know, so that we may be spared the work and expense in connection with sending the papers. We do not expect that many will drop out, but we would just say to any who are not used to systematic study, and are finding it a bit difficult, "you are sure to come into the good of this work if you will stick to it long enough to form the study habit." It will interest those who are doing this work to know that they are linked by their studies or enrolment with the Lord's children in a great many countries, from California to China via Europe, and Africa.

For any who desire to enrol for the first section we repeat the information which we gave at the commencement of this ministry.

The object of this Bible Study Course is to seek to provide a means whereby a foundation

may be laid for such as have not had a grounding in the Scriptures, and who are conscious of their need of such. It is, however, not our aim to just make possible a knowledge of the letter of the Word, that is, the mere content of the books of the Bible, but to lead to a spiritual understanding, so that heart as well as mind may be instructed and enlightened. The method is to provide a line for the gathering of relevant material, and to conclude from the Word of God in general what it spiritually implies or indicates. The Word of God is its own teacher, but our object is to direct study along lines which will bring about this effect. Within this compass several different lines are followed in the different papers comprising the quarterly sets.

1. You enrol by sending your name and address (whether Mr., Mrs., Miss, etc.) to—

Mr. T. Austin-Sparks,
Heathfield,
Kilcreggan,
Dumbartonshire, Scotland,

2. There is a minimum charge of one shilling per quarter to cover postages, printing, etc.

3. There is no correspondence; neither are there any examinations.

Although we cannot take up correspondence in connection with the studies, we shall be glad to hear from time to time how you are getting on, and whether you find your studies helpful. Should you decide to discontinue please let us know.

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In Touch with the Throne

Some Considerations on the Prayer-Life

(Continued.)

READING : Nehemiah iv. 9, 17, 20.
Ephesians vi. 18.

Prayer as Warfare.

THE Christian life has very often been likened to a warfare, and very often the appeal has been made to come and join the ranks, and to enter into the battle of the Lord. But there is an irregularity about such an appeal, because, while it is true that there is such a warfare and such a militant company, the real consciousness of the fight, of the battle, of the warfare, is not existent until you are saved, until you are with the Lord. The unconverted do not know anything about this battle; for them it is something merely reported, spoken about, objective, outside of themselves, and of which they have altogether confused or wrong ideas; and it is not until we are really in Christ that we either know the reality of the battle or understand its true nature. But it is not just the warfare of the Christian life in the general and ordinary sense with which we are concerned here at this time. It is that warfare which is especially connected with, and related to the full testimony of the Lord Jesus. The general conception of Christian warfare is that which has to do with evils and wrongs and vices and the things in this world and in human conditions which ought to be otherwise: and it is there that the mistaken apprehension of the unconverted men and women is found. They think that to enter into the Christian army means to go out to battle with the evils and the wrongs and the vices that abound in this world. But when you really come into touch with the full testimony of the Lord Jesus, you very soon develop another consciousness, that it is not merely evils and wrongs and sins that you are having to deal with, but with spiritual forces, intelligent, cunning, artful, venomous, malicious forces, back of everything else. It is that warfare with which we are concerned just now. That which is related to the full testimony of the Lord Jesus, as to His absolute and perfect

Sovereignty and Lordship in this universe, and that warfare is not with things, but with spiritual persons headed by a great spiritual personage, the Evil One.

Spiritual Conflict implies a Spiritual Position.

That warfare is related to a position. It is a consciousness which only comes to us in a certain realm. You may be a Christian, and as a Christian you may realise that you are up against adversities, difficulties, oppositions, things which make the Christian life strenuous and full of conflict, and call out all the militant features of life, and yet you may not have entered into ultimate things of the testimony of the Lord Jesus, and the ultimate realm of the battle of the saints. But if you come as a believer to a revelation of the fulness of Christ in His personal Sovereignty and Lordship, in the greatness of the work of His cross in every realm, and then into the light of the Church which is His Body, you enter immediately into a new realm of conflict, the battle changes its character, and you begin to develop a consciousness, or a consciousness begins to grow in you that you are up against something far more sinister, far more intelligently evil than those wrongs that abound in the world. You become increasingly conscious that it is the Devil directly and nakedly, with his forces, that you are having to do. But that consciousness is bound up with a specific position, and the experience of believers is that as they go on with the Lord, which means going upward, away from the earthlies to the heavenlies, more and more away from the old creation to the new creation life, more and more away from the flesh to the spirit, the more closely do they come into contact with the ultimate spiritual forces of the universe, and the conflict assumes new forms, the warfare takes a new character. It is a warfare linked up with a specific position to which the believer comes, the consciousness which comes in only in a certain realm. It is in a fuller measure a spiritual warfare, and being a

spiritual warfare, it presupposes a spiritual state on the part of the believer.

To put that in another way, the more spiritual we become, the more spiritual does the warfare become: and the more spiritual the warfare is in our consciousness, in our knowledge, so we may realise that more spiritual have we become. When we are carnal our warfare is carnal, and I refer to believers, not to unbelievers; the unbeliever is not spoken of as carnal, he is natural—when we are carnal as believers, our warfare is carnal and with carnal weapons. That is, we meet men on their own level, we answer back the challenge of men with that with which they challenge us. If they come out in argument we counter them with argument, if they come out with reason we meet them with reason, if they come out with fierce temper we meet them in the heat of the flesh, if they come out to us with criticism, well, we give them what they give us, and try to go one better, meeting them always on their own level.

That is carnal warfare, with carnal weapons. When we cease to be carnal and quit all carnal ground and become wholly spiritual, we find ourselves in a new realm back of men, dealing with spiritual forces and not with merely carnal forces directly. We have come into touch with something back of carnal man, and the carnal man is utterly helpless in the presence of a spiritual man, for the simple reason that he cannot get the spiritual man to come down to his level; therefore he is disarmed, sooner or later he will have to recognise that that man is his superior; but the superiority is not just in that the spiritual man is on a new level, it is that he is meeting, not the man naturally, but the forces back of the man. It is spiritual warfare now; we cease to fight after the flesh, and we cease to fight man. We cease to battle with flesh, our warfare is in another realm altogether; but that represents spiritual advance, spiritual growth, it represents spirituality; and when we come into real spiritual warfare a spiritual state is pre-supposed. In that realm the natural man's resources are utterly useless, they are ruled out, and for that warfare only spiritual equipment is either permissible or effective. Then the warfare is with spiritual weapons, spiritual resources, spiritual equipment. So Ephesians vi. finds us in the heavens, battling, not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, but we are equipped with a spiritual armour, clad in the armour of God.

The Prayer-Life—the Objective of the Enemy.

Now that is all preliminary. What we are coming to immediately as the thing of basic importance for us, having seen the nature of our warfare, is that the battlefield of this warfare is prayer. When the Apostle has shown us the whole panoply of God, the armour in all its parts, and exhorted us to take it up and to stand and withstand, he, as it were, spreads the ground under our feet and says: "With all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." The battleground of this warfare is prayer. What I mean is this, that this battle is won on the ground of prayer, that these forces are dealt with and defeated on the ground of prayer, and that being so, the chief objective of the enemy is the prayer-life of the believer. That is the focal point of all the enemy's attention and strategy; it is the prayer-life of the believer. Now if we said no more than that, that is the supreme thing for our grasping, for our recognition. We have said the most important thing that can be said in this connection. The focal point of all the enemy's attention and strategy is the prayer-life of the believer. If he can by any means destroy that he has gained the day, he has defeated the saints, he has frustrated the ends of God. The enemy fights prayer, persistently, energetically, violently, and cunningly; he fights the prayer-life of the believer. And he fights it in various ways. First of all he fights it along preventative lines, in the direction of prevention, and there has to be a tremendous battle and conflict to get prayer; not only to pray, but to have prayer, to get prayer, and there is nothing in all the range of his wit and cunning and craftiness and ingenuity and resourcefulness that he will not employ to prevent real spiritual prayer. I think probably it will be enough for us if we concentrate upon that just now.

The Battle for Prayer.

I am quite sure that I find the agreement of most of the Lord's people when I say that one of the most difficult things, if not the most difficult thing, is to be able to get to prayer, to give ourselves to prayer, and that when we contemplate prayer then we meet a host of difficulties unsuspected, unforeseen, suddenly rising up as ambushed forces breaking out upon us. Anything to prevent prayer! It is so! I am not saying something that you do not know, but I am saying it in order that you may

recognise it clearly, definitely, deliberately, and face the fact ; that it is not just ordinary circumstances, but it is designed, a well-laid scheme of the enemy to prevent prayer. The enemy, rather than object to, will promote occupation with a thousand and one things for the Lord if thereby he can crowd out prayer. He does not mind how busy we are in the Lord's work, he does not mind how often we are found preaching, conducting meetings, doing the many-sided work of the Lord, as we may call it ; he knows quite well that all the work for the Lord which is not founded upon triumphant spiritual prayer, will count for little or nothing in the long run, and will break down. I say he does not mind you working. Work for the Lord as hard as you can, but if you leave out prayer you will not accomplish very much, and one of the subtleties of the enemy is to get us so busy, so occupied, so much on the go, on the rush with—as we think—things for the Lord, the work of the Lord, that our prayer is cramped and pushed up into a corner and limited, if not almost entirely ruled out ; and the Lord will never accept the excuse : “ Lord, I am too much engaged in Your interests to pray.” The Lord never favours an attitude like that. You will remember that when the children of Israel began to talk about and contemplate their exodus from Egypt, the enemy's reaction was to double their labours ; that is, to get them so much more deeply engrossed in work that there would be no more time for contemplating exodus ; and immediately you begin to contemplate or purpose a fuller prayer-life, the enemy launches a new scheme for keeping you more busy, occupied ; heaping up the work, crowding in demands so that you will have no time, no opportunity for prayer. I think, beloved, that we shall have to face this quite definitely. Of course, there are all the arguments about duty and obligation and responsibility, and it does look as though to put some things aside for prayer would be neglecting duty, failing in obligation, breaking down in responsibility, but there is a place where we have to cast those matters upon the Lord, and pray. Now, of course, it is very difficult to apply that. There are always dangers about saying a thing like that, because there are always people who are more than ready to let go their responsibilities, who do not take their responsibilities seriously ; they would be only too ready and glad to hand over their domestic affairs to someone else while they

could have a good time of prayer. The Lord must safeguard this word. But we must recognise this, that the enemy will construct his best arguments about responsibility and duty and conscience to stop us trying ; and there is a place where, if we see prayer is utterly ruled out, or brought down to such a limited place that it is completely inadequate for a life of spiritual ascendancy and victory, we have to say : “ Lord, I am going to trust the responsibility with You while I pray ; that You will not allow my breaking away for this time to have detrimental results, that You will protect this prayer-time—which I seek for Your glory—from the inroads of the enemy.” The principle of the tithe does work, even in this realm. Give God His portion, His place, and you will find that you are able to do more with the nine-tenths than you could do with tenths when you have given the Lord His one-tenth. That principle works. But there is a battle for prayer, and what I see the necessity for is, a strong, a mighty, a deliberate, a determined stand in Christ, by the victory of His cross, to get prayer ; to bring in the full weight and the value of the victory of the cross of the Lord Jesus to secure prayer, to drive the enemy off the ground of prayer, that that ground may be held for prayer. Like Shammah of old, who stood in the lentil patch with his sword in his hand, and single-handed fought the Philistines, and preserved that lentil patch, and the Lord wrought a great victory. The lentil patch may represent our prayer-ground, which has got to be defended against the enemy in the fulness of Calvary's victory. There is a fight to get prayer, there is a battle for prayer. We have, I am afraid, too often accepted the situation that it is not possible to pray just now, things are such as to make it quite out of the question to pray. Yes, they will be if the Devil has his way, they will be always such as to make prayer out of the question. That is one of his tactics. We have to clear the ground for prayer in the victory of His Name, of His Cross. The Cross is just as effectual in securing time for prayer, if we will apply it, if we will use it, as it is in any other realm.

But we have to approach prayer on victory-ground ; we have to take up this attitude, we shall find it more and more necessary to take this attitude. Now prayer must be, but everything makes it impossible on the human side, but Lord, I claim in the victory of Calvary, a time of prayer, a clear space for

prayer. We have to stand in that victory; it may mean *standing* before we get through. It is not only the many things that may press in upon us along the line of external circumstances, happenings, to leave no room for a time of prayer. How true it is that when we are actually down on our knees, then prayer is withstood right on the very threshold. It may be nothing on the outside. There may be no door bells ringing, no telephone going, or callers coming; you may be in the silence, you may be shut in your own room and be actually on your knees, and then a mighty preventative activity of the enemy begins. It may be physical, you may suddenly develop a physical consciousness that was not there a little while before, that would threaten the whole of your prayer-time, and you find that bodily you have got to take up a tremendous burden, a dead-weight. You may even develop positive symptoms of illness of which you were unconscious before. These are facts. And then mental conditions may come in just at that time which were not there before. Oh, immediately, what an inrush of a thousand and one things which have not bothered you up till that moment. Your mind becomes occupied by way of reflection, things you must not forget which have not troubled you until that moment. And what about that sense of numbness, coldness, distance, and unreality that descends upon you at such times. The unreality; if you pray audibly your voice sounds strange and far away, you seem to be talking into the air; all these things and many others come when we purpose prayer. They come on the very threshold, and for a time we meet all manner of discouragements and setbacks to pray, and if we take the first five, ten or even fifteen minutes as our criterion, we will give it up, we will close down, and we will get up and go and get on with something else. Yes, the enemy is out to prevent prayer, and there is a phase of the battle which has to be gone through in order to get prayer. Again I say this is nothing strange and foreign to you—unless, of course, you have not had a prayer-life at all, unless you are one who has never seriously taken up the business of prayer. But I am not saying it to inform you, I am saying it to you and to myself in order that we may recognise that this is a thing which calls us into battle. It is the warfare of the saints, to *get to prayer* and not only to pray through. There is this aspect of the enemy's activity which is to

prevent prayer, and to obtain it is a battle. There has to be a standing, a taking up position and a withstanding in prayer for prayer.

I trust that saying all that which so true to your experiences, nevertheless has the wonted effect of making you recognise that in the future your prayer life is not going to develop if the enemy can help it, and if it is going to develop, if you are going to have it, you have got to stand for it. It will not come, you will not find that you just drift into it; you will never find that you drift into a mighty prayer life, that you walk with ease into such a thing. You will find there is some making and breaking, some conflict, some battle to get it, that every realm of things will be taken hold of by the enemy against it, and all that he has at his command of super-nature will be used. You and I, beloved, have got to fight for our prayer-life, and the more we advance with the Lord spiritually, the more we shall find it so. It is not that the enemy is out to stop you and me from having a personal prayer-life. That is not what he is against. It is the testimony of the Lord Jesus which is so closely bound up with the prayer life of the Lord's people that he is out to destroy. You and I as individuals as human beings do not mean anything to the enemy. It is that which is bound up with us, with which we are bound up in Christ, His sovereignty, His glory.

What is involved in Prayer.

Now does it not occur to you, strike you with considerable force, that this resistance of prayer-life on the part of the enemy does imply—it more than implies, it positively declares, proclaims—that the Lord's glory and honour, His Name, His testimony, are pre-eminently secured by prayer. If that is the focal point of the enemy's activity, then it means that the Lord's highest interests are served pre-eminently by prayer. It puts prayer in the first place. That again is not new, and yet it is a further emphasis upon the fact. The enemy is always trying to get prayer into the last place. Anything else in relation to the Lord before it, and prayer last, and it does not matter what you say, it matters nothing what you say to Christian people about this, you cannot get it home. "It is only the prayer meeting to-night!" Sunday night when there is ministry of the Word and preaching you will have a hall crowded, packed. Monday night you go into a side hall, perhaps a little more than half

full. And yet on Sunday night you have said that our main ministry is prayer, everything goes if our prayer-life fails! You may say anything you like along that line, emphasise it and stress it but it does not make any difference. I must confess I am often bewildered by the fact that so many really spiritual people.—for so I give them credit for being—will crowd to preaching conferences, meetings, who are rarely seen at a prayer-meeting, or leave so few to do the praying in the corporate prayer-life of the assembly.

And it is so, it is just like that. As though listening to an address were the first thing, the primary thing, as though getting Bible teaching and truth were more than anything else. No, beloved, not at all! All that can only become vital and living and effective in so far as our prayer-life individually and corporately is maintained in strength, is given the first place. So suffer whatever there might be of correction in the word; but it is true, is it not? Oh, we have all been guilty. We all have to say to ourselves: "Thou art the man." But we do need so much to get the Lord's estimate of the value of prayer, and if you go through the Word you will find that He estimates prayer at a higher value than anything else in His people. And if you look at His own life—oh, amazement of amazement, that One such as the Son of God, all that He was, should yet maintain such a prayer-life: "A great while before day": or, "continued all night." He prayed! And has it occurred to you that some of the most glorious unveilings of truth that we have in the Bible came in prayer, are prayers. Read those prayers of Paul in Ephesians and Colossians. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father..." and then he goes on and gives you his prayer, and in that prayer you have got a revelation which is matchless. It has come in prayer, so that your teaching is based upon the prayer-life of a man. Your light, in its true value, comes out of prayer, and there is no light of real value that is not born of prayer, and all

the value of truth depends upon the prayer which is back of it. So that our conferences, our meetings, and all our addresses, and all the truth that comes just remains so much negative matter if there is not a commensurate prayer-life on our part in relation to it. We have got to pray it in and pray it out; and I feel that after a conference the thing to do is to get to prayer more than ever on the ground of what has been said, to take that up before the Lord. If we did that how much more fruit there would be from our conferences. Instead of having it in our notebooks we would have it in our lives; instead of so much more truth that we have now become acquainted with, we should be entering into the working power of that truth, if we came back with it to the Lord in prayer. No one is more conscious of the need of having things said to him than I am at this time on this matter, but we are speaking together of these things, and I trust that we are all taking them to heart. Oh, for the day when, not for the sake of numbers (it is not a matter of counting heads) but, oh, for the day when, because of the recognition of the pre-eminent place of prayer, the occasion of prayer will be as crowded as any conference gathering. It only needs the apprehension of God's estimate of prayer, and we regard it as at least as important as any conference meeting with a theme and an address. The Lord burn that into our hearts, for that is the pre-eminent work—prayer.

It is not a great deal that has been said but it is very important, and let us remember the word in connection with the enemy's determination to prevent prayer. We can go on to show you that if he cannot prevent it he will try to interrupt it; and if he cannot interrupt it he will try and destroy it afterwards. These are other aspects of the thing, but we have seen enough perhaps to get us into some very definite place in relation to our prayer-life in facing it in the Name of the Lord.

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“ . . . as ministers of God, in . . .
patience . . . labours . . . love . . . glory
and dishonour . . . evil report and
good report . . . as unknown, and
yet well known . . . as dying, and
behold we live: . . . as poor, yet
making many rich . . . ”

2 Cor. 6. 4-10.

Foundations

(Continued)

READING : Psalm xi. 3.
Ephesians iv. 7, 8, 11-16.

Building and Battle.

WE shall now proceed with a further aspect of the important matter of foundations. In that eleventh Psalm from which we started our meditation there is one feature which is common to the whole subject of foundations and building in the Word of God. When we considered that Psalm more fully you will remember that David was, at the time of writing the psalm, in the midst of great active treachery, opposition and antagonism. The wicked were drawing their bow in the dark to shoot under cover at the righteous, and in the midst of that hostility the Psalmist refers to the foundations, and then he also says : " Jehovah is in his holy temple " ; so that you get two things which comprise one whole, that is, building and battle. The Temple, the foundations, the Adversary and the atmosphere of conflict. You will find that throughout the Word of God these two things are always found together.

If it is Nehemiah building the wall of Jerusalem, the sword and the trowel are found accompanying one another ; the building and the battle are together. If it is the building of the Temple by Solomon, David has reduced all the surrounding enemies to subjection to make that building possible. The building was not possible until the battle had accomplished its work. When you come into the spiritual interpretations of the Old Testament illustrations in the New Testament, you find those things always together. Wherever you have to do with the building you will always have to do with the battle.

When we look into the first letter to the Corinthians there surely is there a very conspicuous example of this truth. The building in that letter is alongside of tremendous battling. The battling is associated with the building. Now, when you come to the Letter to the Ephesians you see the same thing again.

Here is the House, the " habitation of God through the Spirit " ; here is the Church which is Christ's Body ; and here you have much said about the building up of the Body ; but you will find in this letter that all that is in the presence of the Enemy, principalities and powers, the world rulers of this darkness. The building goes on in battle, in conflict ; and this fourth chapter contains in itself those elements. If you were reading those verses just now thoughtfully, you were discerning that the Apostle in what he was saying about the building up of the Body and all connected therewith was in the presence of antagonisms, perils, dangers, spiritual opposition. What is this about sleight and cunning craftiness, the wiles of error, the winds of doctrine, the waves of falsehood ? These are the elements of the battle, the conflict ; these are the opposing forces to the Church the Body of Christ. These are the things with which the development, perfecting, consummating of God's purpose in the Church are associated, and with which that progress has to contend. And the Apostle is saying in more words that the important thing here is that the saints should be well grounded : that the saints should come to a place of being established, and established in fulness where everyone of them is a responsible, trustworthy member of the Body of Christ. That is the force of this whole paragraph.

Why the Foundations should be soundly laid.

Now then, let us immediately bring before our view the end, the object ; and then we shall see what goes toward the realisation of that object. What is the object in view here ? It is that every one member of Christ's Body shall be a functioning, responsible, effective member, in a position where they are able, with the ability of Christ to stand against the wiles, the craftiness and falsehood of the Evil One, the winds and the waves of error. But, beloved, surely you and I are alive in these days to the

necessity for every member of Christ to be in that position. The conditions with which the Apostle Paul was contending at that time are conditions which abound to-day just as much as then. Of course, it came in his day through those who were Gnostics, people who claimed to have wisdom, to be in possession of knowledge. Of the Gnostics, who claimed to have religious knowledge and wisdom, Paul said their gnosticism operated in these ways; craftiness, wiles, winds and waves of error, false doctrine, false teaching. Whoever may be the counterpart of the Gnostics to-day, gnosticism is widespread. That is, there are waves and winds of error sweeping over the earth, and so subtle that no natural mind can see through, no ordinary judgment or discernment can detect the flaw, the error; so wrapped up in Biblical forms and Scriptural phraseology that the infants, the children to whom Paul speaks, will be easily carried away; those who are spiritually children in a wrong sense. It is not wrong to be a child of God, to be a new-born babe, but it is wrong to be a child when you ought to be a man; and that is what the Apostle is speaking about. In the presence of these things, and in the expectation warranted by the Word of God that these things will increase, develop and become more and more subtle, with the very miracles which will accompany them, the necessity the Apostle saw then, and which is made clear to us through the Word of the Spirit by him is that every member of Christ should be in the position to stand against those wiles; should have their foundations so soundly laid, and should themselves be so rooted and grounded that they will not be carried away. The ministry that is needed to-day is ministry in that direction. Give heed to this word; you will need it. If you have not already done so, it will not be long all of you are confronted with some of these wiles of error; this craftiness of false teaching, these waves and these winds of doctrine; and unless you are grounded and established and know, you will be carried away, you will lose your footing and will be swept off.

Now with the consciousness of so solemn and serious a situation and need, this word is, I believe, given to us by the Lord, and we must lay it to heart. Every member of Christ, without an exception, must be a responsible, intelligent, functioning member; and inasmuch as that is not true of any one member, that member is in a perilous position. But you are

not surprised that the coming along of these winds and these waves carry away multitudes of Christians. Sooner or later they are landed high and dry and do not know where they are because, in spite of having the New Testament, and in spite of having the letter to the Ephesians, which itself is enough for this purpose, so many of the Lord's children are not taught, instructed, and established in Christ, to be able to discern, to understand, judge, and to remain firm in a perilous day.

The Saints as Builders.

Now, then let us look at this passage of the Word a little more closely. "He.....gave gifts unto men," that is, "He gave some apostles." He gave apostles unto men. ".....some prophets." He gave prophets unto men. ".....some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers." These are the gifts which He gave to men. "Men" here, of course, represents the whole company of the elect. The evangelists to bring in the elect; the others mainly to do with those who have been brought in. So that the Church which is the Body of Christ is in view, and it is in relation to the Church as the Body of Christ that these gifts were given by the Lord in His ascension. These are the gifts—but note, they were given for an express purpose and with an express object. They were given for "the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ; till we all attain unto the unity of the faith....." Do not break in with punctuation there. There ought not to be a break. "For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering," as though the work of the ministry there related to the Apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists. It does not relate to that. The work of the ministry there relates to the saints as they are perfected through the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers. The work of these gifts is to result in the saints being in a position to minister, and it is only as the saints are in a position to minister (that is what I mean by functioning) that the saints are safe. It is not alone the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers who are in the ministry; it is all the saints who are called to be in the ministry; all the saints, every member of Christ's Body is a minister according to the Divine intention. And only as they are in that position to minister, in a state which qualifies them to minister, is the Church safe. The

ministries may be as varied, as numerous as there are members of the Body of Christ. "For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministering."

Let us be quite clear in our terms. That word "perfecting." You may say: Well, of course, if we were perfect we could minister. Surely that is a long way ahead, that is something on there toward which we have got to move, to which we have to come. But that word perfecting there does not mean that. It is used as a medical term very often, and a more literal translation would be "mending," for the mending of the saints. If you have an accident and get broken and are taken to hospital you get mended, and that is exactly what this word means. The mending of the saints, making them whole. Sometimes the word is used for the furnishing of a house. You would not like to live in an unfurnished house. We must furnish it before we can live in it. The word is used in Matthew concerning the nets, when the Lord saw certain men mending their nets, is the same word. There were holes in their nets, and those nets had to be made good so that they were complete, suitable for their work. They might not have been in that higher sense the most perfect nets you could find, but they were whole nets, complete nets. And what the Apostle is pointing out here is just that. Not a state of Divine perfection in us but a state of completeness in Christ. "For the mending of the saints unto the work of the ministry." The mending of the nets was unto some hope of catching fish. The trouble with so many, and the reason why so many are carried away with these winds and waves of doctrine is that there are gaps, gaping gaps in their apprehension of Christ, in their knowledge of Christ, in their understanding of the truth; gaps, breaks, openings through which the error comes, and they want mending. And these gifts are given just to mend the saints that the saints may fulfil the ministry. It is so different from the traditional order to which we are accustomed, that the ministry is something we sit under so many times a week, from a pulpit or platform. And having sat under it, and either enjoyed it or endured it, that is the end so far as we are concerned; we have done what is incumbent upon us, we have done our duty, we have "sat under the ministry." That is not the ministry here at all. The ministry is the result in your practical functioning of what the pastor, the teacher, or the evangelist does;

what you do as the outcome. That is the ministry: the resultant exercise in the heart of every member of Christ. If we really did get that we should be a long way on, we would be much further on than we are. Just think where we would be if that had always been the case. The evangelists, prophets, pastors, teachers, having fulfilled their function in our midst and we had gone away and got before the Lord on that and said: Now Lord that has to be wrought in me; I am going to make that mine, and work in the strength of it..

Supposing we had done that with every message we had received, don't you think the Church would have been in a solid place of establishment. A very different history would have been written in the presence of the wiles of the Devil and the cunning craftiness, if that had been the case. We will not look abroad too much, we will look within our own hearts, and say, Now this is for me. We have to look into our hearts and say: Now what is the practical result and abiding value in my life as a functioning member of Christ of that ministry to which I have listened, of that work of the gifts of the Lord, the apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher, evangelist; where am I as the result? Have I heard it, regarded it as the ministry, left it there and let them get on with their ministry? Or am I as a result, a minister of Christ? That is a distinct question is it not? Oh, for the strength in the people of God, in the Church His Body, which would be the sure result of our so apprehending the Word of the Lord. We are badly in need of that strength today, that assurance, that establishment.

Individual Responsibility for Building.

Now notice: "For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ." Then the work of ministering, which is the work of each member of Christ is to result in the building up of the Body of Christ. Now let us test it again backward. How much are you and I contributing toward the building up of the Body of Christ? How much are we functioning with that result, the building up of the Body? That is our business, every one of us. That is our ministry. Are you prepared to accept that responsibility, to take, by the grace of God, that work on your heart; not to be an adherent, a follower, a passenger, an attendant, but a live, functioning member whose very presence in the Body of Christ means its building up.

Later you notice the Apostle puts his finger upon this very matter in a specific way. He says: ".....through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love." Each several part working in measure, resulting in the building up of the Body in love. He has the physical body at the back of his mind. How much Paul knew about the physical body as we understand it to-day I do not know, but the Holy Spirit knew all about it, and when you remember those minute organisms of the human body, the cells of the human body, and how the entire growth, increase, of the physical body hangs upon the functioning of each minute cell, and the body is only built up, increased as each minute cell functions and does its work, you have a wonderful illustration and perfectly true one of how the spiritual Body of Christ is built up and increased. You say: 'I am only a minute part, I do not count.' Well, try and count the cells in your body, how many cells can you pack into a square inch of your physical body?—almost countless. You may be in your own mind like one of those, lost in the crowd; but there is a mighty responsibility for the whole Body resting upon you. The point is not how big you are but whether you are contributing your measure. Each several part working in measure. The sense is that every part must do its measure, come up to its measure, toward the building of the Body of Christ. That is our function and our ministry.

Oh, beloved, we shall have to regard this as an ordination service, and go out regarding ourselves as in the ministry and responsible for the whole Body of Christ in our measure. We cannot understand that, we never shall understand it; we are in the presence of a mystery. Who can understand the physical body to the full? There are mysteries about it which have never yet been fathomed, and I doubt whether they ever will be fathomed. We have often illustrated that mystery of the human body in this way, that the oration of a Demosthenes should be the result of a Demosthenes having had his breakfast. You have read some of those orations which swayed crowds and made men do what they had no intention of doing, the power of reasoning and of human language. If the orator had stopped eating he would have stopped giving orations and therefore his orations were in some

way the outcome of his having his food, but how you translate bacon and eggs into orations I don't know. But it is true! You see what I mean. And how you and I, being the atoms that we are, the cells which may be so small as humanly to be beyond recognition, can affect the whole Body of Christ for good or ill I do not know, but there it is; it is a truth definitely and positively in the Word of God: "And whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it." And if you and I are not contributing in our measure then the whole Body is suffering, is weak.

Here, then, is the call, the challenge, that every member of Christ should be a responsible functioning and intelligent member, fulfilling the ministry. Yes, but there is something more, "...till we all attain unto the unity of the faith...." Well, now we have got our finger upon something which is very vital. We are very much concerned about unity, oneness. We pray for it; we agonise for the lack of it in manifestation; we long for it. How will it come about? What is the principle of coming to the unity of the faith? Every member fulfilling their ministry, a functioning member. What is the cause of discord, division, schism? Well, look again at our first Corinthian letter. "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ...for ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and do ye not walk after the manner of men? For when one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos: are ye not men?" There are divisions among you resultant from your being carnal, your carnality means spiritual immaturity, no unity of the faith. When every one comes into full functioning that is a mighty factor in bringing about the unity of the faith. The Enemy is out to split the Body of Christ on earth into as many fragments as he can. How does he do it? Very largely by the ignorance of the Lord's people. Very largely by their delay in spiritual development, very largely because they are in a passive state instead of an active state spiritually. You will find these things lie behind most of the activities of the Enemy along the line of schism. The unity of the faith, says the Word quite clearly, is through every member functioning, and making their contribution, livingly, to the whole. There was a

day when certain men went to Moses and complained that there were certain people in the camp who were prophesying, and they thought it was a movement toward sectarianism or division or something like that, they thought this was a break in fellowship, but Moses said Would to God all the Lord's people were prophets. The positive line is the better one. When some are fulfilling the ministry and some are not it is quite impossible to come to the unity of the faith. We have all to be in it.

Then again: ".....and of the knowledge of the Son of God." The Greek there is literally: to the full knowledge of the Son of God: ".....unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." All that is bound up with his active life of all the members of Christ. We will not stay with it in its fragments but read it again more carefully.

The Apostle has in view these things which are circling round: ".....that we be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error." If only we could stop with the Apostle's language it would throw so much light on this matter. ".....by the sleight of men." Literally, in the deceit; but the Greek words refer to the throw of the dice and the element of cheating; it is something like the loaded dice by which there is a fraud, a cheating, and that is what is here in the language. The wiles of error. The throw of the dice which is always so arranged that it comes out to the good of the one who is using it. This error that is going round is to cheat the saints of their advantage in Christ, to cheat them of their place. Is not that the effect of error in the long run?

Yes, believers who are carried away like this wake up to the fact that they have been cheated of the reality by a fraud, they have lost the food by something that pretended to be to their advantage. "...in craftiness," that is literally, in their clever trickiness. The words are very rich. He uses the word here which is "in every deed, or every work, in craftiness." Every deed of theirs has some subtle craftiness in it, some trickiness in it. And oh, the trickiness of the Devil in his false doctrine. The thing seems so right, so thoroughly good, according to the Word, but there is something hidden in it, a trick, a snare. The Lord's people need to be alive to that and it is

only as we are out on full stretch, active, positive, in our spiritual life that we come to the place where our senses are so exercised that we can discern the good from the evil, and discern the trick. What a great thing it would be if every real child of God who ought, by reason of time to be in such a position, was really able to see in these wiles, these waves and these winds of falsehood, an error, just where the flaw is, just where the trick is, and be in a position to warn those who are children in a right sense, who have not yet come to the time when they ought to be mature; to be a safeguard to them. These foundations are very important. This is all foundation work, and we must, without exhausting all that is in these verses, just leave the main emphasis and indication of the Apostle to take hold of us, grip us. When everything is said that could be said, however much we might add to it, it is just this, that you and I, every one of us without an exception should be so reaching out and moving on with the Lord in an active and positive way, as over against a passive way, so that our spiritual life and our spiritual senses are being developed, brought to maturity, that no matter what the wiles are, what the winds are, what the waves are which sweep like a hurricane or tornado, or even like gentle summer breezes over the earth, we are never moved, never carried away, we are alive to the subtle secret snare, and we stand. We are in the battle. The building is in the battle. There is no realm in which the battle is more real, more furious, more relentless than in the realm of the perfecting of the saints, the building of the Body of Christ. That is why this one letter outstandingly brings those two things together. On the one hand there is the Church His Body to be built and perfected; on the other hand the raging and the subtle working of the Enemy. The Enemy is out to deceive the saints, to destroy the Church, and the only way in which he can be defeated is by you and I being stretched out for the fulness of Christ, to go on in an active way, not being satisfied that we are saved, but wholly given to all that fulness which is possible in Christ. With all the saints in fellowship till we come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

The Lord impress His Word upon our hearts.

T. A.-S.

The Lord's Assembly

(Continued.)

"Now on the first day of the week."—John xx. 1.

"When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week."—John xx. 19.

"And after eight days again....." John xx. 26.

It is the spiritual meaning of that statement, "The first day of the week" which we have in mind. It is not just the day as a part of time, as a part of our calendar, it is what is there signified by and included in this statement. We have pointed out before, that with this first verse of the 20th chapter there has almost imperceptibly crept in the changing of the dispensation. We read it and we are not struck by the tremendous thing that has happened. "Now on the first day of the week." We have not been impressed with the fact that this statement cuts clean in between the whole of the Jewish dispensation and the Christian dispensation. Here the eighth day has become the first day, the day of the Lord's resurrection. Eight, as we know, is the resurrection number, the number of a new beginning, and on the day of His resurrection the dispensation has been founded, the Church has been born, and the Sabbath day is no longer the Sabbath in its etymological sense, the seventh. The fact is that in the old dispensation six days were worked upon and the seventh day was rested upon. In the new dispensation the first day is rested upon and six days are worked upon. Everything begins, not ends, on the first day, and the meaning is this spiritually, that in the death of the Lord Jesus God has finished all His work of new creation, and in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus He rests in a completed work and then begins operations out of what is already perfected. He builds His Church, He brings His Church to birth upon the ground of a perfect work, and the Church has not to work toward perfection but to work out of perfection; not to work toward victory, but out of victory; not to work toward accomplishment, but out of accomplishment.

The Church is founded upon God's complete triumph and utter achievement. Resurrection

is this feature of the assembly. God's rest, God's satisfaction, God's good pleasure; He can survey all and say, "It is very good," and now in effect He says, "We can work all that out in perfect assurance that it will be reproduced in the Church because it has already been consummated in the Head." When you get there spiritually you have come to understand the tremendous power and confidence and assurance which characterised the first days. Why was it that they were people who were beyond defeat? Why was it, that, let hell and earth combine to do their worst, it was a forlorn hope? Why was it that being persecuted from one city to another, being beaten, imprisoned, they could pray and sing in dungeons? Because the victory was already theirs on the ground of their resurrection union with the Lord Jesus. They were not hoping for victory, they were resting in victory; they had the assurance of it and so they could go on, and although faith was tested as to the position which they had taken up in Christ's victory, tested in circumstances and conditions, and they might have been tempted from time to time to question their position and ask if after all it was true, yet holding on, and in spirit maintaining their attitude that it was victory, invariably it worked out as victory, and the dungeon saw the very jailer converted, and his household. What had happened in general in the birth of the assembly, so to speak, universally, in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, was reproduced in localities far and wide.

Wherever they went they were met with a challenge to their position, their standing in His victory, their grounding upon His resurrection. Hell rose up to cast a doubt and to try and make them believe it was otherwise, but standing their ground, the local assemblies were born in relation to the universal assembly, on the ground that Calvary and the resurrection was complete triumph. So you see what was at the beginning in the universal sense, was reproduced everywhere upon the same principle, and that is the principle for the whole age, specially for the end-time.

The Church carries forward what has been done.

The Church, the assembly, the company of the Lord's own, is established, constituted by Him for the object of being a vessel of His testimony, and the testimony in that vessel is the power of His resurrection. The new cruse of which we have often spoken here, the new cruse which was called for by the prophet in the day when death was raging—you will recall the incident—was brought to him and he said, ".....put salt therein," and the new cruse with salt in it was emptied into the place of death and death was swallowed up in victory, in life, and they could go on. The cruse is the cruse of the assembly, and the salt is the power of His resurrection, and that is the testimony. We encounter death, active, mighty, terrible, awful, death, and the Lord does not protect us from it.

I am speaking now of death in its larger sense spiritually, which, of course, works in many ways; in atmospheres, in mind, in heart, in will, in soul, in body, in a multitude of ways death works; death in a place where we are called to testify. Oh death, this spiritual thing, we encounter it and hell rages and the issue is, shall death triumph or shall Christ triumph? and then the assembly is on trial. The two or three have their opportunity and are being tested out, and are being allowed to be tested out by the Lord as to the power of His resurrection. Faith is tried. The situation seems desperate and well nigh hopeless; yes, but you have taken up a position, the very fact that you are joined to the Lord says that you stand on the ground of His resurrection. He is a living Christ, not a dead Christ, that is your testimony, that is your position; your standing is being tested, your testimony is being tried out. Faith is being well tried by a situation, condition of things, and the issue will depend upon whether in spite of what appears, and what seems, and what feels, you still believe that God raised Him from the dead and in so doing broke for ever the power of death. As faith holds through the ordeal it emerges in His triumph. That is the testimony for the end-time, that is the issue of to-day.

Some of you will be able to understand what I am saying, others may not. The vessel of the assembly is established, constituted for the purpose of the testimony to the power of His resurrection, and that is to be the testimony at the end-time.

What the "Ministry" is.

The Apostle Paul, we have often said, was himself a personal representation of the truth with which he was entrusted. The special revelation given to him was the revelation of the Church of the Body of Christ, and he had—as all prophets have—to be personally constituted according to the message that he had to deliver, to be a personal sign in life and experience of that which they were teaching. I have said all prophets were, and I might say all prophets are. My dear brother, don't you talk about "going into the ministry." That is a mechanical way of talking. Let me say to you that the ministry has got to get into you first, not you into the ministry. That is, the thing has got to be wrought in you. You have got to be a personal representation of the truth which God entrusts to you, and that is costly, there is a price to be paid. Ah, but that is effectual. That is the ministry. You cannot separate the minister from his ministry if he is according to God. Well, the Apostle Paul was so constituted, and so he represents from start to finish the whole dispensation which is peculiarly marked as the dispensation of the Church, the Body of Christ; and it is very significant to notice that as the Apostle moved toward the end of his life, one issue which was continuously raised in an intensifying form was the issue of the power of His resurrection.

At the beginning he wrought mighty works outwardly in the power of the resurrection. Toward the end he had himself, personally to be a representation of that power in every part of his being, and no external miracles were allowed to interfere with that spiritual principle of the dispensation. That is, he could not work a miracle for his own healing, and he could not get by a repetition of appeals to His Lord deliverance from his infirmity. He had, by sufficient grace, to live a resurrectoin life in a dying body, in infirmity, and one of the last cries of the Apostle, which is a dispensational cry, if you will, is, "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection." That will be of necessity the last cry of the assembly. That is becoming, shall I say, wrung from the heart of every spiritual man and woman to-day, being wrung from us as we go on with God. There is nothing for it but the sheer power of His resurrection inwardly and outwardly, that is the only thing.

Oh, yes, but that being so we are in line with the Lord. But you notice it is an end-time

thing as it was at the beginning. In the beginning the principle was established on the first day, it was the resurrection day. The Church, the assembly was found with the Lord in the midst; in the end the assembly is ".....our gathering (or assembling) unto Him" when the Lord descends from heaven with an assembling shout, then to know Him in the power of His resurrection, and that an out-resurrection in the ultimate expression, not a general resurrection, but a peculiar resurrection. Well, you see the assembly is constituted by the very resurrection life of the Lord Jesus. John's Gospel seems to me to be peculiarly the Gospel of the Church. In the similitudes of the cherubim it corresponds to the eagle, always speaking of heavenliness and mystery. Ephesians is that, it is the eagle aspect of things, the heavenliness of the Church and the mystery of the Church; and John just fits into that as Matthew fits into the lion, Mark fits into the ox and Luke fits into the man. John fits into the eagle, and if that is the Church aspect of things in a special sense, then it is not without significance that John has so much to say about resurrection. Go through John again with the thought of resurrection in mind and see how often you come upon it. You come to chapter six for instance, and in chapter six you know what the Lord is saying about Himself. He has come down from heaven and has come down from heaven as bread, "which cometh down from heaven and giveth life....."

Life in the place of Death.

The great illustration of the spiritual truth is His feeding of a multitude in a wilderness. A multitude has left the world, the multitude has left the formal religious system behind, is found with Him in the wilderness, in a wilderness where no bread is, according to nature; where the world can make no provision, and they will perish unless bread is found for them; and He becomes their Bread in the wilderness, their very life as out there separated from the world. And then He explains the literal event in the light of His own person as the "bread which came down from heaven" to be the life of His own, called out from the world, separated from everything merely formal in religion, joined in vital union with Himself. He becomes the life of that. In that sixth chapter of John, four times repeated He says, "I will raise it (him) up at the last day." This is resurrection in relation to the life which He has im-

planted; Himself, as the Life, "I am the..... life," "I am the bread of life," "I will raise.. up at the last day." He is the Life of His own and because He is that He is the Resurrection of His own, and resurrection is implicit in His indwelling as the Bread of Life.

When you come to the last chapter of John which was an appendix (John closed with the 20th chapter undoubtedly, and then added something) you have the instance of the fishing. Peter said, "I go a fishing," and they went fishing and caught nothing. In the morning, one of His resurrection appearances, the Lord stood on the shore, gave a word of command resulting in a miraculous draft of fishes, and true to the Holy Spirit's genius the number of the fishes is given to the very last one; one hundred and fifty and three, and I seem to see a connection between "I will raise it up at the last day" and "one hundred and fifty and three." The precision and the exactness linked with the repetition, "This is the Father's willthat of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing": "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me": "I will raise it up at the last day." He will be the Resurrection to the last one of His elect. The assembly will be complete in the power of His resurrection to a unit. It is to be right to its very last member, whatever is meant by one hundred and fifty and three; the power of His resurrection will work out to precision, nothing lost; the completeness of the triumph of Christ in resurrection. The Church is constituted in the power of His resurrection. You come to John xi. and you have resurrection there brought in specially related to the person of the Lord Jesus, "I am the resurrection." Mary, Martha, yes, they believed in resurrection. They believed as most of the Jews believed, in a general Resurrection. What the Lord sought, strove to do was to bring resurrection in relation to His own person and say, "Resurrection is not some distant event upon the horizon, resurrection is Myself, and where I am and when I am there, that is resurrection." He is in the midst. Do we believe it? He is here to-day; nay, we can go further, many of us, I trust all of us, and say He is within. Can we? If so, resurrection for us has in Him already taken place. He is the resurrection and we are brought into relationship with Himself upon the basis of a life which has triumphed over death. He is that Life triumphant over death, already resident within us, and resident within the assembly. Yes, this is true. These are statements

of fact ; but oh, here again, it is a question of faith.

Faith laying hold of God's Facts.

We said with regard to the truth that He is in the midst, there has to be an attitude and an action of faith. Yes, an attitude and action of faith. It will often be that we have no sense of His being in the midst, either in us or in the midst of us. We may have oft-times an entirely opposite sense but He changeth not, "For I am the Lord, I change not," "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," ".....another Comforter, that he may abide with you for the age (Gr.)." "Oh, but to-day I feel anything but that the Lord is within, everything to-day says the Lord has gone, has departed." You will have those experiences, they are dark tunnels where every bit of the spiritual will be frozen, every bit of consciousness of the Lord will be dead, faith will be tested, but have we not been through enough of such experiences already to make us at least begin to believe that when we get a little further on we shall emerge from this tunnel and know that He has been there all the time, and He will just perhaps gently chide us and say, "I was there all the time, I do not come and go," and faith has to take up that position. So it has to be in the matter of the fact that in the power of His resurrection, He is in the midst, and as faith takes that position, that attitude, and stands, the fact breaks out, the fact becomes manifested and we emerge into the joy of it. Now Acts i. says that by the space of forty days He appeared unto them. Here, again, is one simple little fragment of symbolic language. We know that forty throughout the Scriptures always speaks of testing and proving. Moses in the mount for forty days tests Israel down below and proves them, but unfortunately they break down. Israel in the wilderness forty years, tested proved, breaking down. The Lord Jesus in the wilderness forty days and forty nights tested, proved, triumphant! Resurrection—forty days—what for? Testing and proving. Appearing; yes, something to go on. Disappearing; nothing to go on; or, He may be here any minute. Appearing; disappearing; proving, testing. Proving, testing throughout the complete period until it was established through testing and proving that He was alive. Perhaps no more wonderful forty days in history. Oh, that we could live there where

those disciples must have been, through the forty days, "You never know one minute from another when He will be here, when you may see Him." He does not seem to be here now! What is to be our attitude? We may never see Him again? He has gone for ever? Oh, no! Not that attitude; at any moment we may know that He is here! And we live, not on the negative, that, having disappeared we may never see Him again, but on the contrary, that having so constantly appeared He may be here at any minute. Faith can always take the negative side and become doubt, but faith has to live on the positive side. Testing, proving, until established in the fact that He is alive there is no doubt about it. ".....by many infallible proofs" He has proved this, and I think that that explains John's twenty-first chapter. He has disappeared, chapter twenty, disappeared! It looks as though the story is closed with that, He has disappeared. But He re-appears as upon the shore when they are upon the sea, and it seems to say, "Yes, though He has disappeared He is on yonder shore watching all the operations; He is not out of touch." And the appendix was worth while if it was for that alone.

You see the point is they were constituted upon this. Their very being was based upon that, the fact, the reality, not as a doctrine, not as something that was merely reported. He is a living, personal reality in vital association with their experiences, and He established them upon that; and that is the assembly. What is true of the assembly has to be true of every member of the assembly. Oh, beloved, that we might take the faith attitude on the positive side toward the abiding presence of the Lord, according to His Word, in resurrection. The Lord is here, and yes, but more, He is here in all the virtue and potentiality of His resurrection, and the Holy Spirit would bear witness to that, for He is here to seal the testimony of Jesus in the hearts of those who believe; for, says the Apostle, "the exceeding greatness of his power.....which he wrought in Christ" is "to usward who believe." "Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." He is risen, and the fact of His resurrection as a power within the life and within the assembly is the testimony for which the assembly has been constituted, and we have no justification in existing as the Church if that testimony is not in us. There is no justifica-

tion for assembling together unless the issue is life, an expression of life. Every time we assemble together there should be such a faith attitude toward the Lord as present, and a taking hold of Him as present in the power of resurrection; that this assembly should once again feel that power at work. We ought to go away from our assembling together revitalised, re-energised, renewed, feeling marvellously refreshed and not worn out, tired to death; and it depends very very largely upon our attitude toward the Lord. Oh, if we come together to judge the messenger, to criticise the message, to take account of things present outwardly and to have a meeting for conscience sake, or bound up with religious legalism or anything like that, we will be glad when it is all over. But if our hearts are directed toward the Lord and we are laying hold of the Lord as present in the power of resurrection, we can go away as giants refreshed as with new wine. It depends upon the faith attitude. I do not say *everything* depends upon this. I can conceive of circumstances when, with all the exercise of the Lord's children, there might be a disorder which arrests the Holy Spirit, but a great deal depends upon that for which we come, and the faith we exercise when we do come. Try it and see how it works. Get the Lord into view and exercise faith in relation to Him.

First-Fruits of Resurrection.

In connection with this resurrection you have this third thing, this third principle. "Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto my Father: but go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Literally, "take not hold on Me for I am not yet ascended unto my Father." "Ascended"; this is not the ascension, of course, of which Acts i. speaks, ".....a cloud received him out of their sight." This is something that came in between His resurrection and His ultimate ascension as there mentioned, and it carries with it one of the richest meanings for the assembly. It carries many meanings. "I have not yet ascended"; "I ascend." Evidently between His appearing to Mary, and His coming into the assembly He had ascended. What for? Well, He was the first-fruits. He was the first-fruits of a harvest to be fully reaped in resurrection, in the power of His resurrection. The harvest

was in view, spiritually; Pentecost, the time of harvest, was forty-seven days hence, but before the harvest you always have the first ripe grain, the first-fruits. The Jewish farmer, six weeks before the harvest went into his field and plucked the ears that were already ripe and took them into the temple, and they were presented aloft, heaved before the Lord, with this two-fold meaning. "Lord, inasmuch as you have given me these first-fruits, in faith I receive the whole harvest: and Lord, inasmuch as I give You the first-fruits I recognise that all the harvest is Yours." "Christ the first-fruits," says Paul; and here was the presentation of Himself in the presence of the Father as the first-fruits in which the whole harvest is bound up, in which the whole harvest is secured in faith's complete triumph in which all the harvest is for God, everything is secured and everything is included in Christ the first-fruits.

What has happened? Let us have a look at Romans viii. 29 again, "For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren:" What has happened? He has gone right back in that act of presenting himself to the Father, right back to the foreordination of God; in the foreknowledge of God every member of Christ was known, foreknown and foreordained, foreknown in the attitude which they would take toward the call which would come to them eventually. He has foreordained them, not to salvation, but to be conformed to the image of His Son, and having foreknown and foreordained to that end, the Lord Jesus, in going to the Father in His resurrection-ascension went right back: into the before times eternal and secured every one of the foreordained, secured every one of them in the power of His resurrection, the whole Church in His own person, and presented them representatively, as the Firstborn among many brethren, before God; and then He came down and constituted His assembly and started to work conformity to that which had been before the Father, as that which the Father had determined from all eternity. First-fruits. "..... the Firstborn among many brethren." It is a tremendous thing, this ascension, this going as the first-fruits into the Father's presence. It says that all the harvest will surely come and be there. It is not only something in the Father's intention before the world was, but something secured now, literally in the Son, in the power of His resurrection. That which

rose up in the face of the eternal intention and said: "It shall never be," sin, death, the devil, said: "That inclusion of that elect race in the person of Jesus Christ shall never be," Christ has come and met that challenge in His cross and broken it, and in His representative person as the first-fruits has taken that whole company into the presence of God and secured them there. That is no small thing. He says, "God intended—" The Devil said "No." "I have answered the 'No' of Satan and secured my Church." The Church is constituted on that basis. In effect the Risen Lord said: "Oh, do not make an earthly thing of Me, I am no longer related to this earth, I am related

to heaven now, My family is related to heaven." "And as Head of the Church, the Church is a heavenly Body; do not try to tie Me to earth, do not make something of Me here." "No, I and My members are heavenly in life, in relationship, in interests, in everything." That is the Church, that is the nature and basis of the Church, and Christ is the centre as the resurrection, as the first-fruits, in the presence of God.

The Lord interpret His Word to us and bring us into the spiritual value of it, just show us the fuller meaning and make us to see our heavenly calling in Christ Jesus.

T. A.-S.

Elisha

An Anointed Instrument and his Remedy for prevailing Spiritual Ills

We have been thinking of the nature of that which issued from the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. I think perhaps in what we shall now say, we shall see not so much its nature as its activity and the manner of its operation.

The Lord has lately been compelling my thoughts around the life of Elisha, and it is concerning him that I think the Lord would have us speak. Elisha as a type. Immediately our thoughts go to the fact that he was the one upon whom the mantle of Elijah rested. You see how fittingly he was a type of those who are witnesses of a risen and ascended Lord and upon whom the power of that Ascended One has come.

I am going to assume your knowledge of the principal incidents in the life of Elisha. Let us have in mind that Elisha is the man who follows Elijah through to the point of ascension, and subsequent to ascension, anointing. We know that the Holy Spirit Who came at Pentecost was the Spirit shed forth by the ascended Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus, and the mantle that fell upon Elisha, the double portion of the spirit that he had sought from his lord, is typical of the Holy Spirit that descended upon the Church; and what we have in Elisha is an anointed instrument perpetuating the ministry of an ascended lord here on the earth, and therefore we can see immediately that Elisha represents God's thought for the Church. I stress the words *God's thought* for

the Church for this very obvious reason, that God's thought for the Church is not necessarily what is found in the Church. Unhappily, that fact is all too apparent. So that while Elisha would represent the Church in its entirety according to God's thought, he does not represent the Church in entirety in so far as the Church is not after the thought of God. Hence he represents the nature and activity of that instrument which follows in the train of the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus.

THE WAY TO ANOINTING.

(1) The Energy of Faith.

What I want to do is to look first of all at the way by which this one came to the position of an anointed one, to be in the place that God had purposed for him, to be the instrument according to the mind of God.

We first of all find him in 1 Kings xix. when Elijah, by the bidding of the Lord, comes to anoint Elisha as prophet in his room. I do not propose that we should stay with all the details of this but I want just to indicate a thought or two.

Elisha is found in 1 Kings xix. ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen, and it is there that he receives his call to follow the Master, and we know that the outcome of that was that he said: "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee." Here he meets with his first rebuff. Elijah

says: "Go back again: for what have I done to thee?" Take note of the rebuff, the discouragement, the effort to shake him off. What is Elisha's reply to this rebuff? He took the oxen, slew them, arose and went after Elijah and ministered unto him. One thing I want to point out is this, and I want to relate it to what was said earlier when we were shown the necessity of our spirit being re-born and of God's activity with us *in our spirit*. From the first recorded incident in the life of Elisha there was made necessary an activity on his part of a very definite, purposeful, aggressive, active character. Everything was done in the case of Elisha to shake him off, as we shall see. If Elisha had been a man with anything else than one purpose in his heart he would have been shaken. The work God does in the spirit of a child of His is wholly His from beginning to end, it is an activity of God: but we see from Elisha's example that if we are going to be the instrument God needs us to be, there is the necessity for a definite, aggressive, energising in us, we working together with Him in relation to the end that He seeks when He does this work in our spirit. That brings us back to the word in Ephesians ii. 8, that everything is of grace, even the faith we exercise. So that we do not depart from the truth that all the work of God in our spirits is His work of grace, but there is the necessity for the operation of faith in line with the purpose of God if we are going to be the instrument He wants. There are a great many of the Lord's people who are not in that ministry He intended them to fulfil, not because God has not called them, but because they are not stirring themselves up to take hold of God. Isaiah lxiv. 7: ".....none stirreth up himself to take hold of thee." Elisha stirred himself up. We note that, as we go along—the necessity for a faith that operates in our hearts in relation to the divine call and that refuses to be shaken off. "According to your faith be it unto you" is a principle which runs right through everything. You will not enter into God's purpose, or the blessing of the Lord, or be a channel to others unless there is the response of your heart to God.

(2) Repudiation of Earthly Resource.

The first thing that Elisha definitely turned his back upon in his progress toward the goal of the Divine call was dependence upon earthly, material resource and means of sustenance. The oxen and plough by which doubtless he

got his living were consumed, and represented for Elisha a back page in history. He set his face forward with his Lord, no longer depending upon earthly or material resources or means of sustenance. He has deliberately rejected the natural means and prefers to go on with his Lord and be sustained in such manner as may be found in that way. I want to be careful how I put that. Our brother yesterday mentioned that someone had asked: Is it possible to be the Lord's witness and still remain in an ordinary business vocation? This does not illustrate to me the fact that Elisha, immediately came out of business. It says Elisha ceased in his heart to depend upon material resources for sustenance; that is quite another thing. You can depend in your heart upon the earthly thing—and that earthly thing will fail. You can use the earthly things that God sends without depending upon them as the ground of your confidence, and that is what I see here. The Lord speaks about those that *trust* in riches. He puts that immediately after those that are rich, to explain what He means. Those who put their confidence in riches are the people who are going to get into difficulty; not necessarily those who have the riches. That brings us back to the faith matter we were speaking of. The man or company who is going to fulfil the calling of Elisha has got to be primarily one who once and for all repudiates earthly things as the ground of confidence, or earthly means as the means of support, whether people or things, money or resources of any other kind. We trust not in princes, nor in horses, nor banks nor anything else in themselves. The principle here is that Elisha, in pursuit of his vocation definitely separates himself from dependence upon material or earthly resources. It is the first thing Elisha turned his back upon.

Turn to II. Kings ii. Here again we need to note the continued attempt on the part of Elijah to shake off this one. Elijah was not really anxious to shake him off, but was testing the reality and the pertinacity of this one who was to carry on in his stead. Little use for Elijah, who had stood before Ahab, to have a man as his successor who was not dominant in spirit. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." That is a peculiarly fitting word, because if there is one thing that is happening to-day it is the tendency of so many sorts to discourage the people of God from pursuing right to the end. For the child of God to drop

out of the race at this stage is going to be a matter of infinite peril. We should exhort one another continually to stir up our hearts to endure unto the end, for the end is drawing nigh. That was Elijah's practice with his follower. I think there was a very deep, quiet satisfaction in the heart of Elijah, as Elisha said: ".....I will not leave thee"; and there is joy to the Lord when we say: "Lord, I am going on with Thee to the end, cost what it may."

In the first place Elisha accompanies him to Gilgal, then to Bethel, then to Jericho, then to Jordan, and through on to the other side. I want us to look at the significance of these places.

(3) Repudiation of the Old Creation Man.

First of all, Gilgal. What was Gilgal? We know from the record in the Book of Joshua, Gilgal was the place of circumcision. After crossing Jordan and entering into the land of promise, at Gilgal circumcision was reinstated, and the place was called Gilgal because the reproach of Egypt had been rolled away. Here was a people who in Abraham had been given the land of Canaan, and had gone down to the land of Egypt and become bondmen, a people in bondage. After their wilderness wanderings they are back again in the land and by that symbolic act of circumcision they reach a condition where the Lord says the reproach of Egypt has been rolled away. The dishonour, the shame attaching to Jehovah's witnesses who have lost the land given to them, the reproach is rolled away, they have come back to the place of their testimony and there is set up again a true testimony to the Lord in the place of His intention. Israel might have been great in the wilderness or in Egypt, but out of Canaan was not the full testimony. The Lord's intention was to bring the people into the land of their inheritance. They are not yet fully possessing it, but they are in the land. And that which makes for the rolling away of the shame is circumcision, the cutting off of the flesh, typically the putting away of the whole body of the flesh. In other words, we know the putting away of the whole body of the flesh was the work of Calvary whereby the whole of the old man, the whole of that fallen state, man as soulical man, was rolled away in the cross of the Lord Jesus, and there came in a man circumcised. A people liberated from the bondage of the old fallen condition. Gilgal

speaks of a restored testimony, and the rolling away of the reproach due to sin, due to a fallen nature. But Elijah goes to Gilgal when that significance of Gilgal has long since been forgotten. That was Gilgal in its glory.

We know after the death of Joshua that the angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bochim, and Gilgal is no longer a testimony to the rolling away of the reproach. The putting away in the cross of the Lord Jesus of the whole of the old nature is no longer the living testimony of Gilgal. It has become that in name only; here is that which professes to be the testimony to the cross in the putting away of the old nature, but in Elijah's day no such living testimony was there, and they pass on from Gilgal. What is Elijah doing thereby? He refuses to be identified with the thing that makes a profession and is not; the preaching of a cross which has not got essentially in it the putting away of the old nature. He refuses to be found in identification with that which preaches about the cross of Christ but denies the power. There is plenty of that in the world and the Church to-day; the preaching of a cross in word, but denying the power of it in the putting away of man as man. There is the dividing line among the Lord's people to-day. The subjective side of the cross is that which people will not have. Bring in your message regarding the ruling out of the old creation man in every aspect of himself and of his activity, and your message is often not accepted.

We, beloved, dare not tarry at Gilgal which has lost its essential testimony and message. If you can be induced by any means to stay there you will be allowed, and the only way to get past that Gilgal which has lost its power is to say: "I refuse to leave my Lord." You may preach that Christ died as a substitute for sinners, you may even preach in some measure about the Blood, but the moment you preach the putting away of the whole body of the flesh and the ruling out of natural man in all that he is you will meet with opposition. Humanly speaking, you can have peace for all time in your assembly if you will compromise on that message and stay at an unworthy Gilgal, and allow the natural man liberty to pride himself on his attainments and capacities. The test for Elisha was, would he stay at Gilgal? No, by the grace of God he will not stay there. We have need to hear the Lord say to us: "Are you prepared to stay at that Gilgal?" Gilgal has lost its power these days. Take note of

that, beloved. We shall purchase peace and ease at the cost of our message and our usefulness to the Lord if we will not preach the subjective work of the cross.

(4) Repudiation of Idolatry.

Then they moved on to Bethel, the House of God; the place where Jacob had seen the glorious vision of the way from earth to heaven, the Son of man there, angels ascending and descending. The place of an opened heaven. It was the House of God. Surely an estimable place for Elijah to go to, the very place for the Church to be found identified with. Yes, but Bethel had lost its significance at this time. There were two golden calves set up in Israel now, and one was at Bethel. That which was to have been the place where the very glory of God met on earth, has given place to a golden calf made with men's hands. The Church of the Living God, in the thought of God is to be that on earth where heaven and earth meet, where the open heaven has its expression. The House of God is intended to be the very meeting place, His sanctuary in the midst of the peoples. And in a very large measure, typically at the time of Elisha, and truly to-day, that which should enshrine the glory of God has lost its glory and power, and there has come in the glory of idolatry—of the image which man's imagination about God has produced in the place of the revelation which God would give concerning Himself. Something else in God's place. If you can by any means be induced to stay at Bethel you may, but you will not find your Lord tarrying there. What is in the place of God in His House? Well, man is in His place. Work is in His place. Systems are in God's place. Power is worshipped in the place of God. A thousand things may constitute the idols that have taken the place of the glory of the Lord in His House. And if you will come down to the level where men are honoured instead of the Lord, where a system of things is bowed down to, and the Sovereignty of the Holy Ghost in the Church is not too strenuously insisted upon; if you will depart from the high ground where the rule is "Christ the only Head of the Church," and allow something or someone else to rule, you can stay at Bethel comfortably, but at a terrible price, even the loss of your spiritual vitality and usefulness. It looks as if into that realm we are moving when you consider modern political situations

and recognise the way that the hand of government and political power is coming down upon the Church. The Church may for the present be unmolested, but the moment it suits political power to step in and say "This you may do and this you may not, in the realm of spiritual things," the issue is joined. The test for the Lord's people is then whether they will say: "We know no lord but Jesus Christ"—and to say that will cost heavily. The real crisis for the people of God will be whether they will be swallowed up in the political situations of this world, or whether they will stand, though it cost life itself, refusing to admit any sovereignty but Christ's in the realm of spiritual things. Bethel had become the place where no longer God ruled, no longer was God's appointment there; something had taken His place.

(5) Repudiation of the claims of the Devil.

Then they went on to Jericho. What was Jericho? When the children of Israel entered the land after crossing Jordan, Jericho, a great stronghold of the enemy, faced them, and we know it was a typical thing. The capture of Jericho was the Lord's pattern case. He showed His ability to take the whole land, and when Jericho was taken, on the same principle the land was theirs. Jericho represents the triumph of faith, of spiritual methods over carnal; but the emphasis I want to put on it is this. Jericho being utterly destroyed represented the wiping out of the hostile power that possessed what should have been for God's people. God said in destroying Jericho: "You have seen me do that; the whole land is yours on the same basis." In the cross He stripped off principalities and powers and triumphed over them. Through death He destroyed him that had the power of death. The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the Devil. Jericho destroyed represented the works of the Devil utterly destroyed in Calvary.

What happened in Elisha's day? Not long before, Hiel built again the city of Jericho. Joshua had said: "Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho....." but in Elisha's day that curse was ignored. That which in its utter wiping out stood as a testimony to Calvary's victory is raised up again in his day. It is the undoing of the blotting out by Calvary's work of the work and power of the Enemy. Hiel had set up something which implied that Calvary did not involve the overthrow of the

Devil and his works. We are up against plenty of testimony of that sort to-day. Calvary virtually undone—staying on that side of Calvary that does not involve those very pressing matters of conflict with the Enemy and the destruction of the Enemy's work. Preach the doctrine that stays on that side of Calvary, that does not involve the destruction of the Enemy's kingdom, and you will have very little difficulty, not much opposition from the members in your assembly, and very little opposition from the Devil. Begin to preach a gospel that has as its essential note that by the cross the Lord Jesus destroyed the works of the Devil, stand for that, and you are immediately involved in a situation of constant conflict with men, demons and Devil. You can stay at Jericho if you like with Calvary virtually denied and the works of the Devil again allowed their place, and without any challenge to the prince of this world who was cast out; you can leave the powers of darkness out of your gospel and get on well, but the challenge to us is whether we will preach the gospel of the destruction of the works of the Devil. Will Elisha stay there or go over to the place of the double portion of the Spirit? No—he will not stay there with a gospel stripped of its reality and vital essence. You do not get to resurrection ground that way. No, the message is that He triumphed in His cross and in resurrection brought in a new order where victory rules.

(6) A Personal Experience of Calvary.

Then to Jordan. That is Calvary personally accepted and inwrought, that is all. The challenge for the Elisha instrument is that he has gone through Jordan himself, that he knows the experience personally, in his own heart, of the cross subjectively inwrought. And then away on up to the other side. Now they are on the resurrection side of Jordan, and there the mantle falls from the ascended lord and the Spirit comes upon Elisha.

THE MESSAGE OF AN ANOINTED ONE.

(1) A full orbed Gospel of Victory.

Now trace back the subsequent incidents in Elisha's life. Jordan, Gilgal, Bethel—they all come in again. Let us follow him back again. You and I, by the grace of God, have said as we have gone along: "Lord, I am not going to stay at Gilgal, Bethel, etc. The purpose of my heart is to go through with the Lord." Praise God! But having come through, if it

be so, to the place where we do become the Lord's instrument, let us see what is to be our ministry and how we are to be used in prevailing circumstances; what is to be the remedy we are to bring in. Here is our ministry. Elisha was an instrument in the midst of the Lord's people. He was one out of the many. We are instruments out of the many people of God, and if we do come to the Elisha position by His grace, our ministry then is back amongst the others who have not come there yet, to be a witness for the Lord before the others, and by the grace of God, to be a helping hand to bring them there.

Follow Elisha back (II. Kings ii. 19). While he tarried at Jericho they came to him and said: "The situation of this city is pleasant.....but the water is naught and the land miscarrieth." Jericho, we said, was the undoing of Calvary. And what a fruitless place! What a picture of that gospel to-day which undoes Calvary! You can preach something other than a subjectively applied cross, and you may get psychological changes, reformed characters on the face of it, moral changes accomplished; but given certain tests of experience and those fruits will prove to be no fruits at all. They will not stand. The fruit that stands is the fruit that is born by the preaching of the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, subjectively applied to the heart of the believer. You may preach the objective cross and draw out men's hearts unto the Lord, but given the necessary tests, and all too often trial will carry that fruit away. What is wrong? The power of the cross subjectively applied and the spirit of resurrection are missing from your gospel. What does Elisha do to cure the situation? He brings in the salt—the Spirit of Calvary, the Spirit of resurrection. Elisha's remedy for the cases of converts who do not stand is to preach to them the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the power of resurrection, with the meaning of it all brought into the believer by the Holy Ghost. Your converts will stand if they know livingly that in them is a Lord Who has conquered death; if a soul appreciates it is He Who lives within, that soul will stand. We are meeting in these days children of God who have passed into a realm of utter breakdown, doubting their salvation, and whether they are the Lord's, and they have got into a place where their testimony has ceased to be. What is your remedy? The remedy is to seek to bring home to them the truth that livingly within them by the

Holy Ghost is the Lord Who has conquered death and the Devil, and destroyed sin in its grasp and power and lifted them on to a plane of resurrection. Our business is to proclaim the victory of Jesus Christ through resurrection. That is the salt. The "Victory of Calvary" —no mere slogan, but a blessed reality into which all who are in living union with the Lord may enter. He Himself said "I give you authority over all the power of the enemy": "All authority is given unto me.....go ye therefore." Oh, to appreciate that all the powers of darkness were met and overcome at Calvary is to see that an open way has been made out from all the bondage and oppression of the devil; and the man who sees that, and grasps that truth by faith, will be in a position to stand, and to bring forth fruit that shall abide. Beloved, let us not fail to cast in the salt,—the message of resurrection, ascension and enthronement with Christ. So the ministry of this instrument that issues from the resurrection of Christ is to minister the power of His resurrection to souls in the bondage of the Devil. May the Lord anoint us for that.

(2) The Sovereignty of Christ.

II. Kings ii. 23. These "children" of Bethel were not little dots of a few years old but could accurately be called louts or hooligans: not little mites who did not know better, but probably young fellows who ought to have known better. What is their attitude? See verse 23: "Go up, thou bald head." We noted Bethel represents the putting of something else instead of the Lord as Sovereign Head, some other power in command. What have you got at Bethel as Elisha returns? People of responsible years, who should have known better, making mockery of the resurrection and ascension; telling him to go up as his predecessor has gone up, bringing into a realm of mockery and counting as a common thing the Blood of the Covenant; making light of holy things. That is what is being done where something else is being put in the place of the Lord Jesus. Where He alone ought to govern the life something or somebody else is governing. Where His way alone should control, other thoughts are preferred before His. What is the remedy? There is no remedy except there be repentance. It is mocking at Calvary. Elisha's remedy for them is to curse them in the Name of the Lord. If you rule out the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus and fail to give Him His place there is no remedy. If

you have dethroned Him, if you are not giving Him absolute control in the place where you are labouring, if you are not under His dominion in the work, there is no remedy, that work will fail utterly. The only remedy is to repent and honour the ascended, exalted Christ and give Him His place anew. The resurrection of Christ issued in His ascension—one movement—it is that upon which everything hangs, and the Church has no testimony to give unless it is based upon His resurrection and ascension. Paul said: "And if Christ be not raised.....ye are yet in your sins." Let your note of ministry be that He is raised from the dead, exalted to the right hand of God. Preach an earthly Jesus and you get nothing that abides. Preach the Lord in glory at the right hand of God through the Cross and you have a gospel with the power of God in it. It is the gospel of the glory of Christ that is committed to us. If men and women will not receive your testimony concerning His enthronement there is nothing for them but separation from Him. "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them" because one element of their preaching was the resurrection of Christ. I do not know any remedy for those who will not have the Lord to reign over them.

(3) The New Creation Man.

Gilgal. II. Kings iv. 38. What is Elisha's remedy for death in the pot at Gilgal? Meal. Remember what we said about Gilgal. It is the failure to appreciate that in the cross of the Lord Jesus the whole of the old creation man was put out of the way. Now at Gilgal Elisha finds the sons of the prophets; these are not worldlings, these are people in the Church that we are thinking of. They are seeking food, nourishment, that which will be life to them. They go to try and find it at Gilgal. They found something they thought was the real thing and it was not. We were reminded in an earlier message of the Devil's persistent effort to deceive and counterfeit, and we were told all his counterfeit work lies in the fallen nature of man where the soul element is dominant. These sons of the prophets, children of God seeking nourishment, gathered that which they thought was food and they knew it not, it was counterfeit. What a lot of the Lord's people are thinking they are feeding upon that which after all is only counterfeit. Gilgal is the place where the cutting off of the old nature by the cross is no longer the message, no longer believed

in, and it ministers death because it is the realm where the whole of the deceptive works of the Devil have their strength ; and if you live with a gospel which does not have at its heart the putting to death of the whole of the old nature, you are living in the realm where you will be deceived. Your only safety from deception is to live at the place where the whole of the old creation is reckoned to be dead through the cross of the Lord Jesus. Here, typically, in our narrative, are some of the Lord's people who suddenly realise they have been caught in a trap. They thought that their food would build them up in Christ and find the reverse. What is Elisha's remedy ? Bring in the meal, the fine flour, the humanity of the Lord Jesus. Bring in the nature of God's Man into your death situation and you will cure it—the Man as God purposed all men to be, with spirit in the position of ascendancy over soul and the whole man governed by God through the spirit. Fallen man is not such ; in him the spirit has lost its correspondenee with God and is dead and the whole being is dominated by the soul over which Satan has authority through the Fall. Here is the ground of all deception.

So what is our message, beloved, to the souls we are responsible for who are being deceived and entrapped by the Devil ? The message of the perfect humanity of the Lord Jesus and the operation of God in relation to it through Calvary. If you can bring home to people the fact of man's falling out of God's thought through sin, so that the soulical man, represented by the sons of the prophets, is not God's thought for humanity at all, and then show them God's true Man, the Man whose spirit is in the ascendant, Whose whole being is ruled from His spirit, and not His soul, and then bring them to stand into the good of that by faith, you have cured the situation. You and I, then, have

to be preachers of the perfect humanity of the Son of man, the Lord Jesus Christ ; and through the operation of the cross, the ministration of the power and capacity of that Man to the heart of the believer, so that the very attributes of that one Man, are found operating in the heart of the one who trusts in Him. Re-adjust the order in the life, get the soul domination ruled out by the cross and bring people to the place where the spirit is in ascendancy, and you hold the situation. It is important to know the approach to cases of this sort—God's thought for man. This is the humanity of Christ. The identification between the Son of man and ourselves in the cross to carry away the old nature ; the identification between ourselves and the Son of man in the Throne as bringing us into living fellowship with Him in victory. That has got to be our message to the souls who are living at Gilgal and who are deceived. Have that message born in our hearts and convey it by the Holy Ghost to other hearts and how the Devil would lose his ground ! We have to seek to rob the Devil of his ground. If he had no ground in us due to ignorance and un-crucified flesh he would have no power over us. The greatest enemy is not the Devil but the flesh because if there were no flesh there would be no power over us in the hands of the Enemy.

You and I are called to be Elishas. It is the Elisha instrument that is in touch with the Throne under the anointing of the Holy Ghost, that is with the ascended Lord in His ascension. That carries with it death to self, the cutting off of those things that Elisha had nothing to do with, and as we repudiate them and come through with him we become not only personally possessed of the Lord but a delivering instrument for others. Oh, that the Lord might enable us to loose other souls from the captivity of the Devil. Elisha shows us something of the way to it. G. P.

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His Sovereign Sway

A Brief Message as Spoken

READING : Genesis xlv. 4-11.
l. 15-21.

THERE is just one thing that has been coming strongly to my heart in the last day or two, and that is the fact of the sovereignty of God. We often remind ourselves that the Lord reigneth, and we often say that to one another ; but it is possible for us to accept it as one of the things we are quite sure about, and yet not quite to realise what is actually meant by the statement that the Lord reigneth. To reign is to rule ; to rule is to control, and to bring elements within a sphere and purpose so as to serve the end and to bring about the determination of the one who is ruling—and the Lord God omnipotent reigneth !

The story of Joseph is surely one of the great outstanding illustrations in the Word of God of this principle. " You intended evil," he says to his brethren, " You thought evil when you sold me to the Ishmaelites and they brought me down into Egypt and sold me to Potiphar ; you meant it for evil." There was no kindness, there was no consideration of the purpose of God in those men's minds and hearts, nothing but rank cruelty, hatred, evil, when they sold their brother to the Ishmaelites. The thing was evil from first to last. They meant it for evil. It was an evil act, contrary to the will of God so far as the action of brethren to a brother was concerned. And yet it was one of the factors that positively contributed to the fulfilment of the Divine will and purpose. The consideration of such things as this may bring a great deal of comfort to our own hearts and throw a flood of light upon some of our own experiences.

You remember Joseph as a youth had had two dreams that conveyed the impression that he was designed for a place of superiority, authority. He dreamed he was binding sheaves in the field and his sheaf arose, stood upright and his brethren's sheaves made obeisance to his sheaf. As soon as ever that dream was made known it seemed as if all the circumstances in Joseph's life began to conspire to make such a thing impossible. Joseph was a man of God's sovereign choice, a man of destiny ; an instrument chosen of God to occupy a high

position and to be in the Lord's hand a factor in the preservation of life in that generation ; the preservation of Egypt, the Egyptian nation ; the preservation of his own family, now a fair-sized tribe who would ultimately develop into the nation to occupy Canaan, and out from which the promised Messiah was to come. If Jacob and his sons perish with hunger, the promised seed of Jacob, the promised seed of Abraham, the sceptre that is to be seen in the tribe of Judah will not materialise. And God has foreseen all the circumstances that will arise, and He has in His sovereign purpose—because He chooses whom He will—chosen Joseph to be an instrument in His hand for the preservation of the promised seed. Furthermore, it is perfectly evident that Joseph is a chosen instrument in the sovereign hand of the Almighty God to be one of the most wonderful types of Christ when ultimately He should come into the world. And Joseph had some kind of realisation from his dreams that he was a man of God's choice, and, well from that time all the circumstances in his life absolutely denied and ran counter from every human point of view to such a conception.

Joseph was not an ambitious man ; he was a type of Christ and Joseph did not raise a finger to bring himself into that place of ascendancy. There was one outstanding characteristic of Joseph, and surely it was that which is the secret in the practical development of his character which made him eligible for the place to which God brought him ; wherever he was and whatever his particular employment was, he did that thing as unto the Lord, and the Lord was with him there. We have no indication that Joseph was always trying to get on to something else, some other job than that which he was doing. He served the Lord where he was, whether in Potiphar's household, or in the prison ; and the Lord made everything he did to prosper.

I am not sure that some of us are not in danger of missing the way, and falling short of God's purpose for us just here. We get an idea of what God wants ; we see the need that there is ; we get some desire, some longing to fulfil some part of the Lord's purpose ; we want to be

spiritually effective, fruitful, to be out for the Lord, to be the utmost that we can be; and what happens is that we begin to have a dissatisfaction and contempt for the place we are in and the work we are doing, and we are always in a restless condition wanting to be somewhere else. If only we were somewhere else there might be some chance of our being of use to God, but here there is nothing; and there is a tendency for us to miss being what God would have us to be just where we are, and so to miss qualifying for the next step. There is a danger here, and the most spiritually inclined, the most earnest hearted of us is not beyond this danger, of reaching out beyond our measure, of reaching forward and going before the Lord; I mean getting before God's time.

There was another man, not unlike Joseph, a type of the Lord Jesus; a man of God's choice, Moses. Moses made that mistake which Joseph did not make. Perhaps Joseph had not the opportunity of making it, but Moses did. When Moses was forty years of age he felt it was time to begin to move, and he took an opportunity that came to him that day when he slew the Egyptian, thinking his brethren would understand that it was he who would deliver them. The effort was made with a right objective, a right vision. It is true Moses was the Lord's appointed and chosen vessel to bring Israel out of Egypt; but you see he started to do a good work in his own way, and his own time. It was not God's way, nor God's time and it was abortive.

Now very likely there is somebody here for whom this is the explanation of some disappointments in life.

Joseph did nothing to get himself into that

position to which the Lord had called him a to which ultimately the Lord would bring him. The Lord (I do not know how much Joseph saw it at the time) led him step by step through experiences which were absolutely contradictory, utterly perplexing, and dark, to the point of despair. And the Lord is the same in His methods with His servants whether in Joseph's day or to-day. "Ye thought evil against me but God meant it unto good....." That is principle.

There is no evil in the life of God's true children, God's faithful servants. Whatever seeming evil there is, God means it for good and will extract good from it for you and me. Let faith lay hold of that and trust the Lord for that. That is the faith that will overcome. That is the nature, the way, the method of the Lord's dealings with those who are the Overcomers. If you and I in the days when we are in the pit or in the prison can keep in mind that our God is Joseph's God [the grace of God, the method of God, the purpose of God changes not then while we are in the pit we may rejoice in the fact that this evil will work out for our good and for the preservation of life, for the fulfilment of the Divine purpose of redemption for others. So let us lay hold of that in our hearts, that whatever evil, either man's or Devil's, whatever evil men or Devil may bring against us, however deep and difficult the pit, or the perplexity or the prison, the bondage, the limitations, the cramping of us, if we are the Lord's anointed if we are the Lord's choice, He will bring us to the goal of His Own predetermined counsel and foreknowledge, His purpose of grace for us. The way may be evil but the end is good.

P. W. F.

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3s. 6d.; Newcastle, Staffs., 2s. 6d.; Nutfield, 6s.; Osterley, 6s.; Paget Road, N., 2s. 6d.; Philip Street, E., 10s.; Plumstead, 6d.; Sevenoak, 2s. 6d. and 2s. 6d.; Southgate, £1; Swalecliffe, 5s.; Swindon, 2s. 6d.; Tunbridge Wells, 2s. and 9s.; Walsuer, 2s. 6d.; Wellington, 1s. and 7d.; West cliff, 2s.; Wolverhampton, 2s.; Woodside Park, 2s.; Worthing, 6s.; Edinburgh, 3s., 5s., 5s., 5s. 12s. (for Argentine); Leith, 5s.; Pitlochry, 3s.; Dublin, 5s. and 2s. 6d.; Monkstown, 5s.; Hong Kong, £1; Bulawayo, £1; Egypt, 5s.; Kameyala, Congo Belge, 10s.; Malta, 3s.; Gironde France, 5s.; Winterthur, Switzerland, 3s. 10d.; Buenos Aires, 3s. 10d.; Brooklyn, 4s. 11d.; Millbrook, U.S.A., 5s. 7d.; New York, 4s. 10d.; Seattle, £1; Scottdale, Georgia, 18s. 9d.; D'Arcy Canada, 11s. 8d.; Masetfield, 7s. 8d.; Verder, 4s. 3d.—Total, £20 16s.

A "Witness and a Testimony"

Supplement for Prayer Fellowship.

NO. 8.

APRIL 1934.

SPAIN.

In view of the political unrest in the country we have been provoked to much prayer for our friends during the past weeks. The hand of the Lord has markedly been upon the situation, and nothing has developed to occasion them undue difficulty, and they have been enabled to continue their ministry unhindered. They all write confidently in the face of the threatening political situation, and we rejoice that the Lord maintains them in perfect peace in spite of everything.

MISS SINCLAIR has much improved in health since our last report, but there are indications from time to time that prayer is still needed for her along this line, and while we rejoice in what the Lord has done we would ask that there may be no slackening of prayer for our sister. She has again been occupied in visiting outlying villages as opportunity has offered. Her home sees frequent visitors coming under the sound of the Gospel, and we rejoice to report that a young Scottish lady studying in Jaca has come to the Lord and is showing real signs of growth. Other visitors to encourage have been two nuns from a local Convent who have shown real interest and have invited Miss Sinclair to visit their Convent. We have not heard the result of the proposed visit, but would ask prayer that this link may be profitable to the Lord and that our sister may be held in His hand as she moves into a realm which could prove to hold many perils as well as opportunities.

SISTER MARGARET is remaining with Miss Sinclair for the time being, as the way has not yet opened for Miss Hawes to go forth for residence in Spain. Sister Margaret continues to be maintained in good health.

MR. AND MRS. McKAY in Orense are rejoicing in real tokens of the Lord's hand upon them. The town in which they are living is a traffic centre, and they receive frequent visits from the Lord's servants passing to and from other districts. Our brother has been occupied in visitation work, but finds that by far the most profitable means of reaching the people is through the Fairs held periodically in the town, at which great numbers of people gather, and where he has found a very ready attitude among them for the reception of the Word. In addition, he has in a remarkable way secured entrance to the local prison, and had permission to distribute Gospel literature amongst the two hundred prisoners confined there. He hopes to have liberty to continue this ministry.

able to be moved, Mr. Foster took her to the coast, and they are staying at a little place called La Cumbre, where the Lord has provided them with very convenient accommodation, and according to the last report our sister is slowly improving, though we fear her condition has been an exceedingly serious one, and very much prayer is called for on her behalf. Another lady missionary is resident in the same village, and we are glad that our sister will thus have the fellowship of another sister in the Lord. Brother Foster is using the opportunity to minister amongst the people of the district. At the time of these notes no very recent report has come to hand, but we anticipate that our friends will be staying at La Cumbre still for some time. We desire to emphasise our sense of their very deep need of the Lord's undertaking and guidance.

BROS. GRAHAM and BIRKBECK continue their ministry at Quibdo with encouraging tokens, but there is little of special interest to report.

ABYSSINIA.

MRS. SPEEDY and her little daughter left us again for Abyssinia on March 28th. After much waiting on the Lord it was felt that He was indicating His will that another sister, MISS AGNES MILNE, should accompany them. Miss Milne has been gathering with us at Honor Oak for some time and has for some years had Abyssinia much upon her heart. She is a highly-trained nurse with wide experience, and it is felt that she will have much opportunity of profitable service in Abyssinia. We earnestly commend our sister to the prayers of our readers. As in the case of all the friends who go out from our midst, she goes forth in spiritual fellowship with us but entirely dependent upon the Lord alone for all resources.

Our friends were due to reach Aden on April 8th, and Brother Speedy expected to meet them there. They purpose returning to Addis Abeba, where we believe the Lord has a fruitful ministry for them and we shall value prayer that the details of their way may be made clear to them.

CHINA.

We have heard regularly from our three sisters, Misses Clarke, Featherstone and Taylor. They are living together in a Chinese house and up to the present their ministry is mainly in prayer. They are having close touch with the Assembly of Chinese Christians in Shanghai who so warmly welcomed them on their arrival, and we believe

TAYLOR'S health, and we shall be grateful for encompassing prayer on this account. They are much concerned to know the Lord's mind for the future, and are still looking to Him to make plain in which direction He would have them to move.

INDIA.

Our sisters, LADY OGLE and MISS NANCY WILLIAMS, have been steadily ministering, moving from place to place amongst the Lord's people. Their reports are full of encouragement, and we look for much fruit in the days to come. Please pray especially that those to whom a fuller truth has been presented in these past weeks may be brought by the Holy Spirit into the fulness of the vision that they have seen. We rejoice that both our sisters have been maintained on the whole in good health despite the exacting character of their ministry.

MISS WILLIAMS was due to sail from Bombay on April 12th, and will be returning direct to London. LADY OGLE has lately been at Dohnavur, and at the time of these notes should be at Coonoor with Miss Cowie. She is due to sail from Bombay on April 21st and expects to stay some days in Egypt before returning to this country.

We regret to say that MISS COWIE sustained a fracture of her right arm some weeks ago, and though the letters which have been written on her behalf indicate a maintenance of her strong spiritual fervour, we have reason to believe that she has suffered a good deal by this accident, and we shall much value prayer that the Lord may renew her if it be His will.

We have been grieved to learn that MISS PHILIP, with whom Lady Ogle ministered in the earlier weeks in India, has had a serious recurrence of a former physical trouble, and apart from a very real coming-in of the Lord, there is little prospect of her continuing long among us. The Lord has, however, been quickening markedly and we commend our sister to the prayers of our friends that the will of the Lord may be done in relation to her. The ministry which she is fulfilling in her home is of a character to suggest great possibilities for the Lord.

POLAND.

Our BROTHER YANKOWSKI has been ministering for a time in Wilno and Warsaw, and is now back again at Luck. He continues to plead for earnest prayer on behalf of the Lord's people in Poland, whom he finds so largely uninstructed in anything more than elementary truth.

CONGO.

MISS FOREL. Our sister has been much encouraged by a movement of the Lord in relation to her Mission Station. He has brought to her a sister in the Lord of ripe experience and who is exercising a very vital prayer ministry, and their home is becoming more and more a rest home for missionaries. The prospect along this line is full of promise, but there is the consciousness of much

BROTHER HERBERT JUSTIN.

Most of our readers will have knowledge of the sudden home-call of our beloved brother. This came while he was conducting the evening service at Deal on Lord's Day, March 25th. He had read a few verses from the 9th chapter of John when he fell across his Bible and was in the Lord's presence almost immediately. A little brochure of appreciation of his life and ministry will be printed separately, so that we give no more details here. Please bear up in prayer his dear wife in the loss and strain of the shock.

We gratefully record the receipt of the following gifts (apart from local) for our friends serving the Lord in other lands. (Feb. 1st. --Mar. 31st.)

Miss SINCLAIR—Edinburgh 5s., 5s. Harlesden £4. Bembridge 5s. Greenford 12s. D'Arcy, Canada £1. Bro. GRAHAM—Dublin £1. Mr. and Mrs. FOSTER—Plumstead £3:10:0, £5. £2:14:0. Upper Abbey Wood £5. Miss FEATHERSTONE and Miss TAYLOR—Harlesden £6. Kenley 2s., Fulham £1:6:8. S. Woodford £2. Corelles, Switzerland £1. Mr. and Mrs. SNEYDY—Dublin £1. Southgate 10s., D'Arcy, Canada £1. Bro. YANKOWSKI—Edinburgh 10s., Loughton £2. D'Arcy, Canada £1. Miss CLARKE—Leigh-on-Sea £5. Fulham 13:4d. Mr. and Mrs. McKAY—Lewisham 10s., 10s. Newbury 10s. Miss FOREL—D'Arcy, Canada £1.

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

(If the Lord wills).

Honor Oak Christian Fellowship Centre,
13, Honor Oak Road, London, S.E. 23.

May 19—21.

June 30—July 1.

Kilreggan.

June 16—22.

Crawley, Sussex.

Wednesday, 23rd. May.

Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Friday, 27th. April.

Friday, 25th. May.

Particulars from Mr. S. T. Deeks, 10 Beatty Av., High West Jesmond, Newcastle.

Deal.

Thursday, 10th. May.

Regular gatherings are held at the Christian Fellowship Centre, Honor Oak Road, London, as follows:

A Witness and a Testimony.

Vol. 12.

No. 3.

JUNE 1934.

**GOD . . . WHO DOETH
GREAT THINGS AND
UNSEARCHABLE,
MARVELLOUS
THINGS WITHOUT
NUMBER."**

In Touch with the Throne

Some Considerations on the Prayer-Life

(Continued)

Some Mental Difficulties in Prayer

HAVING considered the five phases of prayer, namely, communion, submission, petition, co-operation and conflict, we shall now go on a little further to consider some of the problems which are related to prayer. As we have said, very often an undefined sense of contradiction or uncertainty in the background of our minds has the effect of crippling or paralyzing prayer. We are sometimes hindered in prayer by certain mental difficulties which we have never seriously set ourselves to analyse or define. Now our object here is to seek to define some of these things, to analyse them, and to nail them down. It is in the way of clearing the ground for prayer in certainty and confidence.

Prayer and the Will of God.

In this connection one of the primary difficulties in prayer arises in relation to the will of God. That, of course, is a very wide sphere of contemplation and consideration, and includes a very large number of different phases and aspects and points; but we shall seek to narrow it down and in what we shall say we shall see a great deal more wrapped up.

As to the will of God; the basic question seems to me to be—Is it absolute or is it relative? What we are dealing with is that question, as to whether the will of God for us is absolute or relative. Put like that you may not be helped very much. It sounds very academic, but I will explain what I mean. Does God permit things because they are His absolute will, or because He would draw us out by them to some position? In the latter case the will of God is relative and not absolute; that is, things do not represent what is absolutely the will of God, but He has permitted them for other purposes, and, therefore, they represent the relative will of God. Now you have got your foundation and your basis for a very comprehensive consideration of the will

of God in relation to prayer. The issue will be, if we are dealing with the relative will of God, either that those things having fulfilled their purpose are set aside and cease to have any place at all in the will of God, or else they are allowed to remain, but we have got into a place of ascendancy over them and they become our servants; not because God in the fulness of His will and purpose wants them to be there, but they are there because He sees they are things which are necessary to maintain us in a certain position. If we were perfect creatures the will of God would always be absolute. There would be no place for the relative will of God. It would be unnecessary for Him to permit things to get us to new positions. But being imperfect, fallen creatures, the will of God for us is more often than otherwise relative.

Conflict between Submission and Importunity.

So the problem arises for us along the line of submission and importunity. Those two things seem to be antagonistic the one to the other, they represent conflict, contradiction. How can you reconcile importunity with submission? Does not importunity rule out submission? Does not submission rule out importunity? These are mutually against each other: and yet not so. That is a problem which comes up in prayer. To keep on hammering at the door, to continue knocking, and yet to know submission! Does not submission take the driving force out of your knocking? Does not the force of your knocking imply that you have not learned submission? That may not always be defined in that way in the mind, but it creeps in, it lies in the background, and very often tends to draw that positiveness and certainty and definiteness out of prayer so that you find yourself in a no-man's-land.

Well, that is a problem and we have got to settle that problem as definitely as we possibly can. And the solving of that problem, I think, is along the line of recognising that the moral

element comes in, and that God is largely concerned with moral elements and questions. There is that which has got to be got over, or got through in us, and that means that in the relative will of God there will be many things which are only allowed, or even sent by the Lord, with the object and for the purpose of getting over certain things in us, or getting us through certain things in ourselves because moral factors are in view. (I am using the word moral in its broadest sense now, not in any narrow sense.) The new creation, we must recognise, is a moral matter, and it is not complete, so far as we are concerned. It is perfect and complete in itself, but in us it is not complete. The old creation still exists. It is objective and external to the new. It has great influence which it exercises upon the new. Sin is not extinct for the believer. The world is not extinct for the believer, as something which registers itself upon the believer. And the Devil is not extinct for the believer. You have no need that I tell you that. But right at the centre of that old creation, is the new, which is a moral thing. But a moral thing—we may say—in its infancy, and all its moral elements and factors have got to be developed to make us moral creatures, in the full sense of that word: that is, responsible creatures, intelligent creatures, creatures with a new conscience, a new standard of values, a new recognition of principles. A whole new heavenly world has come in and its knowledge and wisdom have got to be possessed intelligently. Its secrets have got to be known, its virtues have got to be inwrought. The Lord has not made of us by regeneration mere automatons, machines, to be acted upon from without irrespective of our will, our feelings, our desires, our reason, our intelligence, to be carried hither and thither and caused to do things, made to do things without any reference to ourselves. That is altogether contrary to Scripture.

But what the Lord has constituted us is moral creatures after a new morality, a new heavenly system, an entirely new intelligence which is not the natural man; an entirely new system of judgments and values and appraisements, and everything now will have a reference to us from the Lord. That is, He will refer to us in the matter, and He will call upon us to exercise ourselves in relation to the new creation impress, consciousness, conviction, intimation from within. Thus the new creation is a moral thing. But because there is still the old creation

circling and wrapping it round, the new creation will grow by conquest, will grow by conflict, will grow by strenuous exercise to overcome, by subjecting, triumphing over, deliberate, strenuous, devoted, persistent application. The will, the renewed will energised by the Holy Spirit will not be mechanically operated, but will be called to exercise itself in the Lord. Praying in the will of God is not the Holy Ghost coming and holding your will, your volition, and making you say things without your intelligence. That is an entirely false realm. There is a good deal today where man's intelligence is swept on one side and he begins to flow out with all kinds of things that neither he, nor anyone else can understand; and that is not the new creation. The Holy Ghost does not suspend the intelligence and understanding of anyone He uses in this way, but He calls upon the exercise of understanding: "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also": said the Apostle. And prayer in the Holy Ghost is not that we so abandon ourselves to the Holy Ghost so that we lose all our own moral life (using that word again in the fullest sense).

Prayer as Educative.

Seeing then that moral questions are pre-eminent in the Lord's mind where we are concerned, prayer becomes an education and a training. We speak of "the school of prayer," and a very right designation that is. Education and training; they are not the same thing. Education has to do with obtaining knowledge. Training has to do with moral worth in practical expression. Get that definition, it is an important one. You speak of an educated person and you mean someone who knows a lot. Speak of a well trained person and you think of someone who is worth something in practical value. There are a lot of educated people who are perfectly useless. We are, therefore, drawn out in prayer, and the Lord sees to it that we are drawn out, extended in prayer, and our being drawn out by the Lord, fully extended, represents on the one hand the acquiring of spiritual knowledge; and you do not get that unless you are drawn out in prayer. It is remarkable how, when there is a full extending in prayer, you learn things, you get secrets, you come into knowledge of things. And then also, that, on the other hand, has the effect of training; bringing us into a moral position, on to a higher level morally. We will see what that means presently. Prayerless people will

be both ignorant and weak ; uneducated and untrained. They will not know and they will not be able to do.

So we must recognise further that prayer is not merely individual advantage, but it is the prosecuting of a campaign. There is a Divine scheme of things to be entered into. Prayer is not merely for personal and subjective value. It is objective and collective and relative, even in the moral values which result from individual prayer.

The Nature of Importunity.

Now we will seek to summarise things a little. There are three sides to importunate prayer. Do you see why importunity is demanded, is necessary, is right ? And you see that there is no contradiction between subjection and importunity ; because subjection, as we pointed out earlier, is an active thing, a positive thing, and not a passive thing ; it is coming into line with the Divine mind ; and then importunity follows for the development of moral features.

The Moral Excellencies of Christ Inwrought.

Now the three sides to importunate prayer are, firstly, the moral. And the moral has its own two aspects. We spoke of the ingredients of the incense to be offered upon the golden altar, and these ingredients representing the moral virtues of Christ. On the one hand these have to be apprehended and appropriated by faith. That is one aspect of the moral side of importunate prayer ; that faith deliberately, persistently apprehends and appropriates the moral virtues and glories of the Lord Jesus. That is exercise. It very often represents the putting back of the intrusion of those arguments which arise from our natural selves that would discourage prayer. When we come into the presence of the Lord, we should certainly come in with a sense of our own unworthiness, our own emptiness, our own weakness ; but that is not the ground of our exercise, that should be settled. And yet often positive prayer, effectual prayer, is interfered with, arrested, checked, by the persistent obsession of our own sinfulness, weakness, helplessness, and there is a demand for positive exercise over the moral virtues and excellencies of Christ, that we should get them into both of our hands to get before God.

The enemy will thrust in convictions, condemnations and accusations in the presence of God, but we have with both hands to lay hold of the excellencies of the Lord Jesus, and until we have done that we shall not get through

to the throne because we cannot get to that throne apart from those excellencies. There has to be a deliberate refusal to take that on. We know of some whose prayer life has become an almost far-off, impossible thing because immediately they cut themselves off for prayer there is such an inrush of introspection and self-analysis, and consciousness of themselves, and the wrong things about themselves, so that they never get through to anything positive at all. On the one hand there is faith's exercise, the persistence of faith in the appropriation of those ingredients, those excellencies and virtues of the Lord Jesus to bring us through to God.

Then there is the other side of the moral factor ; those excellencies and virtues have to be wrought in our own souls by the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus in the presence of God is the Representative Man after God's own heart. But He is not only the Representative Man, He is the Man from Whom all the members of the new creation in Christ are to take their character, and His full content of virtues and excellencies as perfect Man, and perfected Man, have got to be distributed to all His members, and they have to take their character from Him and become themselves in their own souls partakers of His nature. These virtues of Christ were tested virtues, tried virtues, proved virtues, triumphant virtues, and they are now energetic virtues, not merely passive. The Lord Jesus (may I say this reverently) has not been put in a museum as a Model, the supreme Specimen just to be looked at, to be admired, but there is generic force and reality in Him. He lives. He is not a model, not a statue, He is a living Christ to impart Himself, and to be ministered by the Holy Ghost to us His members. His faith is not just something that has been rounded off, perfected and polished as something to be looked at as we look at a beautiful specimen. It is a faith by which we have got to live, His faith. His patience is of the same character. We are called to be fellows and partakers in the patience of Christ. You will have a lot of Scripture rushing into your mind ; we just mention these things. "Add to your faith . . ." Add, add, add—and these are virtues of Christ being added unto us. We are called, says the Apostle, to be "partakers of Christ." So His faith, His patience, His devotion, His obedience, His suffering, His love, have all been tested out, tried, proved, and are triumphant, but not as something apart from us, but something in

relation to us. "He hath granted unto us His precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become *partakers of the divine nature* . . ."

This is the moral side of importunate prayer, that the virtues and excellencies of Christ are wrought in us. When importunity represents the demand for patience because God does not answer at once, today, tomorrow, for a week, a month or a year, what is He doing? He is working into us the moral excellencies of His Son, a perfected and triumphant faith, a perfected triumphant patience, a perfected triumphant devotion, an obedience to Him which has no foundation other than that He has required it. Prayer is a training school indeed. These virtues come by exercise. Let us remember that God has an end in view, and that our partnership with Christ at length to which we are called will be moral. It will have to do with character, hence the relative will of God. Sin is not God's absolute will but He has permitted it. "Sin which doth so easily beset"; that is not God's will but He permits it; it is relative. Ah, yes, but the relationship is with our conquest, with the development of the new creation moral life. Suffering is not God's absolute will. He has permitted it, He does permit it. It is, therefore, His relative will which means that His permission, His allowing is for a purpose. When that purpose is reached the suffering may go, or it may still be allowed to remain to keep us in a position, but the position for which it has been permitted has been reached so the relative will of God has been done. And that applies to everything else. Circumstances! Many circumstances that come into our lives are not God's absolute will. A breakdown is not God's absolute will, but inasmuch as nothing can come to any child of His without His consent, it is His relative will.

Spiritual Understanding Secured.

Now, to see that, raises for us the whole question of seeking, in prayer, to know what God means by things; that is our education. Coming to know what God means by things through deep heart exercise and travail is our training. We have reached a higher standard of life. The second thing in importunate prayer is knowledge. We have just anticipated that in what we have said. Knowledge! The moral life in the first place;

knowledge in the second place. There are those who put themselves wholly into God's hands, and they are led into strange experiences of apparent contradiction. There may be a clear sense of what the Lord wants them to do, and the absolute impossibility of doing it. No way is open, doors are all closed; delay, delay, delay! What is the Lord after? To draw us out in prayer, that is the first effect, or it should do. To fully extend us in importunate prayer. We cannot let it go. We may decide we will leave it all with the Lord, but we find ourselves coming back to it again and again and again, and the Lord will not allow us to be indifferent. Well, He is after fuller knowledge and understanding on our part. That is bound up with all the Lord's ways with us, and one thing that of course we know in experience, but which perhaps it will be as well for us to have more clearly defined before our minds, is that we cannot learn Divine principles, or obtain spiritual knowledge from books or lectures. Such can only be known as they follow the line of generation. First of all there must be conception, an inward thing; then there must be formation, and then there must be travail leading to birth. It is a life process. We cannot learn Divine and spiritual things from manuals, not even the Bible. We can only learn what is in the Bible along the line of living experience. *The Bible is not a gramophone, it is a microphone.* Now what is the difference? A gramophone is a thing stored up in itself. A microphone is that which transmits something beyond. The Bible is not a gramophone; there has to come through our reading of the Word something from beyond for our understanding. We can have the gramophone kind of knowledge of the Bible; that is, we may know the Bible as a book through and through, have the most wonderful analysis and diagrams and we may still remain—for all practical, spiritual purposes in a living way—very little use to the Lord.

But if we have a microphone apprehension of the Word, that we have the Scriptures but, God speaks through the Scriptures to us, then we have got the living thing. We have all as children on the sea-shore taken up the shells and put them to our ears and heard the sea roaring. We have brought the shells home to the city and put them to our ears, and have still heard the sea roaring. Is it true? It is a childish delusion. We think when we

are children and have the shell in town that we hear the roaring of the sea, that it is all stored up in that shell, and we have only got to put it to our ear and there it is, it is heard. That is the child's thought about that shell. It is nothing of the kind. That shell is only acting like a funnel which is collecting the vibrations of the atmospheric sounds, and causing us to hear what we would not hear with the natural ear. The shell is nothing, it is a transmitter of the larger thing. The Word of God taken as a book is just like that shell. It will bring to us, if we are in the Spirit, the mind of the Lord, but apart from the Holy Spirit's operation through it to us it may be just like any other book, and we may read it and get no more light from it than you get from any other book. The necessity is for spiritual knowledge.

So many make the Bible just a manual. Now what we are saying is that we cannot know Divine principles, or obtain spiritual knowledge from books or from lectures, these things only come to us along the line of life, experience, something done in us of a living character, a life formed in us, developed, and then bringing us into travail for its full out-working. That is how we get spiritual knowledge, and that comes in importunate prayer, and that is why God demands, and makes necessary importunate prayer. We get to know from the travail of our souls before God, in the long drawn out experience of anguish, we get to know spiritual things. Very often hurry—in the long run—only means loss of time, and we have to come back to get fuller knowledge because we were in too great a hurry. There are those who have to come back, they would not wait, they were in such a hurry. The Lord has to bring them back and tie them up so that they cannot move, and keep them there in deep exercise before Him for an extended period, and they learn then what was in the mind of the Lord as indispensable. There are those who are made to know before they go out, but whether it is before you go, or in your having to come back, the same thing is in view with the Lord, that you should know. And so the Lord's delays are the Lord's times of drawing out in importunate prayer for the sake of spiritual knowledge.

Taking Responsibility in Prayer.

Then thirdly, there is the collective aspect. Nehemiah spoke of the prayer which he prayed

day and night, but that prayer was relative, it had to do with the Lord's people. Christ's prayers were of the same character. They were not just for Himself, but they were related to His own, drawn out day and night for them. Paul's prayers were clearly of the same order. ". . . do not cease to pray for you": "Praying always with all prayer and supplication . . . for all saints." There is persistence and importunity, but it is a collective, relative thing. The woman who is in the back of our minds as we use the word importunate or importunity, confronting the unjust judge, is a woman who represents the Church. Christ's comment upon that word was: "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him . . ."

What is the avenging of the saints of their adversary? Well it is the great collective thing at the end, it is the great issue when the Accuser of the brethren is cast down who accused them before God, day and night. The Great Judge will avenge the Accuser, the harasser of the Church, and this has its collective aspect. The incident of the Friend at midnight, as we have called him, was again a relative thing, it was not a mere personal thing. Because he would keep on knocking the other man got up; it was his importunity that fetched the man out of bed, but it was in relation to others. All this represents a scheme, a plan, a campaign in which all the Lord's people are involved, and God is not only after getting us individually to a place, but getting us relatively to a place with all His people: "Till we all come . . .", and our travail, our moral training, these contradictions and delays which draw us out and fully extend us, these are working in us in relation to the whole Body, and it becomes a relative thing. It is on behalf of the Body.

The Lord is seeking to have His whole Body perfected and every part must have a due working in it in relation to the whole. One day the cumulative effect of our trials, difficulties, perplexities will be seen in the whole perfect Body, and we shall see that when we suffered we did not suffer in isolation, that our sufferings were not detached things, but they were collective, they were related, they were a part of the whole thing, and they contributed to a much bigger thing than our own personal interests. We must allow the fact and the truth of God's whole end to give colour to our personal experience. That what we go through

is not simply because the Lord has marked us out to be sufferers alone, but because the whole Body is His end, and that we suffer in relation to the Body: for the Body's sake we fill up that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ. The sufferings are relative you see. Not the absolute will of God, but relative, in this further sense that they are moving on to a larger purpose of God: when that larger purpose is reached then that relative will of God in the sufferings will go, and there will be no more pain, no more suffering. We must see the whole plan of God and find that our required, demanded persistence and importunity in prayer affects these three things. The personal moral life of the believer on the heavenly pattern: the increase of spiritual knowledge is back of the delays which call us out to importunate prayer, there is something that we are going to know that we do not know. We are going to learn something that we know nothing about, and this drawing of us out is the way by which we come to know what we do not know. An important thing! And then this exercise, this travail, is related to the

whole purpose of God, and has its place in relation to all His saints. There is no such thing as coercion in God's will. That is foreign to the thought of importunity. Importunity is, although it may not seem like it, cooperation with God. We may think that the effect of it is to coerce God, to persuade God to do things. But God has only drawn us into that way to draw us into cooperation with His will. That is what I meant when I said there were things to be got over in us, all kinds of old creation things to be got over: our desires, our feelings, our preferences, our judgments, our conceptions, our estimates; all these things have got to be got over. In the exercise and activity and travail of prayer we have come into cooperation with God and we have found that in the long run what we thought was trying to persuade the Lord to do things, was the Lord's way of getting us to a place where He could do what He wanted. Strange ways the Lord has, but in the end He is justified and: "Wisdom is justified of her children."

(To be continued.)

T. A.-S.

The Anointing of the Holy Spirit

(Continued.)

David and the Philistines; or the Spiritual and the Carnal

READING: 1 Samuel 16-13; 17-1.

"Now the Philistines." That that should come just there carries with it a very great significance. The word "Now" is a very important word. It is the peg upon which hangs a very great deal. That just at this point where David's anointing has been carried out, almost immediately, within so short a time afterward, the record takes this turn, "Now the Philistines"; and with the introduction of the Philistines there at that point we are brought face to face with one of the greatest phases of the anointing, the meaning of the anointing. The Philistines were the chief enemies of the testimony of the Lord. We

have seen that David's life was marked by the Divine purpose of bringing the testimony of the Lord to fulness and finality; which purpose is seen fulfilled when the ark of the testimony is at last deposited in the sanctuary of the temple, and the glory of the Lord fills the House of God. That is the purpose of David's life. It was for that he was raised up, unto that he was anointed. We are now brought face to face with the chief opposition and antagonism to that anointing, represented by the Philistines. As you go through the books which contain the record of David's life, you will be tremendously impressed with the great amount of contact he had with the Philistines; with what a large place the Philistines had in

his life. It is a most impressing thing, and, being made aware of it, as you go to these books you cannot fail to see how large a place the Philistines took in the life of David and in the life of Israel in the days of David.

You will also be impressed, if you care to make a survey of the books of David's life, with the tremendous place the Philistines had in the Old Testament. In the books of Judges and the books of Samuel, the Philistines are mentioned at least two hundred and four times. Then in Joshua, Genesis and Exodus together, you have them mentioned another eleven times; two hundred and fifteen times up to the end of Samuel. That surely means something. That is a round figure, it is not less than that. We want to allow the weight of that to come home to us and see the proportion in the books which contain the life of David. It does bear out what we are saying, that if David was raised up specifically in connection with the testimony coming to fulness and finality, and if he was anointed unto that particular purpose, then the very place which the Philistines hold there in his life represents something which must be taken account of and we must look into this and see the meaning of it.

Who were the Philistines?

The Philistines; who were they? They were not natives of that part of the world. They were, in the first place, a wandering people of a war-like nature and well trained in war. They were therefore, really a menace to the peoples on the earth. They were trained and very efficient fighters, and some of the other greater peoples of the earth found the Philistines a very real handful, and found them to be more than a match for them. Now they came toward the land of promise, the land determined by God to be the land of Israel, they menaced that land before Israel came to it and they gained a very strong footing in that land. Eventually they dominated a large area of it, and so great was their influence and their power and their domination, that they gave their name to the whole of the land, and the name Palestine is simply the land of the Philistines. Palestine means the land of the Philistines. It is their name. That has stuck to the land ever since they got their footing in it. Now the Lord brings Israel into the land. It is sometimes called the land of Israel, but over against that title, over against

that Divine designation, over against that which represents God's purpose, thought and intention, there is fastened upon that very territory the name of the Philistines, so that they dispute the title of this land with Israel, and it really is a conflict of title, a conflict of a name.

The Nature of the Philistine Menace

Running parallel with that you have the fact that the Philistines were the chief foes of Israel, and that the nature of their opposition was this, that they were always seeking to lay their hands upon and interfere with the things of the people of God. You know how in Samson's day they menaced the people, the land, and the Judges, and were always seeking to get hold of the one who in his person collectively represented the Lord's people. Just to get their hands on Samson, just to discover the secret of his ascendancy, the secret of his power. They were probing the secrets of spiritual power and authority, to get hold of that secret in order to destroy the ascendancy of the Lord's people. So, at last finding an ally in Delilah they got to the secret of Samson's power, which was Israel's power, as represented by their Judge; and getting the secret they soon destroyed Samson and brought things again into subjection. The thing which was central to all that, was that they might be able to set their god over against Israel's God, and humiliate the God of Israel.

Thus, on the great day when blind Samson is brought out of prison, and made a spectacle before the hosts of the Philistines, the Philistines' shout and glorying was that Dagon was greater than Jehovah, because, look, here is the representative of Jehovah, here is the one in whom the people of Jehovah is gathered up; look at the poor specimen he is, defeated, broken, blinded! He represents the power of Jehovah. It was the gods of the Philistines. There is a spiritual background to this thing, and how the enemy exalted. The enemy, the Devil is exalted and glorified when the natural man, the uncircumcised, uncrucified flesh gets hold of spiritual secrets and uses them. Follow that principle all the way through. Later you know it is the ark, the ark of the testimony as the embodiment of Israel's power and glory, representatively; and the Philistines capture the ark and they put it into the house of Dagon, with the intention of again humilia-

ting Jehovah in the presence of Dagon. We know that Dagon came down. The Lord is able to look after His own interests even when His people are failing Him. But the object is the same, the two things go together. Philistines laying hold of holy things and using them, with the result that the glory of the Lord is veiled and the glory of the Adversary is manifested. Then the Philistines still pursuing this unholy quest to know Divine secrets, to possess spiritual secrets in order to gain power, ascendancy, looked into the ark, opened the ark, investigated this thing to possess secrets in order to be in power. You know the result. They were smitten by the Lord and from city to city, in the five cities of the Philistines, that judgment spread; but the two things are going on all the time; a wanting to possess Divine secrets, to have those secrets in hand in order to have power, personal power, and that results always in the dishonouring of the Lord and the glorifying of the Adversary.

The Spiritual Parallel of the Philistines

Now you can see from that, without our going any further and drawing in any more data, what is before us. "Now the Philistines." They are known in the Scriptures as the uncircumcised Philistines; and that gives the clue to the whole thing. We know from our New Testament what the spiritual meaning of circumcision is. Let us look at it. Colossians ii. 9-13. ". . . in whom also ye are circumcised . . . in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." What is the circumcision of Christ spiritually? It is the putting away of the body of the flesh. It is said here to be something into which we have been brought. We have been brought into the circumcision of Christ, that is, putting away the body of the flesh, and that was representatively set forth in our baptism. The Word says when we were baptised, being buried with Him in baptism, we took our place in the circumcision of Christ; that is, the putting away of the body of the flesh. Our baptism was a declaration that we in the body of the flesh had been put away in the death and burial of Christ. That is circumcision spiritually interpreted. That is the spiritual meaning of this thing that runs through the Scriptures. God never intended it to be merely an outward and objective thing, He always had a spiritual principle back of everything,

and the spiritual principle back of the historic circumcision was just this, the putting away of the body of the flesh.

Well now the Philistines are called uncircumcised Philistines. What does that mean? The uncircumcised flesh. The body of the flesh not put away. It is the flesh, the natural man the carnal principle coming in and laying hold of spiritual things. Such are the Philistines. When you get that sort of thing it is not long before you get monstrosities, abnormalities, for you notice with David, "Now the Philistines" is followed immediately by Goliath of Gath, one son in a household of giants. This giant is the representative of the Philistines, and the Philistines are gathered up representatively in him. He steps out as their champion and representative, and on behalf of the rest of the Philistines he personally challenges all Israel. He is a monstrosity, he is an abnormality, which means that the Philistines are an abnormal people in this sense. And when you get a carnal man or woman laying hold of spiritual things, you have got a situation that is a very, very difficult situation; it is an abnormal situation. You can deal with the natural man alone, but what can you do with a natural man who has got hold of spiritual things? You can never get over that situation by argument. He as a natural man, knows all you know spiritually. There are lots of people who have got hold of all the Christian doctrine and principles; you can teach them nothing, but they are as carnal as they can be. You cannot teach them anything. They are unteachable. This fact proves them carnal. You can tell them nothing, they know it all. What is to be done with them? Nothing but to have their heads cut off! That is speaking typically. They have got to be laid low. They are abnormalities and there is nothing for them but to die. The only thing is to die, and it is not a very pleasant thing for a carnal man in possession of Christian doctrine to die. A man who knows he is all sinful and blind, and dead spiritually, well, he is prepared to accept the setting aside of himself; but the man who thinks he knows all about things, who has got hold of things of the Lord and is in the work of the Lord, and yet is not a crucified man, his death is going to be a most humiliating thing, and there is nothing more humiliating than to see that giant laid low, and to see by what means God brings that giant low. He brings it low, not by any great

force of nature at all. David lays aside the armour of the flesh proposed by Saul, the equipment of man offered by the carnal mind of Saul. Lays it all aside and refuses it, and takes the simplest of means, and did not say: I come to you with my sling and stones but, in the Name of the Lord. And the giant, the abnormality looks down upon him, disdains him: "Am I a dog that thou comest to me with staves?" When that which in itself is nothing is God's anointed means for dealing with this giant, the humiliation is terrible.

It is far more difficult for someone who is right in the work of the Lord fully and actively, and preaching and all the rest of it, to come down to the death in Christ than it is for someone who has never touched the things of the Lord. The uncircumcised Philistines; that which seeks to enter into the realm of, and take possession of, the things of the Lord, and is not crucified. It is the natural man, the carnal man taking hold of the things of the Lord, taking hold of spiritual principles, seeking to possess spiritual secrets in order that it may be something. Now that may be applied in numerous ways. The Lord must make application as far as we are concerned.

Separation—What it is

We can put the Philistines into one word; it is this. They represent the principle of an unseparated life; and separation in this case is not just separation from the world as we speak of separation from the world, its amusements, and so on. In this case it is separation from the flesh, from self, from the old life and nature even in the work of the Lord, the things of the Lord; separation from all that we are by nature. Now over against that you get David, and you will find that the Lord's dealings with David all the way along were in order to get him and keep him clear of carnal means. The Devil's effort all the way through David's life was to get him mixed up with carnal things in order to destroy the purpose of his anointing.

Saul is the first one who seeks to entrap him. Here is the young man who in himself is nothing, as we see at the beginning: "Look not on his appearance," here is the young man who has not been chosen or accepted, but is left out of the count when the sons of Jesse pass before Samuel for anointing. The young man who in himself is not taken into account by men, but is brought under the anointing;

and then so soon after the purpose of his anointing begins to develop he has to meet the main enemy and antagonist of that purpose. Immediately he steps out to that—oh how cunning is the Devil—immediately he steps out to take the first step towards destroying that opposition to the testimony, there is a trap laid for him through Saul, a carnal man, with his proposal that David should have a suit of armour. Saul offers a suit of armour and brings it and puts it on him, and if David had assayed to go with that he would have fallen. But anointing makes for spiritual sensibility, and David say: "I cannot go with this" and so he casts the natural, carnal equipment aside and goes in the Name of the Lord, stripped down to just faith in the Name of the Lord; that is his weapon. That is his spiritual equipment. That is the power of the anointing; the Name of the Lord.

The anointing always implies that the Name of the Lord rests upon us. But you see there was a carnal trick there, a snare to get him on to carnal ground, and how can the flesh slay the flesh? How can an uncrucified man slay an uncrucified man? If our flesh rises up to meet the flesh in someone else there will be no spiritual victory. The victory is only when we meet flesh in the spirit, and do not react to flesh with flesh, carnal meeting carnal. So David had to meet the uncircumcised and uncrucified flesh not with fleshly equipment, but in the power of the anointing alone. Again and again these traps awaited him.

We saw one or two of them earlier. Losing his faith in the Name to a large measure he took refuge in a Philistine city. He got on to Philistine ground. What is the result? He was useless, absolutely helpless, and he was made ashamed. How can he save Israel on Philistine ground? The Lord delivered him. You see if he cannot be openly defeated by the Philistines he will be subtly ensnared by the Philistines if possible. If the flesh in open conflict cannot get the upper hand, the flesh will come round to the back door, and on a basis of compromise try to get us to lower our standard, and weaken us, and make impossible the bringing of the testimony to its fulness. But the Lord's object with David was always to get him to stand clear of any Philistine element. We know one outstanding instance. When the ark of the testimony was to be brought up again, David made a new cart, put oxen in the cart, and put the ark on the cart; we know

what happened. The tragedy, the arrest and months of delay while David had to go through discipline in which to discover God's way of carrying the testimony—not on a Philistine cart.

They had made a cart and put the ark on it when they wanted to get rid of it. God's idea was that consecrated Levites should carry that ark, not a mechanical contrivance of man's making. A Philistine idea introduced in relation to the testimony brings disaster always. David was caught. He learned his lesson. David, after a few months delay he said: "The Levites ought to carry the ark." The Lord had shown him his mistake and revealed His way to Him. The Lord does that. You see on the enemy's part there is a scheme, a plan, a plot laid, if possible to defeat God's purpose in bringing the testimony to fulness and finality, by getting the instrument for that purpose on to carnal ground. Again and again David was in peril of leaving the ground of the anointing and of therefore being deprived of his very life-work simply by adopting some carnal method. The Lord's dealing with David all the way along was to get him to that place where he personally represented the principle of the testimony, which is the death, burial, resurrection in Christ; utter separation from the flesh in the circumcision of Christ. "Now the Philistines"!

What the Testimony is

I do not know how much more to say in this connection just now. Perhaps it will be as well if I try to gather it up in two or three simple ways. First of all, let us remember what the testimony is. The testimony is, in a word, the Lord Jesus. It is represented by the ark, as we know. The ark is the representative of the testimony. For the sake of those who may not be quite so familiar with it let us remind you of what the ark was. Well, to begin with, it was a chest of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold; those two things. Those two things are types of the person of the Lord Jesus, the acacia or shittim wood, His true humanity, the pure gold His Deity. God and man joined in one Person. The true humanity of the Lord Jesus and the true Deity and Divine nature of the Lord Jesus brought together in one person. Then on the lid of the ark was the mercy seat, blood sprinkled, where God said He would meet His people in their representative, the High Priest, and speak there.

"Between the cherubim and the mercy seat I will speak." The mercy seat is the meeting-place between God and man, where God is heard, listened to, and where He in His Word governs. We are told in the New Testament that the Lord Jesus is set forth to be a propitiation; the literal word is He is set forth to be a Mercy Seat. The Lord Jesus is the Mercy Seat. He is the Place, the One in Whom God speaks to man. That is the beginning of the Hebrew letter: "God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us in his Son . . ." God speaks in Christ and God meets man in Christ. The Lord's own way of saying that was: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." God meets man and man meets God in Christ, but only in virtue of the shed and sprinkled Blood. By the Blood of the Lord Jesus there is made possible a meeting of man with God; and in the Lord Jesus God has spoken and, that being the governing principle of our life, God speaks in us.

God rules the life of His people by what He says in Christ the Mercy Seat. Within the ark there are three things. The tables of law, the golden pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded. The tables of the law, the revealed mind of God for His people. 2 Corinthians iii. and iv. will explain to you what that is spiritually on New Testament ground. The Apostle there takes up the reading of the law by Moses as an illustration. When Moses read the law to the people from the tables of stone he had come down from the mountain and he had to put a veil over his face for the people could not look upon him. The Apostle says: "When it shall turn to the Lord the veil shall be taken away" for "God . . . hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." What are the tables of the law on New Testament ground as the New Covenant? It is God in Christ, revealed in us. God's mind in Christ, revealed in our hearts. The Apostle says in 2 Corinthians ii. and iii. that it is not written now on tables of stone but on the fleshly tables of our heart, not with pen and ink but by the Holy Spirit. You see it is the Holy Spirit revealing the mind of God in Christ in our hearts. So that Christ is the revealed mind of God taking the place of the tables of stone. The ark is Christ with the revealed

mind of God in it, and now it is Christ in you the hope of glory. The golden pot of manna, the heavenly, spiritual, miraculous sustenance of the Lord's people here in a wilderness where nature can provide nothing, where the essential resources of man do not exist, where all man's labours to produce a harvest are in vain. Take a plough into a desert and see if you can develop a harvest there. In the desert where all the resources of man, of nature fail, God from heaven miraculously provides sustenance for His people. John vi. "Our fathers did eat manna in the wilderness." "I am the bread of life." Christ is the Manna for His people. This is the testimony, that where nature can do nothing to help us spiritually Christ is everything to us. Christ is our life, that is the testimony.

This is a very practical thing, beloved, that Christ by the Holy Spirit is revealed in our hearts to show us the way of the Lord for our lives; and Christ by the Spirit ministered to our inner man to sustain us and cause us to live a heavenly life in the world. That is the testimony. The rod of Aaron placed within the ark signified the priesthood which God had chosen. The other eleven rods did not bud, the twelfth did, and became the symbol of a living priesthood; and priesthood is gathered up into the Lord Jesus. The Hebrew letter makes that clear. The living priesthood. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." You see the ark of the testimony with its very contents is all Christ, and it has the centremost place in the life of God's people. It is the very symbol of God's presence in the midst, and Christ in us speaks of God with us. I dare not go into any more detail. You see Christ is the Mercy Seat, the Ark, the Manna, the Living Priest, the Law, the Blood; that is—it is the Blood of Christ, the Blood of sprinkling. It is said "I will meet with you between the cherubim." The cherubim where the Name is called. It is the Name of Jesus. Christ is the Name and Christ is the glory. It is all Christ, that ark. Now the testimony of Jesus is just all that, and all that has got to be brought out to its place of fulness and manifestation and final settlement in this universe in the midst of His people. What the Lord is after is to bring that testimony to its fulness and finality, and He does it by the anointing. Our anointing is unto that. We are anointed by the Holy Spirit for the testimony's sake, that God may at last have that testimony in its fulness manifested to the universe. That is the object of the anointing.

Countering the Anointing

Now the second thing, the thing that will thwart that is if we dare to touch these holy things with the flesh; if there is any uncrucified natural man about us that is taking hold of the things of the Lord; if in an uncrucified way we seek to probe into the secrets of the Lord and use the secrets of the Lord in our own wisdom, strength, our own glory, to get position and recognition and reputation for ourselves. Only crucified men can bring the testimony to fulness. Only the really circumcised in the circumcision of Christ can work in the power of the anointing. No Philistine element may come in here. The Enemy's effort all the way along with us will be to get some carnal connection, some carnal ground, in order that he may destroy the purpose of our anointing and defeat the end of God in bringing His testimony to fulness and finality. Remember that! Oh, we must not have a place.

There is not one of us who would not quite eagerly take the ground of "Not I but Christ" in declaration, and yet we may have a will of our own, that we will this or that; for we have a like of our own, we like this and do not like that; we might have a desire of our own, we would desire this and not that, we would go this way but not that way. We have got to come to the place where all that which originates in ourselves goes into death, and we are in a place where we are perfectly open to the Lord for His will, whatever it is, however much it may go against our likes or contradict our ideas, or upset our acceptances. We have to be in the place where we are down before God, this carnal man absolutely slain, and we are open to the Lord spiritually to go the Lord's way. Otherwise the anointing cannot work, the purpose of the anointing cannot be realised. God's dealings with us are all to get rid of the flesh; not simply because the Lord wants to slay us.

He deals with us as He does in order to get us in the place where the fulness of the power of the anointing can operate and where His glory can come in, and where His testimony may be carried forward through us to its full expression. That is only possible as we quit the scene and the Lord Jesus occupies it, and we can truly say it is no longer I, but Christ.

This then is a summary of spiritual history. David anointed in relation to the

testimony in fulness ; immediately the coming in of the subtle purposes of the Devil to work in him the principle that can defeat the end of his anointing, and that principle is the principle of "I," the strength of self, the strength of nature, the flesh, the carnal element. That is how the enemy makes the mischief, robs the Lord of the glory, and takes the glory to himself. The Lord deliver us from the Philistines. The Lord make us mighty against the Philistines. The Lord give us to have no compromise with the Philistines. The Philistine nature is in us by nature, and we must take the uncompromising attitude toward the Philistine in us, for the Philistine is bent upon occupying the territory of God and giving *his* name to that which should bear the name of the Lord.

It seems to me a tremendously significant thing that the very land God meant to be called by His own Name and to be the land of Israel, should up to this day bear the name of the Philistines. Why? Simply because Israel never wholly quitted the ground of the flesh. The trouble with Israel all the way through is that they would not stand upon their separation unto God. Their whole history was one of links with the forbidden nature, the uncrucified nature, and the Philistine got the advantage and fastened his name upon that which ought to have the Name of the Lord. May it not be true in our case. We should bear the Lord's name and not the Philistine's.

This one thing before we close this chapter. When at last the Lord broke through to David and showed him the House of God, He had been preparing him for this all the way along. David had not had the revelation of His life purpose all the way through, God had been making him ready for it, and at last when he was ready the Lord broke through and revealed to him the House of God, the Temple ; and David got the vision and the pattern of it and the purpose for it fully in his heart. The very next thing is that David went out and dealt with every one of those enemies mentioned in the book of Judges. The book of Judges is a book full of different peoples

who menaced Israel in the days of the Judges, and weakened, defeated, and brought Israel into bondage. It is the long story of years and years of weakening at the hands of different peoples. The book of Judges is a book of reproach and shame and disgrace. God's Israel was in the hands of these many peoples round about. You notice immediately David got the vision and purpose of the House of God in fulness, he went out and dealt with them finally. It says to us that the House of God can only come fully into being as all those things which are a menace to the people of God are dealt with one by one and finally settled ; all those elements which are fleshly elements trespassing upon the things of God are absolutely to be put out of action. It is a glorious thing, it is an inspiration! Whether he understood it all or not, he got a vision of the House of God in fulness and immediately went out to deal with all those people—one by one you come up against them in the book of Judges—which had been the weakening force. The House of God must be built upon the ground that nothing of the flesh of any kind whatsoever can have a co-existence with the House of God. That is why Solomon was a man of peace, of rest ; because David had made it possible. The House of God is always a house of rest ; upon this principle, that the enemies have been dealt with and settled, put down. That is why the Church has come into being on the basis of Calvary's Victory. Because in Calvary Christ met every foe to the Church, and dealt with it. It is a House of rest. You and I as members of Christ's Body are His spiritual temple on the principle that we have entered into the rest He has secured by having defeated all our foes.

The basic thing for the testimony is that the Philistine has got to be dealt with, every un-circumcised element has got to be ruled out, and the anointing is unto that. The enemy wants to destroy the anointing by somehow getting a Philistine element into our walk, relationships, attitude, judgments ; anywhere. May we be saved unto a full and complete victory over the Philistines.

Foundations

(Continued.)

READING: Hebrews v. 11-14; vi. 1-3.

THAT portion which could be accompanied by a very great deal more from the letters to the Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, and from Peter's letters, brings one very foundational thing into view. Foundational because it is addressed in this case to very religious people, and to those who inherited the whole of that system which God Himself produced. It brings into view the fact that with Christ, and a true relationship to Christ, everything begins over anew. Everything else, it does not matter what it is, comes to an end. It makes clear what Paul was so fond of saying, that with the death of Christ everything finished; everything! The central thing religiously, so far as the old order was concerned, in type, was the veil of the temple; everything met in that veil. With the death of Christ, from heaven that thing was ripped and split in twain by the hand of God. The old order was struck right at its centre. The death of the Lord Jesus did bring an end to everything--religiously and otherwise--of the old order and system and creation. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus was God's starting all over again right from zero. And not one fragment or fraction of the old creation was carried over into the new.

Resurrection More than Elevation

I think that a good many people have the idea, even if they have not thought it out and put it into positive shape, they have a mentality that to become a believer, a child of God, a Christian, is to come to a certain point in one's history where you, metaphorically speaking, go up in an escalator on to a higher platform and proceed. It is in the nature of continuing life on a higher storey. That is, that now you have interests, religious interests, Christian interests, which you did not have before; that your activities and your energies are directed along lines in relation to Christ, which did not obtain before. You are simply going on now on a different level of life; and thus they confuse resurrection, with elevation, and elevation with resurrection. Now it is tremendously important (and I am not careful about being too elementary) that we should recognise that when we become children of God we have come to the place where we have not gone

up on to a higher storey as in an elevator, but where we have tumbled into a grave and been buried, and so far as God is concerned, never again to be seen as we were before. You say: Here we are, it is the same old I, the same old ego, the same old personality. That may be from your standpoint, but from God's standpoint, No! What you and I have to do is to accept God's standpoint. That is what Paul means by: ".....reckon ye also yourselves to be dead....." That is, accept God's standpoint. Once you have accepted that intelligently and deliberately you are destined to come continually, progressively, increasingly to know that God's standpoint is a real one. That is, that God had reckoned you dead, and does reckon you dead, and He does not want to have anything to do with you on that old level; and inasmuch as you bring anything in from the natural, you have a bad time, and find God is up against you. You come to these crises, and you say: What is the matter, Lord? And the Lord says: That was ruled out in the beginning! You see it is an accepting of God's standpoint once and for all, and discovering it is not a theory, not a doctrine, but a reality.

"When Did You Die?"

I picked up a little book this week; the title on the cover rather struck me. Probably many of you know it. "When did you die?" I have only seen the first few words of it, and the writer says: "A strange question to ask any one," and then a little while and he says: "You died as long ago as the Lord Jesus died on the cross." I know, of course, what he will have to say about that, I know what will follow, but that is the truth which the Lord requires that we shall accept. The Lord's standpoint is that you and I died before we were born, before we came literally into this world; so far as the old creation is concerned, we died, we died with Christ, and the Lord has nothing whatever to say to us or do with us until we have accepted that position; the first word to any man from the Lord is, "repentance from dead works." Everything is dead until you know resurrection union with Christ, no matter what it is, religion or anything else, everything is dead until you know union with Christ in resurrection life.

That is God's position, and the cross of the Lord Jesus presented to any man or woman represents so far as that man or woman is concerned an absolute end ; and on the other side, a beginning of an entirely new order. Paul calls the different order : ".....the newness of spirit." That is not the newness of the Holy Spirit, that is the newness of our spirit, that our spirit has become a new thing and out from that everything else works. You can see it in his own case. If ever there was an illustration of what newness of the spirit means, Paul was such. Why, it came about swiftly with him ; one day he is breathing out threatenings and slaughters against members of Christ, and on his way with a passionate burning determination to destroy these Christians, and in a few hours he is humbled, before a little assembly in Damascus, which he was going to destroy, taking his instructions for the rest of his life.

That is a change of spirit, is it not ? That is newness of spirit. And you find that tremendous change manifested in all kinds of directions. Think of this Pharisee of the Pharisees and his attitude toward Gentile "dogs," as he would call them (anybody that was not a Jew was a "dog" in the eyes of a Jew) ; see this man in whose very blood that was, now putting Gentiles at least upon an equal footing with Jews, and giving his life in continuous suffering that those Gentiles might come into the enjoyment of Christ. Something has happened inside, a new spirit ! That only comes through the crises of a death in one realm and a resurrection into another realm ; something that only God can do. And all that is not of that newness of spirit is of the old creation and it means the impassable barrier of the cross of the Lord Jesus whenever it arises. Let any of our old man, whether of our old temper, our old way of judging, our old disposition, any of it come up at all, if we are children of God, we know quite well that at that point a barrier is set up and we cannot get past, we are held up in our spiritual life and we have to go back and have that thing cleared up. It is as real as any other thing in the universe to us ; at that moment we stand still spiritually, and the flaming sword is across our path. There is no way for that here. Bring that here and you will be judged, you will meet the judgment of God, you will be broken. It is coming up against the fact that God finished with all that long ago and we have to accept God's standpoint. When we have accepted it then the thing works out, it con-

tinually works out. We take that position, we accept the truth. We cannot bring an actual end to the old creation ourselves, but we say in a positive way—I reckon as God reckons. Well then we shall find as we go on that God having put all that under death, death rests upon it, and if ever it shows its head again the sentence of death is met. If we begin to work for the Lord with our own natural strength we meet death and before long our natural strength will come under death. If we begin to use our natural judgment in the things of God we shall meet an arrest and before long we shall come to a deadlock, unable to get through. Anything which we bring of nature into the things of God will bring us up against—not some new issue but—the old issue, death which was made to rest upon the old creation. In so far as we move in the newness of life, work by the Spirit of God, walk after the Spirit, death is done away and we are in life and we can go on and can get through, no matter how much there may be of handicap and weakness in nature, we can get through as we go on in the Spirit. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death" : we are free !

Death—God's Starting-place

Now that is all old familiar ground to many, and yet something which we have continually to remember. It is the foundation. Unless we have the foundation thoroughly well laid, we shall come to a hitch. We know of many children of God who have been the Lord's children for years and they have been working for the Lord many of them, and yet they have come to a standstill, they have come under an arrest. Why ? Well in some way, at some point, somehow, something of themselves, their old self has come up, has come into evidence, has come into the way. It may be some of their old mind, some of their old will, some of their old affections, desires and feelings ; they are in their own way somehow. They are in the Lord's way. What is needed is not that they should die again, but that they should come to accept their once-for-all death in Christ in relation to whatever that may be that has come up, and let it go and be set free from that law of sin and death. "Repentance from dead works." That is exactly what the Apostle is saying to these Hebrews. You have come to a standstill. You simply ceased to go on. You went so far, now you have got to a certain point

and for years you have not budged a bit from that position. You have never got past foundations, you are not going on to full growth. You have not settled it once and for all that you died when Christ died. You ended the whole system and order of the old creation religiously and otherwise when you came to Christ. Christ is the end of the law and Christ is the end of the old creation, and He is the beginning of everything new. Do not be wearied at repetition of old truths; they are very important as foundations, and this is foundational.

We are destined, whether we now accept it or not, whether we like it or not, we are destined to discover that God's foundation stands. This is true, and no one will ever get through in relation to God and His things while still bound by the old creation, on the old creation level. This new way of life is so narrow that we cannot take ourselves into it, we have to leave ourselves behind.

Well, now, that is a position taken up, and what those who are being baptised are doing is to declare in the practical way that that is the position they have taken. What they are going to discover is that they have not just obeyed a form of doctrine, but that they have entered into a very live situation and from henceforth the Lord is going to make good the implications of this, and He is going to say: That died, you cannot bring that along, don't bring that out of the grave, put it back. And they will find all the way along that the Lord just puts His finger upon things which He reckons as ended in the death of His Son. But, of course, whenever there is acceptance of the Lord's attitude and position to those things on the death side, we get more of Christ as we get rid of ourselves.

I do want you to recognise that every one of us from the wisest to the most foolish, as we judge, every one of us when we really come into Christ, has got to learn everything all over new. It is true that we may have a tremendous amount of knowledge and information as this world can give it, and yet the wisest, the wealthiest in knowledge or in any other way,

coming into Christ has got to learn the ABC in spiritual things. They will discover that. Everything has got to be learned from the infant class, from the cradle roll of the spiritual life. It is no use our coming unto the Lord and thinking we know something; it will not be long before we are made to know that we do not know anything. The Lord said: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" "I think if He had been in another world from the one in which He was at the time, if He had been in the Western world He would probably have said: How hardly shall they that have knowledge enter the kingdom. The boasted knowledge, wisdom, intellect of the Western world is the great obstruction to the kingdom; it is not prepared to know anything. When Paul got outside of the Jewish world that was the kind of thing he was saying all the time, that the wisdom of this world was the great hindrance. With the Jews, gain along the line of wealth; to the Gentiles, gain along the line of knowledge was the hindrance, and anything that appertains to nature has to be set aside, it is a hindrance to our coming into the Kingdom. The longer we live in relationship to the Lord the more we know that we know nothing. One knowledge we have is that we do not know anything at all, and we are just longing all the time to get some knowledge. There is no royal road to spiritual knowledge, we have to start right at the beginning and learn the things of the Lord as we go along. When we start as young Christians we do think that we know something. But, of course, that is the folly of youth. We are learning everything all over anew. With all the knowledge that we might have naturally, if it should be anything, it does not count here; spiritual knowledge is a different thing. We have started all over again, but when we accept that place—Now I have everything to learn, I am open and eager to learn; I know nothing—then the Lord can teach. It is the proud one that never learns anything. The Lord show us what it means to begin, what the meaning of the Cross is in our end to the old and beginning to the now. T. A.-S.

“Take your Share”

(A word as spoken)

READING : I Chron. xv. 1-2.
II Timothy ii. 1-3.

I DO not know whether the connection between those passages is apparent to you immediately, but there certainly is one. “None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites; for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever.” The two fragments in the second chapter of the second letter to Timothy, verses 1 and 3: “Be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus . . . Take thy part in suffering hardship, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus,” bring us into the spiritual meaning of that word in Chronicles, that is, into the place of the work of Levites.

Arrest Through Disorder

The Levites, as you know, are a very interesting people, and their history is full of valuable things for the Lord's people in all times. But there is one thing amongst those many things which is on my heart particularly just now, which I feel the Lord would have us consider. It is that responsibility represented by being in the position of Levites. You will remember that this word of David's was the outcome of some history which was full of tragedy. One of the very many snares set by the adversary against the Lord's testimony in the life of David had succeeded in the incident of the cart which David had inadvertently, forgetfully, unwatchfully constructed to bear the ark. It was a violation of the law of the Lord as here set down, with the result that one man, at least, had died a tragic death, and the whole testimony had been brought to a standstill for a long time. Then eventually, after the chastening, the discipline by which David had come to recollection, to remember the Lord's word about the carrying of that ark of testimony, a new spiritual movement was made, and things were adjusted. Now, according to the word of the Lord which David had remembered, the ark was brought out and committed to the Levites, and David says, not a cart, but: “None ought to bear the ark of God but the Levites, for them hath God chosen . . .” Their's was a peculiar responsibility amongst

the Lord's people, and they had got to take their responsibility, and it was not to be transferred to any other means. The responsibility belonged to them, and if they did not take their responsibility, then the testimony suffered loss, then tragedy came in amongst the Lord's people, then everything went wrong. That is exactly what happened. When the Levites were not taking their responsibility then there was weakness, failure, breakdown, arrest, and the Lord was dishonoured. When the Levites are eventually brought into their place and take their responsibility things go on, and the ark of the testimony is brought to a position of advancement.

Maturity and Responsibility

It is just that word, that thought about taking responsibility for the testimony that is weighing upon my own heart; that which is meant by our Levitical position, our place as Levites. It is a place of spiritual strength, as over against a place of spiritual immaturity and weakness. You will remember that the Levites could not enter upon their ministry until they were thirty years of age, and then they had to give it up when they were fifty. While the age of twenty was the age for going to war, the entering upon this Levitical ministry in fulness was not allowed until they were thirty, and then they had to retire at fifty. (Of course, that does not create a precedent for retiring from the work of the Lord when you are fifty!) It is a spiritual thing that is represented, and all that it says is this, that for this carrying of the Lord's testimony in spiritual responsibility, full strength is required. It was a taking out of life the section of the best years, the years of full strength. That full strength was related particularly to Levitical ministry. Literally it is not carried over, of course, to the work of the Lord now. That is, it does not apply in the sense that we may not come into a place of full responsibility until we reach a certain age and then we must give it up when we reach another age; but it does mean this, that there is required a spiritual strength to take this responsibility, and the Lord calls for the taking of this responsibility

for His testimony, for His glory, and therefore He calls for us to be strong.

You see exactly that element in this passage in Timothy: "Thou therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus"; there is your spiritual strength. What is it for? Well, so far as Timothy was concerned, it was that he might take his part in suffering hardship. So far as others were concerned he was to commit to faithful men these treasures which had been committed to him. You see the whole background is Levitical. Timothy and the others, faithful men, who have come to a place where they can take responsibility; and the necessity for that is spiritual strength. So, "be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

Very simply this says to us that there is a tremendous need for people to take responsibility for the Lord's testimony, and not always to regard certain others as being the people who are solely responsible; not to remain babes, to be carried and nursed, and to have all our own personal feelings considered, being always so sensitive and open to taking childish offences, leaving the weight of things spiritually to others. Such can never take responsibility, such will never take their share in suffering hardship, such will never be good soldiers of Jesus Christ, with such the testimony will never be safe. Perhaps one of the greatest spiritual tragedies of our time is the fact that so few are in a sufficiently strong spiritual state to be able to shoulder the responsibility for the Lord's testimony themselves. They belong to the great camp which follows. Yes, they are prepared to follow where others take the testimony, but they are followers, they are not taking responsibility.

Levites are Representative

I feel quite sure that it was because Israel had not recognised spiritually the meaning of the Levites in their midst that they failed so constantly through the wilderness. The Levites had been chosen to take the place of the priestly firstborn in every family. The firstborn in every family was the natural priest of the household, and took responsibility in the household in priestly matters. Now the Levites as a tribe, were chosen to substitute the firstborn, and became the tribe of the firstborn ones. If all Israel had recognised that, and abode by the spiritual truth, that in those Levites was their responsibility, that

what the Levites were doing was only as them representatively, and that the responsibility resting upon the Levites was their responsibility, and that they were vitally linked with that testimony being borne by the Levites, there would not have been that detachment which meant so much weakness and which found the general company constantly drawing back, wavering in uncertainty, unsettlement, in a place where they were as people who had never seriously taken responsibility for the Lord's testimony. They were in a detached state of mind; the Levites carrying the ark were one thing, and all that they had to do was to follow. And so they followed very often murmuring and complaining, and they were not taking the responsibility that was resting upon their representatives.

I feel that to-day we have something very much like that. A large number of those who belong to the Lord are just in the camp, in the throng of the Lord's people, and leaving the main responsibility with others. They are regarding it not as their first concern. They are ready to follow, but they are not ready to take responsibility. They like to see things going on, but for themselves they do not care to be responsible for things going on. Now the Lord would say to us, take your share, take your part in the sufferings as a good soldier, be strengthened. Do not be as those Corinthians who were always babes, carried about with every wind; not as those Hebrews who, when they ought to be teachers, still needed that someone should teach them the first principles. Take responsibility spiritually, let the testimony of the Lord Jesus be your business, your personal business. Take the attitude—in a right way—that if you fail the whole thing might fail. I think we should be quite justified in taking an attitude like that; that this thing, after all, does very largely depend upon us individually, that this is *our* business, *our* responsibility; that we are not just one of a crowd, but a responsible member. Levites are not a separate class of people from all others, they are those who have spiritually taken responsibility. That is the only difference between Levites and the rest of the people. The Lord has found them to be His responsible people.

Responsibility Means Strength—not Vice-Versa

Be strengthened unto taking your share in the hardship, come up to that state of spiritual

strength, reaching out to the Lord, in order to take responsibility. I do believe, that if we recognised that the responsibility was resting upon us, that we were called to the responsibility, and, at the same time, were so deeply conscious of our own weakness; for the Lord's sake, for the sake of His testimony, if we reached out to Him, He would give us more strength. So often we are not reaching out for the glory of the Lord and the maintenance of His full testimony. The way to get strengthened is to take on more than you can carry.

Perhaps you are working the other way. You say, when I am stronger I shall be able to take responsibility; when the Lord gives me more strength then I shall be more serviceable to Him. I will ask you if the Lord has ever done that with you? What is your experience? Has the Lord come to you and started by giving you, in the first place, a great deal of strength and enablement in order that you may be able to take the responsibility, or has He come to you and called you to take the responsibility? Your experience differs from mine very much if it is not the second way. I have found all along that the Lord makes demands and calls for an exercise of faith, and then meets the demand. So we must not wait until we are such wonderful people before we do anything for the Lord, and begin to take responsibility. We must recognise that the Lord says: Take your share, and then, recognising your responsibility, you may take your strength. Strength comes not along the line merely of consciously needing strength, but along the line of recognising that for which we need the strength. It is the object of the strength that brings the strength. We must have a motive for it. We say, Now Lord, here is this interest of Yours, I am unequal to it, but because it is your interest I must be strengthened unto it, and I come for strength for your interest, not just because I want to be stronger. That is the ground upon which the Lord works.

The Nature of the Responsibility

The Levites ought to bear the ark, it is their responsibility, and none but the Levites ought to bear it. It is the responsibility of those who have come to a place of recognising how tremendously the Lord's interests are bound up with their life. That is priestly ministry. You see, here is the Tabernacle, that is the place of the crowned King. The King Eternal,

Invisible is in the Tabernacle in the midst. All that relates to His glory, His honour, His majesty, as invisibly dwelling amongst His people is put into the hands of the Levites, they are as it were the bodyguard here on earth of the King invisible. They have to keep things for Him, watch His interests, maintain His testimony in strength, guard against the encroachment of those things which would pollute. And that is just where we are. The Lord is in the midst of us, the Lord is with His people, but things have got to be maintained in accordance with the Lord's presence, and some have to take responsibility for that. It is not just to be a latent and passive fact, things have got to be kept in accordance with the presence of such an One as the Lord. He is holy, then the work of holiness is committed to the Levites. He is in power and majesty, then the power and the majesty of the Lord is the responsibility of the Levites. You see it is responsibility for what is related to the Lord as present, the testimony of the Lord; and that is our business. We have to be faithful: "... the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." It all speaks of a position, a standard, a life that is not just the pupil (we shall always be that in a sense) but, "able to teach others also," taking responsibility for the testimony.

Various Ministrations, but One Ministry

The Levites were divided, as you know, into three sections. They had three departments of responsibility. One section had the vessels of the sanctuary, all the holy vessels; another section had all the curtains and the coverings; and the third had the boards and bars. We may have our different aspects of work. There are those Levites whose ministry is, shall I say, more essentially spiritual, it may belong to the vessels of the sanctuary. There are others whose work is in another direction. Mine it may be to mainly minister in the Word of the Lord, what a lot of people would call "the spiritual ministry." (I repudiate the suggestion that spiritual ministry is bound up with people who preach—that is not the only spiritual ministry.) There may be others who minister in other spheres—business life, household work. The Levites were divided into sections of different kinds of work. Some had the rougher work, the heavy bars and boards of the Tabernacle, more physically

strenuous than the carrying of the pots and the pans and the golden vessels and implements ; but it was all Levitical work, they were all one people, one tribe. Responsibility rested upon all equally for all these parts made one ministry. And so your sphere, your work and mine may differ, but it is one ministry, one calling, one responsibility, one testimony. This emphasis is upon taking it, assuming it, regarding ourselves as being responsible people in the testimony of the Lord.

I am sure the Lord's heart must long for that. I am sure that oft-times He has had, in looking at me, to say : Oh, I wish I could trust him more ; I wish he were more reliable, more responsible ! And I know that as I have looked at many of the Lord's people

I have said, I wish that they did not need so much looking after ; if only they would begin to stand on their own feet, and take responsibility, so that we need not worry about them any more because we know that they can be trusted ! They need urging and encouraging, and all the time following up and putting right, because they have taken offence, and so on. If only they would take the responsibility and go right on in these things and do not need to be looked after, how much more progress the testimony would make !

Now may the Lord give us the grace to take our share in the sufferings as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, to be strengthened with the grace that is in Christ Jesus, to bear the testimony of the Lord.

Timothy and Demas

The Verdict of the long-run

READING : II Timothy i. 8 ; iv. 9.

THE position in which both Timothy and Demas—amongst others—found themselves at the time when Paul wrote this letter was the acid test. Various other forms of testing might leave the metal still undetermined as to its through-and-through genuineness, but when at length subjected to the acid the verdict will be final.

Paul and his position was the acid test. It was not alone the fact that he was Rome's prisoner, and that the world was against, so that his life was to be forfeit for his faith. There were more factors than that. There was the fact that in every city and town the whole Jewish fraternity was against him. Then, not only was the world and the religious system which had—in a sense—produced Christ and Christianity—against him, but he was suspect amongst many Christians themselves. Even Peter found some things in his letters "hard to be understood."

Paul's position of being outside of the world, outside of the so widely established religious order, and so utterly spiritual and heavenly in object and method, meant well-nigh universal misunderstanding, suspicion, and ostracism. Association with him left no hope of popularity, wide acceptance, or even generous appreciation. On the contrary ; the shadow resting upon Paul would rest upon all his associates, and their chances of influence would be prejudiced before ever they gave their message.

The alternatives were quite clear. If the world was at all in their hearts, the utterness of Paul's way left them no honest course but to leave all that for which he stood and go where that heart-dividing element drew them—back to the world. Demas did this. Paul was too much for anyone who had a secret love for the world.

Another course was open to such of whom it could not be said bluntly that they "loved this present evil age." As open association

with Paul jeopardised their existing opportunities in the Lord's work, or introduced an element of risk into the prospects of wide ministry, they could secretly and inwardly be in sympathy with Paul, but keep quiet about it, and never let their sympathies be known. They might even go as far as to let Paul know that they had a very real agreement with him, but at the same time intimate that their very usefulness to the Lord (?) would become curtailed if they openly associated themselves with him and his position. Thus they would be involved in being one thing to Paul, and another to his enemies. The only remaining course would be to be quite sure about Paul's position, decide whether God was with him, and risk everything on a full unashamed fellowship with him, believing that in the long run God would vindicate, and in the meantime a man with a mandate from heaven cannot

have his ministry stopped by all the forces of earth and hell ; God will sovereignly see to that, and if every door which man can close is closed, God has others which no man can shut.

This last course Timothy took. What is the verdict of the long-run ?

Tragic as is the answer concerning Demas, perhaps his was the more honest way than that of those who adopt the middle course.

These three courses are presented to many of the Lord's people to-day, and the question for many—especially those in the Lord's service—is, will they compromise in the matter of their position and relationships in order to preserve their own influence, or will they pay the price, lose everything, and have such a Divine support as will see at length something accomplished which is in spite of everything having conspired to make it impossible ?

Christ in Heaven, and Christ Within

The Objective and the Subjective

THE NEED FOR BALANCE.

Ephes. i. 20 ; Col. i. 27 ; Rom. vi. 1-6 ;

Rom.viii. 1-2, 33-34.

We feel the importance of saying a further word with regard to Christ in heaven and Christ within the believer. That is, what is objective and what is subjective. It is tremendously important that we should keep a proper balance of truth. A very great deal of our trouble is because of there being an unbalanced emphasis upon some aspect of truth. It is good to know the truth, and it is good to rejoice in the truth, but it is just possible that even truth should get us into trouble. There are many perils lying in the direction of truth, even spiritual truth ; and there are not a few of the Lord's people who have fallen into those perils. It is not that they suffer from want of light, but they are suffering very much because they have not got their light properly adjusted and balanced. Thus it becomes very necessary for us to get things in their right perspective and in their right proportion. Preponderance

on any one side will always lead to injury, and very often it will lead to disaster spiritually. The history of many instrumentalities which have been raised up and used by the Lord is eventually the sad story of a loss of power and effectiveness, because of the going off on to an unbalanced emphasis, of putting some side of truth in a place out of proportion to that which corresponds to it.

Corresponding Truths.

It is not just a matter of being all-round ; that is, of having everything and being in everything, but in the constitution of a body we find that one law is balanced by another. All the laws, of course, are necessary, and it is important to give due place to every function in our bodies, but there run parallel laws and functions. One balances the other. There is that which corresponds to something else. These two things are, as it were, twins, they just run together, and to over-emphasise or over-develop one means to throw the whole order out, and to bring about quite serious limitation and weak-

ness, and to make things far less effective than they should be.

So it is in spiritual matters. There are always corresponding truths. There is one thing, but there is something which goes with it, and which keeps it in its right measure, and causes it to fulfil its purpose and to serve its end most effectively. There is this order in the Divine creation, that one thing is necessary to another to make that other fulfil its purpose to the full. That is where balance has to be observed and maintained.

The Adversary using God's Work against Him.

Then we must remember that the enemy, the Adversary, is always wanting to use God's own work and God's own truth against God Himself. That is the thing which is made very clear in the Scriptures, and a thing which we may observe in experience and in spiritual history, that the adversary is always seeking to take hold of God's work and God's truth and use that against God. This is a more successful line of action than perhaps any other, because the result is that he immediately prejudices God's own work and God's own truth. He closes the door to the acceptance of what is of God simply by using it against God, and one of his most successful methods is that of securing an over-emphasis or an unbalanced apprehension of Divine truth. You will see what I mean as we go on.

A Peril with every Blessing.

So that with every blessing there is a peril. There are perils related to every Divine blessing. Wherever there is something which is really good from the Lord, that has linked with it its own peculiar peril.

Now these are merely general observations, as leading up to this brief meditation along the specific line of what is objective and what is subjective as to the work of the Lord Jesus for and in the believer. We will look at both of these separately very briefly, seeing what the blessing is and seeing what the perils are.

THE OBJECTIVE SIDE.

We take the objective side first, the Lord Jesus as presented to us as in heaven. We know that He is there, and we know that a very great deal is said in the Word about His being there; but why is He there? In the first place: How did He get there? Now you will notice if you look into the Word that when-

ever the heavenly side of the ascension of the Lord Jesus is presented, that is, whenever the matter is looked at from above, it does not speak about His going up or His ascension, but it speaks about His being received up. In the first chapter of the book of the Acts you have two angels appearing when the Lord Jesus was taken up from amongst them, and they (the disciples) were looking up into heaven, and these two angels said to them: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, which was *received up*....." The Authorised is "taken up." That is an angelic, or a heavenly, standpoint, and the word "received" represents something more than the fact that He just ascended to heaven. It carries with it this fact, that it would be impossible for the Lord Jesus to be received in heaven if He had not perfectly accomplished the work which He came from heaven to do. In effect, heaven would have been closed to Him; heaven would have had to say to Him, But You have not done the work; there can be no reception until You have. But it was because He had perfected the work which He came to do, and there was nothing more to be added to it, that heaven received Him, and it was a great reception! The Psalm gives us some idea of what that reception was: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." You see, it is the work that He has done by His Cross, in overthrowing all His and our enemies, meeting all the demand of human need in the matter of salvation, perfecting our salvation. And so He is *received up*, and He is at the right hand of God; and the right hand is always in Scripture the place of honour. Remember that! Strength and honour is what is represented by the right hand. And He is at the right hand of God, the place of power and the place of honour, because the work which He came to do was finished. That is, your salvation and my salvation have been perfected by and in the Lord Jesus. There is nothing whatever for Him to add to it. That is the most elementary thing to say, and yet it is so foundational. So many of the Lord's people have not come to enter into the joyful appreciation of that, that the Lord Jesus really has added the last stroke and the last touch to our salvation. That when heaven received Him, heaven set its seal to the perfected work of His

Cross, and He is there in possession—not of a salvation which has yet to be accomplished—but in possession of a salvation which is final, full, complete, utter.

Perfect Salvation when we Believe.

Our salvation rests upon that, not upon anything subsequent to that. It rests upon our faith-acceptance of that. In the day in which we believe in the Lord Jesus on the ground of the perfection of the work of His Cross, we receive perfection of salvation, and in the day that we believe we receive all that salvation which is in Christ, we enter into all that salvation to its very last degree. We shall never—though we lived for centuries on this earth,—we shall never *in Christ* be one little bit more perfect than we are in Him in the very moment that we believe. All that is made good to us in the day that we believe. There are no questions, no hazards, no risks, the thing is settled, it is ours; full and complete *in Christ*. The Blood of the Lord Jesus has dealt with the whole sin question, root and branch, once and for all, for us. The question of condemnation has been for ever settled. You cannot have anything less than this—NO condemnation! “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” It does not say: There is no condemnation to those who have faithfully been going on with the Lord for years. It says: “*IN CHRIST.*” And when you are in Christ? You are in Christ the day that you believe in relation to His work on the Cross for your salvation, and in that day, or in that very moment, when you so believe you enter into the place of NO CONDEMNATION, and there is nothing less to be said about condemnation than that.

The tremendously important thing is for us to have that settled in our own hearts. We are saved, we are forgiven, we are delivered from condemnation. *In Christ* we ARE perfect. He is our perfection, and that perfection of His is ours through faith. The people who have the purest, clearest, fullest heart-grasp of that are the happiest people, are the people who know joy. The people who have not grasped that are disturbed people, they have not the fulness of joy, they are always afraid, anxious, worrying about their salvation, doubting; and the enemy plays many tricks with people who have not got that settled once and for all.

Now that is the blessed truth of what is objective for the believer as in Christ in salva-

tion. I am so glad that He is in heaven with this matter, and that He is “far above all” holding this matter. If He were here in this world I might think that anything could happen, but He is not, and He is not in any realm where anything can happen, He is beyond all happenings in the matter of salvation. That salvation of ours in its perfection has been put beyond the reach of anything that can throw a doubt upon it, or raise a question as to it, beyond the touch of anything that can bring it into uncertainty.

THE PERILS OF THE OBJECTIVE APPREHENSION.

But there are perils associated even with that blessed truth, because it is only one side of the truth. It is the first side; it is the thing which *must* come first, but it is only one side, and therefore, being one side, it is just possible to make salvation onesided by putting all the emphasis upon that and not giving due place to the corresponding side.

I.—The Peril of Shallowness.

What are some of the perils? Well, we begin with the simplest form of peril, and that is the peril of superficiality, of shallowness. It may be a matter of very great joy and rejoicing and satisfaction, but contentment in that realm and with that side alone may just prevent that deep work which is necessary, which comes by the corresponding side of the truth of Christ's work, the subjective. Thus it is found to be that many people, who are rejoicing to the full in the finality of their salvation in Christ, are living very much upon the surface, and not learning a very great deal about the deeper realities of Christ, the fuller meaning of Christ, and coming to a place of spiritual growth. That is the first peril, and perhaps the simplest form of the peril.

II.—The Peril of Delayed Maturity.

Then there is this peril which is found to exist in that realm, that is, making the Christian life static, settled, where it has just reached that point of accepting all that by faith and staying there, and not going on beyond that in spiritual experience. Everything now is there, objective, outside. There is great joy, great assurance, but the Christian life has stopped with that, it has become settled, it has settled down with that. That is a very real peril, and you find it marking a great many of the

Lord's people. Their attitude is, Well, I am saved, nothing has to be added, can be added, to my salvation; I need have no more doubt for my salvation, it is all perfected, I am accepted in Christ, and I am perfect in Him; what more need I? I just rest upon that and enjoy that day by day. Well, that is very good, but you see it can just bring a check, so that you live on one side of things, and the whole of the Christian life just stops there.

III.—The Peril of Contradiction.

There are other perils. We find that with many who have very truly and blessedly apprehended the greatness of the salvation which Christ has accomplished as theirs, because they know that the question of salvation is eternally settled, and there is no room whatever for any doubts or fears, and that they are saved and nothing can ever alter that, and their salvation does not rest for a moment upon anything that they do, but it rests upon what He has done, it does not rest upon what they are, it rests upon what He is—and that is all true—but, because they take that position, very often you find that life becomes hard. They are perfectly sure, they have no doubts whatever, therefore very often the question of sympathy does not arise, and they become hard, they become cold, and they become legal. Sometimes they become cruel, and too often inconsistencies arise in the life; that is, I am saved, it does not matter what I do, I shall never be lost. They would not say that, the last thing that ever they would think of would be that; and yet very often it works out that way, that their very certainty of salvation opens the door for inconsistencies and contradictions in their lives which never reach their conscience, simply because they say they have no more conscience of sin, that the conscience has been once purged, and so one should never be troubled with conscience again; salvation is absolute, nothing can touch salvation. You see, subtly, imperceptibly, without their reasoning or thinking, that does creep in and you find that to be a result and effect with some, so that if you were to bring home to them certain things in their lives which you saw were glaring inconsistencies they would hardly believe it, they would possibly repudiate it, or they would simply say, Well, nothing alters the fact of my salvation. Life is thus thrown into an unbalanced state, and the peril comes right in with the very fact of the fulness and finality of salvation.

IV.—The Peril of Truth taking the Place of Life.

There is another peril; it is of making progress rather a matter of truth than of life. Progress, of course, is recognised as necessary. No true believer would sit down and say, Well, now there is no more progress to be made. But for many who have so strongly taken up the position upon the objective work of the Lord Jesus in its perfection, the matter of progress is not a matter of life, it is rather a matter of truth; that is, to know more rather than becoming more. Thus you find that a very great many who are in that position have advanced tremendously in their knowledge of truth, but somehow or other their own spiritual growth in Christlikeness lies far behind their knowledge of truth. They know a great deal more than they are. The growth in Christlikeness has not kept pace by any means or in any proper proportion to their progress in the knowledge of things about Christ, and that is a danger which comes in with this very thing of which we are speaking.

V.—The Peril of missing the Prize.

Then this further peril. The peril of giving less importance to the prize than should be given to it. Salvation is not the prize. Salvation never was a prize. You can never win salvation, you can never earn salvation. Salvation is a free gift. But to settle down with salvation in its fulness and its finality means for a great many a failure to recognise that there is a prize. That of which the apostle Paul spoke when he said: "I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the upward calling." There is something more than salvation, something related to the Lord's full purpose in glory, something related to the ultimate full manifestation of the Lord in His people, and that is not just that they are saved people, but that they have *attained* (and Paul uses that word) unto something. Paul was never in fear of losing his salvation. When he said: "Lest, having preached to others, I myself should be cast away," he was not thinking of losing his salvation, but he was aware that there was something that he could miss; he could fall short of something, that which he called "the prize," and he related with its attainment a growth in his spiritual life: "Neither am I already *perfect*." To settle down with this: Well, my salvation is perfect, complete, final in Christ, nothing can be added to it, I rejoice

in that ; may be that we give less importance to the prize than we ought to give.

So you see there are perils which come in with—perhaps the greatest of—the blessings.

THE SUBJECTIVE SIDE.

That does not cover all the ground, but it must be enough on that side for the moment. We turn just for a moment to the other side, Christ in us, or the subjective work of Christ. What is the subjective work of Christ? What does Christ in us mean? We know from the Word that it means conformity to the image of Christ. Paul uses the phrase: "Till Christ be fully formed in you." In salvation we have everything as to our own perfection in Him. We have that *potentially* within us when we receive Him. All that is in Christ as to His present character—not only his position but his character, mark you. It is not *where* He is, it is *what* He is. It is not now what He possesses, it is what He *is*. He possesses our salvation, but we know what He is and "when we see Him we shall be like Him." So that all that He has given to us potentially when we believed is all there to be developed; and, as Paul says: Christ is to be fully formed in us, and we are to be conformed to the image of God's Son. That is a very wonderful thing. It is: "Christ in you the hope of glory." Christ in us means that eventually we shall be like Him to the full. But this is not the *fact* of our being saved, this is the *object* of our being saved. This is not salvation in its fundamental and initial meaning; this is salvation in its outworking to its full meaning, the image of Christ, God's Son.

Identification with Christ.

How do we accept that? We accept that by recognising the other side of Calvary's work. The one side is our accepting of what Christ has done for us, apart from us in His own Person. We accept this other side of conformity to His image by accepting that Christ not only did that *for* us but *as* us, that is, representatively. We come to Romans vi. and recognise that when Christ died we died, when Christ was buried we were buried, when Christ was raised we were raised. That is His representative work. Now we accept that all at the beginning. Our union, our identification with Christ we accept in simple faith at the beginning; but, mark you, that does not become operative in any full measure until the objective side has been settled. *There has*

got to be a settlement, definitely, positively, finally, that our salvation in Christ is perfect and complete, before there can be any full measure of the outworking of Christ in our hearts. The Lord must have that basis upon which to work.

You see this is where the danger comes in with a great blessing. Oh! it is a great revelation, a wonderful unveiling, that God has chosen to make us like Christ, not only to save us with a perfect salvation, so that the question of sin and condemnation is done with, answered finally, but that God has chosen to conform us to the image of His Son. What a revelation, what a blessing. Yes, but God cannot do that second thing until the first thing is settled, because it is in that realm that there are unspeakable perils. What are the perils? The perils are these.

THE PERILS OF THE SUBJECTIVE APPREHENSION.

If the Lord were to get to work to empty you and to empty me of ourselves, in order to make room for the Lord Jesus; to show us ourselves in order to show us the Lord Jesus, to make us to know what we are in ourselves in order to make us know what Christ is in us; make us know our weakness in order to make Christ's strength perfect in it; to make us to know our foolishness in order to make Christ as our wisdom, perfect in us; if He were to start to do that and the question of our salvation was not settled, the devil would jump in at once and use God's very work against us, and when the Lord is dealing with us to make room for His Son, the devil will begin to say: You are under condemnation, God is against you, these very dealings of God with you are proofs that your salvation is not certain. And so it is with a great many in whom the Lord begins to work out things. They allow the enemy to jump in and take hold of the very work of God and turn it against God, by bringing up doubts in their hearts as to their salvation.

Do you see that? So often that is done, and the perils are there, running right alongside of the greatest blessing all the time. It is thus that the enemy tries to use God's truth against God.

Now the subjective side of God's work demands for its effective outworking that we are settled once and for all as to our salvation; that comes first! If you have the one side, the objective only, and all your emphasis upon that, you may be shallow and you may not grow

spiritually. If you have all subjective you become introspective, and you begin to doubt your salvation, to get questions; your eyes are always turned in upon yourself, and the result is that you begin to look for something in yourself that could commend itself to God, trying to find some good, something pleasing to the Lord, and that is a denial of the perfect work of salvation accomplished by the Lord Jesus. You see it is an undermining and undercutting of the whole of the work of Calvary. These two things must go together. The one must have its place; fully and finally *in Christ* we are as perfect in the hour when we believe as ever we shall be. On the other hand, all that that is in Christ is going to be made, not *theoretically* true, but *actually* true in us by the Holy Spirit. But the second demands the first, and we must keep the balance. We must rejoice always in the fact that our names are written

in heaven, rejoice always in the fact that we are saved with a perfect salvation, but, on the other hand, we must remember that there is something that the Lord wants to do to—not make salvation true, but to make the image of Christ an inward thing. That is the outworking of salvation.

So that this balance is necessary, and we must give equal emphasis. If we over-emphasise the subjective we take something from the glory of Christ. If we over-emphasise the objective we take something away from God's purpose. It is a matter of *the work of God in Christ*, and *the purpose of God in Christ*; and these two things have got to have their place.

May the Lord just give us understanding, so that we come into a place of rest and are delivered from the perils which lurk in the vicinity of every Divine blessing. T. A.-S.

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A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY.

*"... The Heavens Opened, and The Son of Man
Standing at The Right Hand of God." Acts 7. 56.*

"The Testimony of Jesus." Rev. 1. 9.

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This Ministry

has as its most earnest
aim:

- I. "THAT IN ALL THINGS HE
(JESUS) SHOULD HAVE
THE PRE-EMINENCE."

 - II. "THAT WE MAY PRESENT
EVERY MAN PERFECT IN
CHRIST."
-

The Battle for the Throne

READING : II. Chronicles xxii. 10-12.
xxiii. 1-21.

Genesis ; iii. 15. " And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between they seed and her seed ; He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

(I need not remind you that that was addressed to the serpent.)

Revelation ; xvii. 14. ". . . and they also shall overcome that are with him . . ."

That which I believe the Lord has laid on my heart very definitely and strongly for this season of our gathering together is what is represented by those passages, and many others, namely :

THE BATTLE FOR THE THRONE.

In the history of this world as it is recorded in the Scriptures the first and the final issue is that of dominion. Every other factor and element is gathered into that. The books of *Genesis* and *Revelation* bound that history, and two factors characterise those two books in a comprehensive way. All the other books of the Bible are but aspects of that whole matter. Their value is the specific aspect of the entire issue with which they respectively deal. That might be a help to you in your future readings in any one book of the Bible, that is, to note its distinctive aspect of the comprehensive truth.

The two comprehensive features of *Genesis* and the *Revelation* are *dominion* and *redemption*. In *Genesis* the order is dominion and—because the dominion was lost—the redemptive programme. In the *Revelation* the order is the redemptive programme consummated and dominion restored. Let me repeat that. Everything that lies between *Genesis* and the *revelation* represents aspects of that comprehensive truth—dominion and redemption, redemption and dominion. But note : in both of these books comprehensively, and in all the other books specifically, redemption is always subservient to dominion. That is one of the things which we shall more fully consider as we go on.

I want to pause for a moment just to say something by way of parenthesis. It is that we are not at this time occupied with some scheme or system of truth, but rather with the ultimate issue of this universe, and this is a matter which, more than ever in the history of this world, concerns the people of God at this time. If, as we believe is the case, we are approaching the end of the dispensation, then the issue of all the dispensations is on the immediate horizon. If you were asked, what is the issue of the dispensation ? You would probably answer, The coming of the Lord. I want to say that that is only introductory to the issue. The issue is the dominion of the universe. We hail the coming of the Lord because of what it means in its outworking. It is not merely an isolated event, it is something which carries with it all that has been pointed unto through the ages, and all that God eternally intended before time was. That is, God's method and means, and basis and character of the government of this universe. So that we are occupied with no small thing, and it is necessary for us to get the magnitude of the background, in order to give us an adequate motive for facing the conflict. For the conflict in which we are today, beloved of God, is no personal thing, no small, narrow, local matter. We are in THE conflict, it is heading up—and we believe very soon—to the final settlement of the government of this universe ; dominion according to God's mind. We are in that conflict today. If you are knowing anything of the mystery of spiritual conflict, that is the explanation.

Well, all that is parenthetical, in order that we might face this matter in a right way, not thinking that we are just to get teaching. We are to face the most practical issue that has ever been presented to man, and not only to man but to angels and demons.

Man and his Inherent Functions

Having said that, we are able to get closer and closer to this matter. And at this point we have to introduce man as being central to the

conflict and to the issue. There are three inherent faculties in man's constitution according to the Divine design and purpose. Those three inherent faculties in man's constitution are prophet, priest and king. I want you to take very careful notice of the way in which that is put. It is said that these are inherent faculties in the constitution of man according to the Divine design and purpose. These are not merely temporary or periodic functions, neither are they merely offices.* We will say more about that later.

In the Scriptures these three things overlap and run together in normal times. When things are right and according to God's mind they all obtain at the same time, at least in principle. When things are either undeveloped or deranged they either disappear or are out of proportion. (Of course, you will have to be working pretty energetically with your background knowledge of the Word to be able to follow this and confirm it, for we cannot stay to fill in all detail). Let me repeat that. In the Scriptures these three things overlap and run throughout together in normal times. When things are not normal, that is, when they are undeveloped or when they are deranged, either or all of these disappear or else they are out of proportion. The book of Judges, covering some 400 years, is an abnormal and deranged state of things, and the constant repetition in the book of Judges is: "And there was no king." That explains a lot.

The Prophet and Priest related to the Throne.

Now I want you to notice another thing which is very important. The prophet and the priest are always related to the throne. The king is above them, and they are for him. In other words, all that is represented by the functions of prophet and priest is unto dominion. That is not very profound. I think that lies on the face of an ordinary reading of the Scriptures. Take the books of the Prophets. What has the prophet to do with? The throne, always! Our chapter (II. Chronicle, xxiii.) shows how the priest also relates to the throne. It was by the action of the priest that the young king, rescued from the massacre of the seed royal, came to the throne, in accord-

* We are not dealing with the specific gift of prophets or prophecy. Such were—as we understand the Scriptures—given in a relative and not a primary way. They related to bringing the Lord's people into the fulness of His thought. The specific gift will "cease," but the spiritual reality will remain.

ance, you notice, with the word of the Lord to David. But it was through the priest. When that priest died that throne was upset, all went wrong in the land; but while that priest remained alive, with his influence toward the throne, the government was pure and right. So that what is borne out by the Scriptures very fully and clearly is that the functions of the prophet and the priest are unto dominion. These three, while manifested in the form of office, rather represent spiritual features than official status. (It is necessary for me to work myself through all this seeming technique in order to reach the necessary end, but I think it is all vital, all important, and it ought to be all very instructive). Let me repeat that these three things—prophet, priest, king—while manifested in the form of office, rather represent spiritual features than official status. Take that which they represent spiritually.

The Spiritual Meaning of the Prophet.

PROPHET. The prophetic function is related to spiritual knowledge. Now stay with that and think! Spiritual knowledge is the nature of the prophetic function. What does that mean? It represents the expression of the mind, the thought; so that in the prophetic office you have God's thought placed in the mind of His instrument, which is in the nature of spiritual knowledge. The prophet's knowledge was not studied, was not got from manuals and commentaries. It was revelation, spiritual knowledge. It was not the fruit of the activity and energy of his own brain, it came by the Spirit of the Lord. The true prophet has always to express his ministry in some way like this: "The hand of the Lord was upon me," or, "The Spirit of the Lord came upon so-and-so and he prophesied," So that the prophetic function has to do with spiritual knowledge, deposited as God's thought in the mind of His instrument.

The Meaning of the Priest.

PRIEST. The priestly function has to do with righteousness. It is a moral question when you come into the realm of the priest, and this not only in the mind but in the heart. The prophet represents the mind of God, the priest represents the heart of God on all moral matters, gathered up into all that is meant by the word "righteousness," hating iniquity. That is a matter of the heart, and that comes within the compass of the priest. That is why,

in the Holy Spirit's taking up through Paul of the symbolism of the Divine provision against the enemy, the breastplate is the breastplate of righteousness. It is a matter of the heart. Righteousness here is a matter of the state of the heart, and the keeping of the heart and its affections and its desires holy, in the sense of moral integrity.

The Meaning of the King.

THE KING. The king, the throne, has to do with holiness; holiness in a spiritual sense. This is a matter of the will. Holiness is the foundation of His Throne; spiritual holiness, not only moral integrity and uprightness. This relates to the will, and brings in the whole matter of authority. Authority in the last analysis is a matter of spiritual holiness. Trace that through God's Word. Track that down to its final representations in the New Testament, and you will see that it was because of His spiritual holiness that the Lord Jesus was able to utterly cast out the prince of this world. "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." "Now is the prince of this world cast out." Authority, dominion, the throne, has to do with spiritual holiness, working through the will. How did the Lord defeat the prince of this world when He came to overthrow him and to rob him of the dominion which He knew was vested in Him? His utter devotion to holiness, and that devotion expressing itself in a will bent with every ounce of its strength upon pursuing that path of holiness.

You come up against a mighty will when you come up against the Lord Jesus in the wilderness with the devil. See the resolution; see the unwavering purpose. Follow Him right through all His temptations: "I come to do thy will . . ."; "Not my will, but thine"; "He set his face as a flint . . ." But what was the governing factor of that will? It was holiness. It was against compromise with what was unclean. It was against compromise with an unclean world. "All these (the kingdoms of this world) will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Ah! But they are unclean, therefore unacceptable, and the strength of the will is seen in this, that He would rather go to the Cross and suffer all its agony to keep clean in God's way than He would accept the easy way out and the government of the kingdoms of this world in

their unclean state. That is the King. You see, dominion is no mere despotism, it has a character. It is spiritual holiness.

Now you see what I meant when I said that, while these three things are manifested in the form of office they rather represent spiritual features, so that you have mind, heart, will. The mind with God's thoughts, the heart with God's standard of righteousness, the will with God's strength of holiness—prophet, priest and king.

I want to take you back again, and remind you that there are these three constituents in the nature of man according to God's mind. This is how man is made when God makes him. He is made with these things in his being. They are not things which developed in the course of history, that God said, Now, in organising Our system We must have prophets, and priests and kings. Those things were all the expression of an inward thing, which was constituent in the creation of man. This is the image of God in which man was made, and it expresses itself. You must remember that back of everything historical and typical in the Word of God there are spiritual realities. You have to get back of the prophet and the priest and the king and see what is the heavenly, spiritual meaning of this. The prophet is God represented in His reason and intelligence. Through the prophet the Word of the Lord is: "Come now, and let us *reason* together, saith the Lord." That is, Let us get down to Divine thoughts. "Your thoughts are not my thoughts, neither are your ways my ways . . ." There is the expanse of distance as between earth and heaven between your thoughts, and your ways, and Mine, and you must come back to My thoughts, My ways. That is the work of the prophet. The priest is God represented in His moral qualities. You notice what the function of the priest was. It was to examine and scrutinise the offering; to, if possible, find a fault, a flaw. We have sometimes said that the priest was the most expert fault-finder in history. It was the business of the priest, if he could, to find a blemish. If he could, then that offering could not be accepted, it was excluded. And when at length, passing his expert eye, the sacrifice was without spot and without blemish, it was offered to God. That is all a question of moral blemishes, and the priest, therefore, in his function represents God in His moral qualities. The king represents God in His

government, and His government is controlled by the law of spiritual holiness.

Now all this was vested in man in creation. Man was constituted by these elements. Man was not merely appointed to these offices. If you could now just follow that ahead, you would see that every child of God who comes into line with God's design and intention and purpose is a prophet, a priest and a king, by constitution and not by appointment. The appointment was a consequent or a subsequent thing. What I mean is this: God never merely appoints to office. God makes men that *are that*. He does not appoint priests, He makes men priests. He does not appoint prophets, He makes prophets. He does not appoint kings, He makes kings. That is a law which governs everything in the Divine order. God never takes from among men someone selectively and appoints him to office, and says, Now I am going to make you a minister, that is, I appoint you a minister. God takes hold of men and women and puts them through the fire and constitutes them something, and everybody has to say, That is a prophet; that is a priest; that is a king; in a spiritual sense.

A Weakness in Organised Christianity.

The phrase "organised Christianity" has been used with a good deal of, shall we say, criticism. It is a phrase which means disrepute amongst some of us. Now you understand what we mean. It simply means that organised Christianity represents a system, an appointment by man, an election by man instead of inward constitution, spiritual formation, by God. One is organised, the other is organic. A prophet is not an officer, a priest is not an officer, a king is not an officer in the first instance. These are the functions which come out of the very constitution of the person or persons in view. They represent something which God put into man when He made him as from Himself. It is very important to notice that as we go on.

Let me repeat my last statement. God never merely appoints to office. He makes men who ARE that spiritually, and then calls attention to what He has done.

The Range of Man's Dominion.

I would like to take one further fragment before breaking off, with a word about the extent of man's dominion, because we are not

primarily occupied with the prophet and the priest. What we have said has been said in order to give the full circuit of man's constitution, and we have emphasised that the prophet and the priest are unto the king, and our specific object is the king, or rather, dominion. We want to recognise afresh the extent of man's dominion according to God's original thought in His creation. Looking at the Scriptures, at man created by God, before anything else happens, we find, firstly, that the dominion of man is related to nature, that is, the three kingdoms, the animal kingdom, the vegetable, and the mineral. That was man's kingdom in nature, where he was given dominion. "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands." "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." That in the first instance, related to Adam. But, secondly, his kingdom his dominion extended beyond the sphere of nature. It was also spiritual, and embraced the sphere of angels, unfallen and fallen. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation." They are our ministers. "Know yet not that we shall judge angels?" "He gave them authority over unclean spirits." "Behold, I give you power (authority) over all the power of the enemy." Man's dominion reaches into the spiritual realm. I am speaking now of man according to God's mind.

Note two things, perhaps a little difficult to grasp as they are said in the first instance, but I will repeat them in order that you may be able to get them. Man's delegated dominion from God gave him dominion or government over the kosmos, that is, the world order. Man's faithful and obedient allegiance to God gave him authority over the spiritual forces beyond the kosmos. Let us work backward and prove it. When man was unfaithful and disobedient he lost his authority over the spiritual forces. They took the upper hand of man. Resultantly he lost his government over the kosmos. Man's dominion over nature and the world order was conditioned by his faithful obedience to God, but that faithful obedience to God put him in a position of government over the world, by having dominion over the spiritual forces in the world. This has a tremendous bearing upon the last chapter of the Ephesian letter and the book of the Revelation. You see the issue of the ages to be man brought back to authority over the

spiritual forces in the universe and establishing the government of God in the earth. That is redemption.

If you think this is a vast, far away thing, something too much beyond your grasp, let me say to you that this applies to the weakest child of God. There is not one who is not called to this. Can you see the discrimination that is implied and involved by and in what I have said? Kings, priests, prophets, are not in God's thought isolated individuals, forming a special class. Those things relate to the whole. It is a kingdom of priests, that is, kingship ultimately is corporate, collective, not merely individual. That is God's original thought. If the thing were individual and specific it would be autocratic and despotic. That does not mean that because it is universal it is democratic, but it does mean that it is theocratic—God over all—BUT through His new creation. God's nature expressing itself to the full in a new heaven and a new earth,

through a new people. To that you and I are called, every one of us, the weakest, the simplest. We are in the battle for the Throne. We shall be touching upon problems which may arise as we go on, but I do want you to recognise this, that man was constituted for dominion, but he was conditioned as to his dominion, and the condition was faithful and obedient allegiance to God.

It is exactly where you find the Lord Jesus in the book of the Revelation; when you come to find Him Lord of lords and King of kings, you find He is "the Faithful and True Witness."

We are touching the last thing; we are touching the Throne. We are coming to, "Him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne . . ." and when that happens Satan will be cast down from heaven, and there will be no more place found for him. That is what is in view. We are in that conflict now.

T. A-S.

The Anointing

(Continued.)

READING: Psalm i-5; ii-6; xv.-1;
xxiii.-6; lxxv. 1-4; lxxxiv. 1-4;
lxxxvii. 1-3.

I HAVE selected those passages to give us a key as we continue from the point where we closed the last chapter on the assembly as the anointed vessel. I want to come again to this matter in general for a moment before we make some further practical applications of the truth.

We are thinking of the Church which is the Body of Christ, His Assembly, as the anointed vessel of the testimony of Jesus; which testimony we have explained and defined. We have seen that David was anointed with the thought in God's mind that he should bring that testimony typically to fulness and finality in the House of God. That which comes out with Solomon in the Temple in the greatness and fulness and glory is the issue of the anointing of David. Although David did not actually build the Temple, his life made it possible, his history with God was the basis of it. On

the ground of his history with God, which Solomon did not have, he received the revelation. It was David who had the revelation of the temple, not Solomon; and moreover, David accumulated the wealth for the Temple. All that Solomon had to do was to carry out the revelation; and Solomon, being David's son, represents the issue of David's life in vocation, in work, in the purpose of God. Solomon and David are one in principle; they are two aspects of one thing.

David and the House of God.

Now it is tremendously impressive and significant, therefore, to see what a large place the House of God has in the life of David. Take the book of the Psalms of David. You find that these Psalms are spontaneous impromptu outflowings from specific experiences. David is brought into a situation, passes through a spiritual experience with a very literal background; and out of that experience and from that very literal background there

emerges a Psalm. If you have not worked your way through the Psalms of David with their background, as far as it is possible to trace it, you have missed one of the most precious things. The headings will very often give you the key. Take Psalm 34 and you find that David sang that Psalm as he emerged from a trap. He, as we know, fell into a state of doubt, he lost momentarily his assurance concerning the inevitable triumph of the anointing which was upon him. Much pressure, prolonged adversity and suffering had so reduced him as to bring into him a question as to whether he would really get through and survive; and he therefore in principle doubted the anointing. When we do that there is always a trap waiting, and Ahimelech (otherwise Achish, both the same person) was resorted to, and so David went down to Achish or Ahimelech, and the lords of the Philistines saw him and said: "Is not this David the king of the land? Did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying: Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?" and he was a marked man, and now whereas he had said: ". . . I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul," he saw that he might die by the hands of the Philistines, so he had not really got out of his difficulty. And then he feigned himself mad—a shameful phase of experience through which to pass for an anointed one; but he escaped. Ahimelech said to his lords: "Do I lack madmen, that ye have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?"

I do not know whether Achish saw through it and this was his way of finding an escape for David, but at any rate David escaped and what I like about it is that David did not put it down to his own artfulness, that he had by a trick got out of his difficulty, but he came out from Ahimelech's presence singing Psalm 34 and went straight to the cave of Adullam. It was born out of an experience, and he recognised that not his wit or cunning but the Lord's goodness had delivered him from that trap. There was something deeper than merely escaping from a natural embarrassment. There was a great spiritual deliverance from all the ignominy and shame into which an anointed one had been brought. It was evidently a heart revulsion and not merely a trick to get himself physically out of an awkward situation; a heart revulsion from this whole thing. I

mention it by way of illustrating this general truth, that these Psalms were born out of fragments of spiritual history with a literal background. Now take the numerous references in the Psalms to the House of God in the light of what we have said and seen. You will find that these Psalms being born out of spiritual experiences, with their reference to the House of God mean that David's spiritual life was bound up with the House of God. This man is so largely linked in his inner being with the House of God. He sings of its glories, he expresses his longings, and he has as his highest ambition to dwell in the House of the Lord for ever. It is the House of the Lord that bounds the horizon of this man, and all his spiritual experiences are in relation to it. Then in the end, in type, the House of God is a realised thing as the spiritual expression of his life.

David and Christ.

Now we have said that David was a type of Christ. Note, David anointed, and the prominent and all-inclusive thing in his life is the House of God; anointed therefore in relation to the House of God. Now the Lord Jesus, the Anti-type. The object of the Lord Jesus, dominating His whole being was the House of God. Use the other terms if you like, "My Church," or The Body of Christ, the spiritual Temple. The one great expression of His earthly life was: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;" and again: "I will build my church." The object governing the life of the Lord Jesus was His Church, and He was anointed in relation to that; that comes out of His passion instantly. All the types of the Old Testament bear out the truth that what emerges from the passion of Christ is the Church. If Adam passes into that sleep and comes out of it with his bride, that is Christ and the Church. The Calvary death and the resurrection with a Church, His Body: ". . . even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it." And so you may follow all the types of the Old Testament. Whether it is Joseph and Asenath, or Isaac and Rebekah, or any of the numerous types of the Church; you will find that they all bear this out, that the object and concern, the dominating interest of the Lord Jesus is His Church, and to secure His Church He was anointed; it was in the power of the anointing that He secured His Church.

The Holy Spirit and the Church.

The one tremendous issue of such a comprehensive conception is this, that the object of the Holy Spirit is the Church the Body of Christ. Not the Church as we know it on the earth, the organised system, but that spiritual body, that heavenly thing. The object of the Holy Spirit is that. Within that compass there may be many, many things; the salvation of souls, and pure evangelistic ministry, the building up of the saints by pastoral and teaching ministry; the number of things may be countless as to Holy Spirit activities, but remember the one all embracing object of the Holy Spirit is the Church. To be brought to fulness in Christ, that is basic to all else. That is not something which is introduced at an advanced point in spiritual life, although with many of the Lord's people that does not become apprehended, grasped until they have been the Lord's for a long time; but that is really at the beginning of everything from the standpoint of God. The anointing is given very often in advance of the spiritual history relative to the purpose of the anointing, but the anointing has that in view, the Holy Spirit has that in view. If the Holy Spirit is with us he is with us not for any personal or departmental purpose but He is with us with His own vision, His own object, and that is the Church the Body of Christ, and all His activities within us will be with that in view. Oh that we could and did see the specific purpose of the Holy Spirit, the all-inclusive object of the anointing. When once we have seen that we are in the way of understanding almost everything that the Lord does. We are in the way of interpreting so much experience, and we are in the way of accepting so much more than we would accept without that apprehension of the full purpose of the Holy Spirit. To see what the Lord is after is a great help in moving with the Lord in His demands, His requirements. Now then, if that is true, if the Church, the Body, the Assembly is the all governing purpose of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, then the Lord will give a tremendous place to the laws of life of the Body of Christ amongst His people who are truly going on with Him. Their whole history will be governed by that and the Lord will press that in principle upon them, and all their crises will be relative to that.

It is a tremendous help to see that a crisis to which the Lord brings us which is costly,

which involves a good deal for the time being, perhaps of suffering, misunderstanding, difficulty, is not just some personal thing so far as we are concerned, and that the Lord is nailing us down to some peculiar line which applies to us and is our affair. No! That crisis with all its costliness and suffering is relative to the whole purpose of God, and our individual experience is relative to the absoluteness of God's purpose; that there is nothing which is merely an isolated experience, a personal thing. All God's eternal and universal purpose is bound up with our personal experience, and when we get our personal experience set in that universal and eternal background of God's purpose there is a motive large enough for us to pass through the crisis in a yielding way.

The Value of the Universal Background.

I do feel, beloved (and let me say this especially to those who minister) that one of the most powerful and effectual ways of leading the Lord's people on in the truth to the acceptance of the truth whatever that truth may be, the acceptance of say the truth of Romans vi., identification with Christ in death, burial, resurrection, or any other aspect of the whole truth; one of the most powerful and effectual ways of leading people on in the truth is by giving them the universal and eternal background of that truth. If we take truth in fragments, in a detached way, and begin to hammer those isolated truths home upon people as something in themselves, we have not given them an adequate reason for accepting them, it has simply become some personal thing. But set truth in the light of the eternities past and future, in the light of God's eternal purpose concerning His Son, and say: "Now that is why you should die, accept your death in Christ's death; that is why you should be prepared to let go your natural life, that is why you should embrace this light, because it is not merely a personal matter, but it relates in an organic way to all the people of God throughout all ages, from eternity to eternity." "It is a part of a tremendous whole; there is nothing in the purpose of God which is isolated to individuals, it is all relative." And if you can bring in the eternal background of every fragment of truth and every Word of God, you have given a sufficient motive and a sufficient dynamic for the acceptance of that.

To put it round the other way. You refuse light, you refuse truth, what does that mean?

That it simply is you that suffer and you are perhaps prepared to accept the consequences? Oh, no, it does not stay there. Our refusing to go on with the Lord in any bit of light, truth, revelation, just sends us out—in that measure—of the whole fulness of Christ. And I ask you, what do you want in your relationship to the Lord? Would any one frankly say: "I do not want the fulness of Christ"? Now test it. Would you definitely stand by and say: "I do not want the fulness of Christ, that is not my desire or wish." I venture to think that you would honestly say: "I want the fulness of Christ." Beloved, you cannot have it as an individual. No individual can have the fulness of Christ. You can be filled with Christ in your measure, but it is going to take the whole Body of Christ to realise His fulness, and that is what the Body is for. We shall individually become a part of the fulness of Christ in relation to all saints, and the fulness of Christ will depend upon our fulness of relationship with the whole purpose of God in His work. You can have a little bit, much less than the Lord intended by refusing truth, light.

The whole Church necessary to the Fulness of Christ.

This leads me to these practical applications. The Body is necessary to any kind of fulness. The assembly, the Church is necessary to any kind of fulness. Not only afterward, but now. Do you want to know fulness now in this way, and that way, in experience spiritually, in service, in life? The Body is necessary to any kind of fulness. That is, that separateness or non application of Body principles means limitation. It means that we shall go just so far and there we stop. There is no end, no limit when we come into the revelation of the Body. While we remain separate units in the Lord we are limited. Of course, I have said: "when we come into the Body" and "while we remain separate units"; perhaps I ought to add "in spirit" because if we are in Christ we are in the Body, but it is the acceptance of the revelation, the truth, the following on that brings us into fulness. The body is necessary to life. Now the Body can be represented by two or three. As we have often said, it was never the Lord's way or intention that there should be individual servants of God alone. The Lord's law is the law of the Body even in the going out two by two, and if ever a servant of God in the New Testament became isolated

in a wrong way, that servant of God got into difficulties before long, even though it was Paul. We find the going very stiff and very hard and baffling, but when Sylvanus and Timothy were come down Paul was caught up in spirit and testified. "I found not Titus," and so he lost an opportunity at Troas for which he had been longing. You see the Lord does not stand by a violation of His own principles if those principles are not very carefully watched over by the people who have intelligence about them. I do not mean the Lord has never succoured and helped an isolated servant of His. He does graciously, providentially, sovereignly, but that is not His highest, and he will seek to show that that is not His way.

The Strength of Fellowship.

A Body principle is necessary to life. We know it in experience. We may be moving toward a state of spiritual death, utter weariness of mind and body, and then immediately ahead of us there is a gathering of the Lord's people, and nature says I am too tired to go to that meeting, and if nature prevails there is no gain but loss. For those who have learned the secrets of the Lord the attitude is taken, "Yes, but the flesh must not govern this, I shall find my life there." So a wearied and jaded and exhausted child of God faces what all around in the flesh argue is utter folly. They go because they know what will be the result, and they come away in life, the weariness and tiredness gone, giving place to a wonderful inflow of life which they have found in the fellowship of the Lord's people. That is true to experience. Some of us know very extraordinary experiences of being really ruled completely out on a physical basis, and we have not taken that as the criterion, we have lifted our heart to the Lord. The question is not am I fit, but do You want? And while natural wisdom would have said "No never," sometimes the Lord has said: "Yes, I want you there," and there has been a getting up in faith and the result has been life, and not a return to the old condition. This principle has worked out. The Body is necessary to life. Some of you will be thinking of those twos or threes who never are able to have a larger fellowship of the Lord's people. I have said that it is not the Lord's way to have one alone anywhere in His service because of the life principle bound up with the two or three. There is another

thing to be said, that physical proximity is not necessarily the governing thing in this matter if it is not possible. The corporate Body is not a physical thing.

Where it is possible to have the fellowship of the saints the Lord holds our life to it, makes our life to be a part of it; where it is not possible the spiritual truth may still work, provided we stand on Body ground, provided we recognise the spiritual oneness of the Body and appropriate its values. You may be in some part of the world alone and may be grievously assailed in some way or other. It is possible for you to stand there in your place many miles distant from other saints, and say: "Lord, I appropriate by faith all the values of my fellowship with the saints," and there is value in that. It is an attesting of God's truth. What is the value that is in that? It is the value of which we are speaking. The Holy Spirit operates in relation to the Body and not in any detached way. He is the Spirit of the One Body. And for the Holy Spirit geographical proximity is not a controlling factor. The Holy Spirit can minister through the body to the scattered members. Now these things for some may seem strange, but they are working principles, and God would have all His people in the good of this truth. And, beloved, what a tremendous difference it would make in the work of the Lord and in the spiritual experience of all the Lord's people today if this truth were governing their hearts.

Fellowship and Life.

The Body is necessary to life; the ministration of life to individual members from the other members is a law of the Spirit. That is the principle in the physical realm back of the calling of the Elders and their anointing with oil in certain physical crises. It is not just a rite, an ordinance; it embodies this principle that Elders are representative members of the House of God, they stand as the House of God, that is all. They are not ecclesiastics, or officials, but they represent the House of God and when they come it is bringing in the House of God. In effect it is bringing in the Body of Christ.

You cannot send over to all the globe to gather together all the members of the Body of Christ to pray for you, but the Body comes in through representative members and they anoint with oil, the symbol of the Spirit of the one Body, and they lay hands on the sick, and

that is an act of identification, identifying this suffering one with the One Body and the One Spirit, and what happens? Well, life is ministered. That life may work out to the healing entirely of that sickness as we have known it to do. That life may work out not to the removing of the disease or sickness, but to such a quickening as to enable to endure or carry on, or rise up in spite of weakness, and do the Lord's work. The principle is not the principle of removing the state of mortality, but of quickening the mortal body with Divine life. The effect is different in different cases but the principle is one, life is ministered and you see it is corporate. The Body is there in representation and the Spirit is there as the Spirit of the One Body, and the Body in the anointing involves life. The Body is necessary to life. And the Lord jealously guards that as we saw in the case of Saul stricken on the Damascus road; Ananias and Sapphira touching the Body and meeting judgment; and as we have in 1 Corinthians xi. 30: "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." ".....not discerning the Lord's body." The Lord is jealous for His Body. Violate the principle of the Body or ignore it and you suffer, therefore the recognition and discerning of the Body is necessary to life, to fulness.

Fellowship and Safety.

Then the Body is necessary to safety. If David found his life in the House of the Lord, as undoubtedly he did, David also found his safety in the House of the Lord: ".....help out of the sanctuary." ".....he shall hide me in his pavilion." His safety is in the house of the Lord and that is carried over spiritually into the Body of Christ, the Assembly, the House of God.

May I speak of this safety in one direction alone. Safety in the matter of deception. There is nothing, I think, which more swiftly opens the way to deception and error than ultra-individualism, separateness of spirit and action. I am going to say some things which, if you do not understand them do not worry, and please do not go away and use them against me because you have not understood them. But it is in this connection those things are said by Paul about women and their covering. They have been given a privileged place in the House of God, representing the principle of the Church's subjection to Christ as Head. Now the apostle is very careful and explicit about those things and he speaks of Eve being

deceived and transgression coming in through Eve, not through Adam, deception coming in through Eve, and he links with that these other things, that if a woman forsake her covering, *which is simply symbolised in her head attire*, when she is in heavenly things, if she forsakes that, she forsakes her protection from deceiving spirits. For that reason we see (you will bear with me I am sure, you sisters, I am only trying to get at spiritual principles) that almost invariably when a woman has assumed the place of authority in spiritual matters it is not long before you have got an excess of some kind, or a twist, perhaps a false doctrine. Touch spiritual things out of place and out of order and you are exposed at once to deception. You see that the covering is symbolised in the natural material thing, but it contains a spiritual principle. What I am saying is this, our safety from deception is in the Body, and being saved from independence of life and separateness of action. Our safety is in the fellowship of saints. The Body is necessary for a right vision and functioning. It is necessary for life, necessary for safety.

We have illustrated this before by this physical Body of ours. If any of the organs of our bodies were separated from the rest of our body they would lose both their form and their functioning. It is by reason of their place in the Body and their relation to all the other organs that they keep both their form and fulfil their function. And the Body is necessary to keep us in order and to help us to function aright. If we get out of fellowship with the Body there will be abnormality of

some kind. We shall become unbalanced, we shall not derive the benefit of the Holy Spirit's imparted revelation to others, and, oh, what we owe to that! The Lord does not reveal all His truth to one man, He spreads His revelation over all His saints, and even the most Godly, the most consecrated can learn something from someone else spiritually; and the Lord ordered it so, even among His prophets and even amongst His Apostles, so that Peter will say: "Even as our beloved brother Paul has said." There are some things hard to be understood, nevertheless, Peter is acknowledging the revelation given to Paul. And Paul got his function through the Body as well as his instructions. "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." He got his instructions from the Body. And then at Antioch the Holy Ghost said: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Light and action, revelation and vocation are bound up with the Body. The Body is necessary for position and function.

Now a closing word. The Body is necessary for discipline. It is all very well for us to say we are perfectly willing to be subject to Christ. Everybody would say that. Listen: "I was sick and ye visited me, I was in prison and ye came unto me....." "Lord, when saw we thee sick or in prison and came unto thee?" ".....inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." That is the Body truth. Christ is sick in that member, Christ is linked with the sickness of that member.

T. A.-S.

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The Spiritual Background of the Word of God

Conference Talks with Workers

WE are going to be occupied with THE SPIRITUAL BACKGROUND OF THE WORD OF GOD. We will start at the beginning, having the Word open at the first chapter.

The first observation which we make is that this world is represented as within a greater sphere. That is a broad statement, but it is the commencing point of any comprehensive and adequate grasp of the whole purpose of God. This world is represented as within a greater sphere ; and I think that is quite obvious in reading the first chapter of Genesis.

And then the heavenly bodies are said to have been created with a relationship to this world.

Then we take a leap forward. The encircling realm of this world is said to be occupied by spiritual intelligences. We must draw a line somewhere between the immediate encompassing of this world, and that place to which Satan mysteriously enough has access to the very presence of God. There are, undoubtedly, two realms. One is toward this earth ; and one is toward God Himself, in His Own Presence wherever that is. The encircling realm of this world is said to be occupied by spiritual intelligences. The Scriptures in that connection are : " Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness....." Then Satan as : " the prince of the power of the air," and such like passages.

The Godhead in Action.

The next thing is that the creation of this universe is said to have been the work of the Divine Trinity in a certain order of operation. I do not mean creation in a certain order of operation, but the Divine Trinity in a certain order of operation.

First of all, what is the Divine order ? Let us make a general statement so far as the Godhead was concerned in the creation. From the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit. Now, can you substantiate that with the Word ? These are not unimportant things ; they relate to the whole of the spiritual background of things right to the end. If you lay your

foundations here, then you will understand later that those things hold good and apply. Perhaps if I just suggest to you the thing that is in my mind you will more fully work it out afterward. I have suggested to you, that passage concerning the Spirit of God brooding, that there is a state of death and ruin from which the Lord has not finally departed, over which He is still hovering with the intention maintained in His mind that there should be out of that, something for His absolute satisfaction. That carries you right on to that central thing in which God does ultimately and finally, without any chance of the thing breaking down again, accomplish His purpose.

When you see the Lord Jesus dying on the cross, you have on the human side, and on the side of the old creation another scene such as you have in the beginning of the book of Genesis. Darkness—and even nature witnesses thereto—over the face of the earth until the ninth hour ; darkness, ruin, judgment, death, over that old order of things ; it is nothing but void ; but the Spirit of God is brooding ; "the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead" ; the Spirit of God brings back our Lord Jesus from the dead, and in bringing Him back He becomes the Firstborn from among the dead, and the new order is brought in. The Father ; in the Son, by the Spirit. That indicates what I mean by the spiritual background of things, and it is important that we see, not only the order, but where each one comes in in the Divine intention. God is the instigator, the originator ; the Son is the sphere of His work ; the Spirit is the Agent for realising it ; and even the Lord Jesus does nothing apart from the Holy Ghost. He is the Spirit of Jesus, and in Him there is nothing without the Holy Ghost. In His birth it is the Holy Ghost ; in the first step of public ministry in relation to the purpose for which He has come, it is the Holy Ghost ; all the way through it is the Holy Ghost. To the Cross : "who through the eternal Spirit offered himself....." ; and then in the resurrection it is the Holy Spirit ; and He receives the Holy Spirit in ascension and exaltation for His Church ; and it is everything

still by the Spirit even in the Church. So that the Holy Spirit is seen—from this standpoint deductively as well as from the Word emphatically—to be the executive instrument in all the purpose of God ; and the Divine order is just that. Everything originates with the Father ; it is in the Son ; and it is by the Spirit.

Now there are some very comprehensive, although familiar things bound up with that, they are these.

Christ—The Inclusive Sphere of all Divine Activities.

God has a great purpose. That purpose is answered inclusively and exclusively in Christ, and nothing of the Divine purpose is possible outside of Christ ; and the formula " In Christ " represents the A and the Z, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and Omega of the Divine intention and purpose. Then within the sphere of Christ, and only within the sphere of Christ, does the Holy Spirit operate in relation to the Divine purpose ; that is, so far as having a place in that purpose is concerned. The Spirit of God moves universally in relation to the purpose, but when it is a matter of participating or having a place in the purpose of God, you have got to find your place in Christ. And you will find that everything upon which the Holy Spirit alights to make it fulfil the Divine purpose and give it life, is something relative to Christ, and it represents a new discovery, or a new movement in Christ.

We were speaking about Ezekiel's great vision of the temple, and you will remember that we said that that vision of the temple was spiritually an unveiling of Jesus Christ ; and Ezekiel, under the control, government, direction of the Spirit of God representatively, is taken into the confines of that temple ; he is taken in, through, round, and he is shown every detail of that temple and given the exact dimensions of it. All the chambers, their arrangement, their number, order, position ; everything ; and an exact figure is put upon everything, every bit within and without ; and all that becomes the place in which the Priests and the Levites are to fulfil their ministry in the eternal purpose of God. Everything is measured for us in Christ, and we have got to find our measure. Some people are too big to be of any use in the House of God ; they have to have their measure reduced. Some people are too small and they have to have their measure

increased ; but they have got to find their measure in Christ, to occupy their place, and fulfil their ministry. The whole thing is presented by God. That which is presented is Christ. And the Holy Spirit brings in and gives the measure of Christ for every one, and the place in Christ for every one ; and that is the sphere of the purpose of God, the vocation of His people. It is a simple illustration, but it is important for us to recognise that everything is bound up with Christ, of the purpose of God, and the Holy Spirit's work is to show us the things of Christ.

The Nature, Purpose and Destiny of Man.

Now we go on. Certain things are said about man, as to the nature, the purpose, and the destiny of his being. Can you say how, and why this is so, respectively ?

Firstly, how ? In the image of God ; for the glory of God ; in the image of God's Son.

What is the nature of man's being ? " In the image of God." The purpose of his being ? For the glory of God. As to the destiny of His being ? "conformed to the image of God's Son."

I. The Nature of Man.

The image of God ! What is the image of God ? To what does that fundamentally refer ? Trinity !

Tripartite : but it is important for us to get more than a general statement ; it is important for us to see the greater fulness of that. We can see, of course, it is so well known, that man is tripartite. He is spirit, soul, and body ; but we have been dealing with the order of the Godhead in creation, and there is a close relationship here.

Take the Godhead. The Father is the Source ; the Son is the Channel ; the Spirit is that which comes from the Source and flows through the Channel. Now if you take that as an illustration and carry that threefold, tripartite, element into man you have got a better truth about the nature of man's being. There is a spring and there is a channel, and there is something that flows through in every part of man's being. This principle of the Divine image, the Godhead, is written upon everything that God has created ; specifically, upon man, and man rises to a level of this image, of course, much higher than anything else. Take nature ; take the creation, and see the principle upon which God has generally

constituted it. It is that threefoldness. What have you in the matter of the constituents of the universe? Well, you have matter, you have energy, you have space. You cannot get outside of those; they encompass everything. Everything is bound up within those three. What is space? Space is height, length, breadth, not depth; only three. The depth is the height of a thing always; that is a dimension that does not come in. You cannot get away from that at all. When you are dealing with space you have got to reckon on one of those three things.

Time; what is time? Past, present, future. You cannot get outside of that. It does not matter where you look in this universe you are bound by three.

If you look into your own being not only to spirit, soul and body, but more closely, you will find the law of three everywhere. You go to the eye and you find your eye is composed of three distinct parts; go to your ear and you find that your ear is composed of three distinct parts; go to your body and you find tissue, blood, and nerve.

Take all the chemical elements as you find them and you have the law of three. And then you will find that you come back to this; a spring, a channel, and something that flows through. The principle of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. You have a body; you have a nervous system; and you have life. They are all there. So that this creation is an expression to the last detail, the most minute point, of the threefoldness of God, of the Trinity, of the Godhead. That is the image.

II. The Object of Man.

Now you go to the next thing; the object of His creation. First, as to the nature of his being; then as to the object of his being. We have said, for the glory of God. Put that into one word—Representation. For His glory; representation! Carry that right forward and you will find that the end is this, that eventually the race fulfils its original thought of God in this way; that God is expressed in the universality of His Son Who is eventually, as it were, distributed in the race, that every part of the race partakes vitally of Christ, is corporately one with Christ; not only spiritually, as now, but then literally. There is something more in the corporate than only the spiritual; later the race will be a corporate expression of God's thought in Christ. In effect, while Christ will remain personal and

individual, it will be a universal Christ by the Spirit. The work of the Spirit of God. The Trinity is not going to dissolve, break up in the coming eternity. The original creative thought of God is going to be realised to the full in the ages to come. God is really going as a Trinity to be represented in the race; an origin, a sphere, and a life, a power. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are going to be represented by a race. That is the background of the Word of God. If you have never thought of it like that, if you go back to the Word of God with that comprehensive thought, you will find that the Word of God lives anew. I am not talking about the Deification of humanity, that the race is going to be Deified and absorbed in the Godhead; I am talking about God's thought for man and its ultimate realisation that it shall represent Him and express His image and that will be Christ manifested in every part of that race, in all that universe. He fills all things; He is all and in all.

Why then do we find this trinity in everything in the universe and particularly in man? It is an expression of God's thought along the line of representation; but you cannot take the fallen race now as wholly representing God; neither can you take a redeemed life, a sanctified believer as wholly approximating to God's original thought. There has yet to be a spiritual body before that full thought is realised. It will be a body; a real body. It is necessary to the original thought of God to have a body; it is a part of the trinity; it has got to be maintained. The fall of angels at the beginning with Satan is the fall out of God's thought. Angels have spiritual bodies. They appeared to men from time to time; if the veil were taken away we should see them. What Satan and his angels lost was their spiritual body; they are disembodied, and their one eternal craving is to inhabit something. You never find an occasion when Satan appears in his own body, nor a demon, but they always appropriate some other, and their longing is to inhabit something. They were disinherited of a body. They have lost God's thought eternally; God's thought for a representation of His mind. We come into our spiritual body and we have come to the last part of God's thought for the race; that is, the purpose is consummated. Representation is a very comprehensive term. It takes you right back and right on and shows you what the Lord is doing now in the saints and in the Church.

III. The Destiny of Man.

The third thing; as to the destiny of his being. That has been said to be, according to the Word, conformity to the image of His Son. You see how closely that is related to what we have just said. What is the difference between the image of God in the first case and the image of His Son in the last case?

The Godhead is trinity.

The image of God's Son is purely moral. The other—so far as we are concerned—is constitutional in the sense of creation. But now, conformity; being made like God's Son, is a moral thing. The consummation is moral. And that work of conformity, of course, is a going back over the whole ground of moral ruin and recovering God's thought in a moral universe. So that simply, the difference between the image of God and the image of God's Son, is the difference between the constitution of things inwardly, morally and spiritually. One way by which that is brought about is the putting of the man in order. Instead of his soul having predominance, his spirit does. The Word of God all the way through shows that it is the moral excellencies of the glory of the Lord Jesus that have got to be appreciated, and by faith appropriated, and inwrought by the Holy Ghost. We are working in this threefold sphere all the time.

Now it is said that God came and walked and talked on earth before man fell. This implies a thought and intent of God. It implies the thought of fellowship; identification with what He had created.

The next phase is that of a usurping of God's place in the life of man on this earth, resulting in God withdrawing from the earth in general, as an accursed thing, and confining Himself to that in which the curse has been virtually or actually judged and removed. You see that thought is a fresh door through which we enter another large realm of Scriptural truth—the usurping of God's place in the life of man on this earth (we need not discuss that, it is clear enough), resulting in God withdrawing from the earth in general as an accursed thing (that also we can assent to). That carries with it in itself a very great deal and has a line of its own. The fact that man ignores that truth, as in the case of Cain, seeking to bring to God the best products of this earth, over-looking the fact that the earth at its best was an accursed thing, and believing that he would find acceptance

with God on the ground of the world's best, and finding the door closed.

That is a history which runs right through to our own time. The whole philosophy of humanitarianism is constructed upon that, and is the Devil's lie, and the Devil's negation of Calvary. Then God is seen confining Himself to that in which the curse has been virtually or actually judged and removed. Virtually or actually. Do you get the significance of that? Virtually applies to typology. The thing has been virtually done by the type; actually, later, in the work of the cross of the Lord Jesus. There you get your line running right through. Where is the Name of the Lord? Where can you have fellowship with the Lord? Where can you find the Lord? Where is the Lord at work? Where does the Lord pursue His purpose? Just there where the curse has been virtually or actually judged and removed. So you find an altar represents that place every time. In the passage which we have considered in the conference (Exodus xx.), where the Lord speaks about the building of an altar, He says: "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me.....and if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it." And immediately: ".....in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." Where is the Lord? At the altar that is according to His Own mind, not man's man-made altar; the altar which embodies the thought of God which no tool of man's intellect can carve out. It is the deep mystery of God's thought in the cross of Christ. Where that is is the place where God is, and to that He confines Himself. Therein is the great importance of recognising that fellowship with God is only, but is always upon the ground of the cross. The Table of the Lord is the central thing in spiritual fellowship, in assembly life. Wheresoever two or three are gathered, the Lord is, but they are there on the ground of the cross. The thing that brings the Lord in is that there is a standing upon the ground of Calvary. Abel got through that way, and all who have ever got through have only got through on that ground. God comes in on that ground. Hence, to keep God out of the world, and to maintain his usurping place, the cross in its true spiritual meaning must be countered, nullified.

T. A.-S.

(To be continued.)

In Touch with the Throne

Some Considerations on the Prayer-Life

(Continued).

READING: 1 Kings xviii. 30-32, 36-38, 42-45.
James, v. 17-18.
Ephesians vi. 18.

Prayer as Conflict (continued).

We note that what is true of the enemy's activity along the line of prevention of prayer, is also true along the line of interruption of prayer. I do not only mean that while you are praying you have interruptions, but he has a subtle way of interfering with the continuity of a prayer life. That you may triumphantly secure seasons of prayer for perhaps a week, a fortnight or three weeks, and then that is introduced which breaks into that continuity and you lose it, and you find that after a time a tremendous battle has to be fought to recover that prayer life. And for many of us the history of our prayer life is the history of a spasmodic prayer life that comes in patches, a history fraught with the necessity for every now and then recovering lost ground in prayer through having a set back. The interruption of the enemy. There we have to set a watch. Especially must we set a watch against reactions from intensive periods, slacking off and feeling that now after that strenuous time we can take a spiritual holiday. There is always a very great peril there, as David proved, in a time when kings went out to battle, he went up on to the housetop. And then what the enemy cannot prevent, and what he cannot interrupt, he will seek to destroy afterwards. That is, he will direct his attention to spoiling the prayer life afterwards. We may have a strong time, we may have a series of strong times, and the enemy is always out, if he cannot directly attack our prayer life, to spoil it through another angle which does not seem immediately to be related to it, but by which indirectly we are crippled. Your prayer life may be very strong and good and consistent, and then in some other department of your life something happens, in a relationship somewhere else, and that thing has been touched by the enemy, so that when you come to prayer you find that that thing represents a direct blow at your

prayer life, and you cannot go on until that thing has been dealt with on the outside. We must recognise in what we are saying that all these things are just the enemy's efforts and a highly organised scheme to either directly or indirectly destroy our prayer life, or interfere with it; and we shall find that the focal point of everything is our prayer life.

It is when we come really to pray, in the real business of prayer, that we shall discover exactly where we are in all the relationships of our life. The iniquity which we regard in our hearts may not have directly anything to do with our prayer life, but it indirectly comes as a terrific blow upon us. Things which may be side-shows bear right down upon our prayer life. The enemy is always putting up these things all round to destroy our prayer life. We register everything, the state of things when we come to prayer. We may not recognise for the moment what that thing means, whatever it may be. An interrupted fellowship, a strained relationship, a cross-purposo, a breach somewhere. We may not recognise exactly what it does mean until we come to take up our strong prayer life, and we find that thing has struck at the very vitals of prayer and we cannot get on; that thing is out there and so we are held up here, and then we discover there has been a subtle working on the circumference of our lives striking at the very centre of our prayer life. He would destroy it, so to speak, throw things at it to make it impossible, things from the outside. I think you are able to follow what I mean; experience bears it out.

The Universality of Prayer.

Now we come, shall I say, to widen out a little in this spiritual conflict. These passages which we have read present us with a very comprehensive position. In the chapter in Kings, the account of the battle of Elijah on Carmel is an Old Testament illustration undoubtedly of the New Testament truth, especially in Ephesians 6. These two things go together as type and antitype, as part and

counterpart. What is common to them both is that the sphere of the conflict is the heavenlies. What James says directs the whole of this matter to the heavens, the opening and closing of the heavens, the government of the heavens, the ruling of the heavens; the heavens are the main object in view here, and this conflict relates to the heavens and the heavenlies: "Our wrestling is . . . in the heavenlies," and in a very real way Elijah's conflict was a conflict in the heavens where heavenly forces were involved. That, I think, is patent. That is a common feature in these two things, these two portions of the Word.

Need I say what has been so often said here, that this particular spiritual conflict in which you and I are found when we have come into God's full purpose and testimony in Christ is in its ultimate issue related to the government of the heavens. Who is going to govern in the heavens? There are the principalities and the powers and the world rulers of this darkness and the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenlies, having assumed the place of government; the world rulers; that is a usurped place, that is not the eternal thought of God nor is it the will of God. Christ is Head, and His Church as His members are in the intention of God called to rule in the heavens, to govern in and from the heavens. It is a question of what the heavens are in this matter, whether they are to be Satanic or whether they are to be the expression of the absolute Lordship of the Lord Jesus in and through the Church which is His Body. It is the heavenlies which are involved, the ruling realities, it is there that our conflict is; that is the sphere of this warfare, and our prayer life has to do with that. It is not just and merely to do with the incidents of our lives here on the earth. Oh that the Lord's people would recognise the immensity of this, for so often the generality of our prayer is in the realm of merely trivial things, and a great deal of time is taken up with telling the Lord all about the little things of our ordinary earthly life which, well, they may be important to us and they may count for an earthly life, but which do not touch the ultimate things in God's purpose. We go over an extended tour and take the Lord with us and tell Him all about it; how we went down the street and met so and so and they said so and so, and then we went on and—that sort of thing. (I am not making fun) trivial, earthly things.

There is such a difference in praying down

there and praying against the immense forces of the universe and getting the heavenly things through. The Lord's people want lifting in prayer, where the mighty heavenly eternal and universal are affected, touched and brought through. There is a great need for us to be brought into our heavenly place in the matter of prayer, where real spiritual matters lying back of the other are touched. Very often the Lord never allows our prayers to be effective in the merely earthly details of our lives because He wants us to see that there is something behind these things which matters a great deal more. You pray for a thing to happen, a change to take place, an event to come off, but nothing happens. The Lord seeks, after you have extended yourself as fully as you can on the matter, to show you that there is a spiritual key to that situation, and He cannot do just the earthly thing for you because that would not in any way be to your spiritual increase of intelligence, understanding, knowledge, value; that would only be doing things because you asked Him. He is trying to instruct, to teach you, so that you come into possession of spiritual situations. Well, it is the heavens which are the sphere of this conflict.

The Church—The Occasion of the Conflict.

What is the occasion of it? What is it for? Well in both these passages 1 Kings, xviii, and Ephesians vi, from the context you see that the occasion of the conflict is the Church. The immediate object in view is the Church. In 1 Kings xviii. of course it is the people of God, and the issue of Elijah's prayer was that their hearts should be turned back. The Lord's people are in view, his prayer is for this people, and he brings all the people near and involves them in this issue, associates them with it because it is their issue. In Ephesians we know that the thing which is in view right through the letter is the Church which is His Body, and this is the occasion of the conflict. A battle in the heavenlies in relation to the Church the Body of Christ. There are two things to be said about that. One, that it is not merely a personal matter; it is a collective, a corporate matter. This conflict relates to the whole Body of Christ and the conflict of every individual is a relative conflict, it relates to all the rest of the saints, and there is that spiritual relativity that if one member is defeated the whole Body suffers spiritually

It may not know why, it may not be conscious of its particular suffering, but registered in the Head and the consciousness of the Head, there is a loss to the whole Body when even one member falls into defeat. The conflict is a relative one. And so the enemy seeks to isolate individual members of the Body and bring such pressure upon them as to crush them down, because he knows—not just the value of an isolated member—but the relativity of every member, and it is because of this that there is so much spiritual emphasis from the intelligence of the Holy Spirit upon the necessity for praying for all saints, for the fellowship prayer, the corporate prayer of the Lord's people. That it is loss to Christ, the Head, if there is not that prayer for all saints.

Christ in Glory—The Object of the Conflict.

The other thing to be said about this is that it is not even the Church as the Body which is the ultimate thing, although it is the immediate occasion. We must not put the Church, the Body of Christ, in the preeminent place; it is an occasion but it is not the final thing. The Church, the Body of Christ is His instrument, His vessel for His testimony. His testimony is deposited in the Body, so it was in His resurrection; at Pentecost the testimony of His victory, the testimony of His exaltation, the testimony of His glorification, the testimony of His universal authority in heaven and in earth, He deposited it in the Church at Pentecost. And what the temple was in the Old Testament as the shrine of the glory of God, the Body of Christ is in the New Testament the shrine of His glory, His testimony, His Name, and it is ultimately to strike at that glory, the Name, that exaltation, that the enemy directs his attention at the elect vessel, the Church the Body of Christ. And so it becomes the occasion of the conflict, although not the end of the conflict, but he gets at the Christ, at the Name, at the glory through the Body. We know that that was true in the Old Testament.

When Israel was in a state of spiritual declension the Lord's glory and honour, His Name His Majesty were over-shadowed, beclouded, lost to view. When Israel's spiritual life was in the ascendancy, then Jehovah's testimony was maintained in full strength. In the New Testament, and in our own time in this New Testament age, the enemy's way of dishonouring the Lord is by destroying the

spiritual life of the Lord's people, or breaking up the fellowship of the saints. So the Church, the Body, becomes the occasion of the conflict because of what it is in its Divinely appointed vocation, purpose, object. The enemy's bitter hatred and violent opposition is directed against the corporate life of the Lord's people. By any means he will seek to destroy that, to break up the fellowship of the saints, to set the Lord's people against one another, to introduce disintegrating things—but oh how subtle are his ways in this.

The Strategic Value of Watchfulness.

Here I do feel, beloved, that you and I will have to do what Nehemiah did, and what the Apostle in this very portion exhorts us to do: "Set a watch"; "Watching thereunto," because as you notice in both connections it is the wiles of the Devil which are in view. They are the subtle activities of the enemy, and to set a watch against the wiles of the Devil in practical outworking will at least in one direction mean this, that we make *quite sure* that the rumours that we hear, and the reports that come to us are absolutely trustworthy; we make quite sure! "Prove all things." We can be divided by a rumour, we can be split up by a report. We can be set at variance or apart by a mere insinuation. You have only got in these days when the atmosphere is surcharged with fear and suspicion to hint at the possibility of anybody being unsound to create a spiritual breach of fellowship, and make a gap. If only we set a watch and made sure we would find that a great deal of that was unnecessary, unwarranted and represented a great loss to the Lord Himself and His people, for when we get really to close grips and sift these things we find there is nothing in them; or if there is anything in them, they have an explanation, and we cannot fail in all honesty of heart, to accept the position as being a right one. Very often that is how it works out. But oh, to set a watch against these wiles of the Devil, for his methods for breaking up the corporate life of the Lord's people are beyond our power to enumerate. That is where prayer and watching are necessary. Prayer should result in intelligence about the wiles of the enemy, and watching unto prayer is watching and praying that you might discover in prayer what it is the enemy is after and how he is working.

We do not want to be obsessed with him, to always have our eyes on him, but we must recognise the facts as they are, and the facts are these, that throughout these almost two millenniums the enemy has unceasingly made it his great business to destroy the fellowship of the people of God. Is that true? Is that history? If it is true what does it signify? That you can never have something that really in any measure represents what is precious to the Lord, of a spiritual character, as embodying some precious element of His testimony, you can never have it but what it is the object of such Satanic malignity and cunning, with the one intention of splitting that, breaking that up, getting there schism and division somehow by truth or by lies. That is history, and surely it gives the whole game away for him, that a Church in fellowship, a Body rightly adjusted and related, moving together in the will of God is the greatest menace to the heavenly rule of principalities and powers that there is in the universe. To that we should work and direct our attention. Let us lay ourselves out for spiritual fellowship. That does not mean compromising with things which are contrary to the Word of God, that must not mean coming down from any spiritual position to which the Lord has, through cost, brought us. We must be where Nehemiah was when they said: "Come down and let us discuss this matter, confer about this." Nehemiah said: "I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down." There must be no coming down to discuss things that are beyond the point of discussion as to spiritual necessities, etc. But beloved, any spiritual position arrived at through cost and the deep in-working of the cross, must only be held in relation to all the saints, must not be held out of relation to the saints, to make of such as have it and hold it something apart from the rest. No! Whatever may be the difference of spiritual position so far as degree is concerned, fellowship with all saints must be striven after and maintained as far as possible, and reached out for. I do want to urge that upon you more and more, as it is urged upon my own heart, because the Lord's end in giving light and truth may be defeated if the reception of it and the holding of it constitutes those who have it something apart from the rest of the saints. He has given it for the Body; if it is held apart, then the end for which He gave it has been missed. Lay that to heart

very definitely. So then, the occasion of the conflict is the Church by reason of its heavenly calling and vocation. This is no personal thing, this is no local thing, this is universal. The Body of Christ is a universal reality.

The Basis of Victory.

Just a word or two with regard to the basis of victory in this conflict. The basis of victory here in 1 Kings, xviii. was undoubtedly the altar. In Ephesians it is the same. Before you reach your position in the heavenlies for heavenly conflict and triumph, you have to pass from the earlier chapters of Ephesians and recognise that a death has taken place, an altar was there, and that having died you have been quickened and raised together. There are all the features of the cross, the altar, implied at the beginning of the letter to the Ephesians, so that the basis of victory in the representation and in that represented is the cross, the altar. He took twelve stones and the constitution of the altar with twelve stones immediately brings in relation to the altar the administrative feature. Twelve is the number of administration. The altar comprised of twelve stones becomes the administrative instrument in this conflict in the hands of God, the governmental principle. The government is in the cross and by the cross, for by His cross He triumphed, in His cross He stripped off principalities and powers and made a show of them openly. I wonder if while you were reading those fragments of 1 Kings, xviii. you were struck with the terms: ". . . according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name." What is that? Well, Israel—a prince with God. Sons of a Prince with God represented in the altar, in the cross.

It symbolically speaks to us very clearly of that basis of our coming into our Prince, governmental position in Christ, The Prince with God. He is a greater than Israel, He is The Prince with God; we are sons in Him and partake of His princeliness. It brings us up into a place of governmental authority in Christ in the heavenlies, but it is all bound up with the altar, bound up with the cross. The cross is the basis of victory, and that is borne out again by not only the testimony of heaven, the Word of God, but by the testimony of hell. Satan is an unwonted, unwilling—I wonder sometimes whether he is an unconscious—

witness to the truth in this way, for it is perfectly clear that he hated the cross, that he tried in the first place to keep the Lord Jesus from it: ". . . this shall not be unto thee. But He turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan." This is Satan trying to keep Him from the cross. Satan, having failed to keep him from it, tried to bring Him off the cross: "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." Subtle suggestions. ". . . let him now come down from the cross and we will believe him." That was what He had come for, to be believed on in the world. But no, the second method of the enemy did not succeed.

Having failed along those lines, and the cross having been accomplished in spite of him, he will seek now to change, to alter the preaching of the cross and to make it of non-effect. He will get people to preach it and in their very preaching of it make it void. Extraordinarily subtle that. It is as well to recognise how far the enemy will go. He will promote the preaching of the cross, and in so doing the cross preached by his instigation, under his influence, makes that very cross non-effective. The Apostle tells us that in his first letter to the Corinthians. That the cross preached in the wisdom of men makes it of non-effect, makes it void. Men preaching the cross in their wisdom are simply taking the true meaning and power out of the cross. Oh yes, you hear plenty about the way of the cross, but it is not His way of the cross. The very power of the cross is in its registration against the enemy and all his works, sin as a principle, and evil as a state, a nature. The power of the cross is taken out when you speak about the heroics of the cross, and speak about the way of the cross as—well any man who denies himself and lays down his life for his country is in the same category as Jesus Christ Who, after all, only laid down his life as any British soldier has done. That is the cross in modernism.

Another thing which he seeks to do in relation to the cross is to keep Christians in ignorance of its full meaning. It is a great day for the Lord and a terrible day for the enemy when a Christian breaks through into the revelation of the full meaning of Calvary. That day marks a new bit of history in the realm of conflict. You may meet a certain kind of opposition on the ground of the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus, but believe

me you will meet ten times more when you come on to the ground of the representative work of the Lord Jesus, when you take up your place in identification with Christ in death, burial, resurrection, in a spiritual way. Then begins a new history of conflict, battle, of Satanic antagonism, but you have entered into a new realm, a new place, now powers at your command. The enemy has lost his ground. Multitudes believe in the substitutionary work and rejoice in it, but they are still going on in the energy of the natural man, even as Christians. They do not represent a menace to the enemy in those higher ranges. But when the cross has been so accepted and planted in our lives that the natural life is set aside: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me," then there is a new realm of meaning to the Lord, and meaning to the enemy, and therefore a new realm of conflict. The enemy is out to keep that side of the cross from Christians, and we have said it before and it is true, that you meet your opposition on that line very often from Christians more than from any others. It is a strange thing. Immediately you go on with the Lord into all the fulness of the meaning of Calvary, you find your chief difficulty in the realm of Christians, "official" Christians as a rule. Leaders will not have it, and you find your way is made infinitely more difficult. It is true the enemy does hate the fulness of the cross and by any means he will seek to destroy its value for believers, to hide its meaning from them, if possible to get them to forsake the position and come down from it, or to persuade them not to accept it. Well, that is his testimony to its value surely. He is a witness to its meaning. It is, then, the basis of victory, and he knows it very well.

I think I am not going further than that now. We must take that, think about that, apply that, but remember this grand conclusive thing, that Satan is a defeated foe for all who are truly one with the cross of the Lord Jesus; because Calvary does represent his defeat, and as we are planted into the death of Christ, with Him we stand in that defeat of the enemy, in that victory of the Lord Jesus; and for us, however he may rage, storm, fight, afflict, press, worry, harass, the fact remains for those who are one with Christ in His cross, Satan is a defeated foe.

T. A.-S.

Victory over and Deliverance from this Present Evil World

READING : Colossians ii. 20-23 ; iii. 1-3.

"THE doctrines of men." Let that clause govern the other part of the two previous verses. Verse 3 of chapter iii. stands over against the first part of verse 20 of chapter ii. : "Why, as though living in the world....." That does not mean just having your location in the world ; it means something more than that. Over against that : "Your life is hid with Christ in God." Your life is not in the world, your life is in Christ.

Those verses form the very best foundation we could have for the meditation to which we are being led. We shall gather up certain things which we find running through the whole of the Scriptures, and what we find throughout the Scriptures is, for our present purpose, an eight-fold thing.

1. An Abiding Antagonism and Clash between God and this World

I think that needs very little enlarging upon for the moment. Anyone who has any grasp of the Scriptures will be able instantly to recognise that that is so. From Cain—the man of the earth—right on through the whole of the Scriptures, you are brought to recognise that abiding antagonism and clash between God and this world.

2. An Abiding Expression of that Antagonism between that which is Spiritually Related to God and this World

Anyone, any company, or anything spiritually related to God is found to be in the expression of that antagonism and that clash between God and this world, and that very relationship to God spiritually involves in the clash, involves in the antagonism.

3. A New Constitutional Affinity with this World is Seen to be in Man's Nature,

gravitating toward the world, like the point of the compass to the magnetic North. There is that which is in the very nature of man now as fallen which has an affinity with this world,

and gravitates towards it, and the Scriptures reveal that that gravitation is of an inveterate character.

May I stay to make a parenthesis? No one is thinking that when I use the word "world" I am just meaning the geographical sphere. You understand that the word "world" is a very much bigger word as we use it spiritually than this geographical sphere. We use that word in its fullest meaning—an order of things here separated from God, organised and controlled by the evil one. That is the full meaning of "kosmos."

4. A Spiritual System of Intelligence

as revealed by the Scriptures to be bent with all its might upon maintaining that affinity, and that relationship between man and this world.

5. Spiritual Death is the Law which Governs that Relationship,

and is the mainstay and master-hold of that system of spiritual intelligences. Let me repeat that : spiritual death is the law which governs that relationship, the relationship between fallen man and this world ; and spiritual death is the mainstay and master-hold of those spiritual intelligences which are out to maintain that relationship between fallen man and this world.

6. To Sever that Bond, to Destroy that Affinity, to Introduce a Counter Law of Gravitation, is the Essence of the Work of Christ

If you get that you get the heart of everything. That will explain everything. The work of the Lord Jesus in coming from heaven and fulfilling His mission here is, in its very essence, the severance of the bondage of man to this world, the destroying of fallen man's affinity therewith, and the introducing into man of another law, which counters man's gravitation toward this fallen world ; another law of gravitation, which is not world-ward spiritually.

7. This Severance, this Introduction of the New Spiritual Law of Heavenly Gravitation, is always Marked by the most Intense Conflict at Every Stage and Point

It is always fraught with deep spiritual suffering. You will never emancipate a people spiritually from this world only by intense conflict and through deep suffering.

8. The Method is that of Going into Death in Order to Destroy Death, and being in the World in Order to Overcome the World

That is an outline, and if you were able to sit down with that prayerfully I am sure you would see that you have touched something which is of primary importance. Within the range of that everything with which you and I as the Lord's children have to do is gathered up.

Now I am going on to take up one point. The work of Christ, the Cross in the work of Christ, and the purpose of His coming. That again is gathered up into eight things.

The Effect of Christ's Presence

Firstly. To once and for all register in an absolute and pre-eminent way that collision, that mutual antagonism between God and this world. Christ's coming into this world, and Christ's work in this world in a way unparalleled, unprecedented, registered, made manifest, dragged out into the light, threw up into clear relief that fact, that there is a mutual antagonism between God and this world. You can trace it through the Old Testament. It is quite clear there, but it is more or less local or localised in the Old Testament. When you come to the Lord Jesus coming into this world you have the universal factor, a universal Person set down in the midst of the universe, and universal forces focussed upon Him. And because of Who He is, because God is there in Christ, because this is no mere man, as in the case of the Old Testament, because this is "God with us"; you find that from the very commencement of His career, His course, His time here on the earth, there broke out that smouldering volcano of antagonism; first through Herod, and then by another, and another, and another means, until in the end it seems that everything has conspired and converged to cast Him out of this world, as having no place in it, as being a menace to it.

Demons betrayed secrets, the full explanation of which is not in the Word of God: "Art Thou come to destroy us before our time?"

I know Thee Who Thou art, the Holy One of God": betraying deep mysteries concerning the destiny and the doom of that spiritual world, that world of spiritual intelligences. Men and demons worked together, and this hate showed itself. What a great deal He had to say Himself about it, and to what lengths He carried it, into what realms; right into the heart of Judaism and its spiritual, its religious citadel, the Scribes and the Pharisees. "Ye are of your father the devil"; "the works of your father ye do"; "Ye are from beneath; I am from above"; "If ye had known the Father ye would have known Me."

You see, He carried it right there into the highest realm of religious life as this world knew it; and finding there this deep-rooted antagonism, and dragging it out, making it impossible for that thing to go on hidden, until at last, stung by His presence, it broke loose and from that realm came His doom, so far as His course here on the earth was concerned as a man. Oh yes! everywhere this universal focal point; God in Christ making manifest as never before—not locally but universally, not merely on the earth, but in that spiritual realm—that there is a clash, a deep-seated and terrible clash between God and this world. And His coming was for that purpose. It is important for us to realise that it was necessary to expose that thing. It was essential that that thing should be dragged out, but, oh that the people of God had sufficiently recognised and grasped and apprehended this thing.

Oh! beloved, you and I, before we are through, will see the utter impossibility of that contradiction called "a worldly Christian," "a worldly Church." If we do not see that now, well, the Lord help us! The very coming of the Lord Jesus into this world was, firstly, to manifest, as had never been manifested before in a universal way, that there is, right at the very heart of things spiritually, an antagonism between God and this world; and that world can never be reconciled to God. You have to use the word "world" in another sense when speaking of reconciling the world; that is a more limited usage of the word, but that world of which we are speaking is beyond reconciliation. We shall see that as we go on.

Secondly. His coming was, while to register in an absolute and pre-eminent way that mutual antagonism, to rescue an instrument from this world, to secure an instrument in this world for this age, embodying that

antagonism. Do you get the force of that? Did Christ come, first of all, to make the antagonism absolutely apparent? Yes! Then equally He came to secure an instrument in this world, for this age, which would embody that antagonism. That is, the instrument which Christ secures in this age, in this world, is going to be an age expression of the antagonism between God and this world. That means that if you and I are a part of God's instrument in this world, resultant from the work of the Lord Jesus in His Cross, you and I are going to be the embodiment of that antagonism; that is, there is going to be something about us which can have no compromise with this world, and which for ever stands in a position similar to that which the Lord Jesus occupies in relation to this world in the spiritual antagonism. And that instrument is going to feel the antagonism which He met, and is going to be conscious that this place, this world, is by no means a place of rest and abiding. "In the world ye shall have tribulation....." To get rid of that is to undo the work of the Lord Jesus; to try and get popularity in this world for Christianity, to escape the world's bitterest antagonism, is to counter all that the Lord Jesus came to do.

Now that is a terrific thing to say, but it is true. I made a note in my Testament from Martin Luther. Martin Luther had a pictorial way, as you know, of presenting truth, and he did it both for the devil and for the Lord. Martin Luther, speaking about Matthew v. 10-12 pictures the disciples of the Lord, the believers, arriving at the gates of heaven and being met there by the Lord Himself; and one of the questions which He asks each one who arrives, with which He interrogates every professed disciple is this:

"Wert thou an abomination to the whole world, as I and Mine have been from the foundation of the world?"

Well, the Lord's coming was to secure an instrument in this world for the age which would embody that mutual antagonism between God and this world. You see your calling, brethren. Does that explain something? I think it explains a lot. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews has a way of putting it: "Of whom the world was not worthy." That is his verdict on the whole matter.

Thirdly. His coming was to destroy for such that is, such instrument), that law of death. Note: firstly, to bring out into the clear light,

which He Himself was, the reality, the depth of that mutual antagonism between God and the world. Secondly, to take out of the world a people for Himself, yet to be in the world for the age as a representation of that antagonism. Then, thirdly, to destroy for such that law, that mainstay, that master-hold of the powers of evil, to destroy him that had the power of death and to deliver them; to destroy the power of death for His own. He came to do that. It would be impossible for us to live here on God's side and on God's behalf, to meet all that antagonism of hell to God, unless Christ had accomplished the destroying of that master-hold of the devil—spiritual death.

Beloved, you and I are becoming more and more conscious, are we not—many of us are—that the only possibility of staying in this world and on the earth is by the life which is triumphant over death, and unless we know more of that, this place is going to be impossible spiritually. Is that not true? It is! There is a real spiritual world, with which we are in touch, but which we so dimly understand. What is the spiritual experience of those who are really going on with God? It is, on the one hand, of an intensified consciousness of death, and, on the other hand, a growing emphasis on the power of His resurrection. Is that true? I do not think there is any doubt about it. And this is not something which touches merely the spiritually aged and fully matured. I believe that the Lord would teach the younger folk this thing; those of you who would, perhaps, think that you are not old enough to understand and enter into these great spiritualities.

I believe the Lord would teach you that you can know deliverance and victory in the realm of death by coming into a full apprehension of Him as your life, and, while the phraseology, the terminology may be difficult for you, the experience may be as clear and as simple as anything could be. The fact that those who are children of God—whether mature or immature—are children of God brings them into experiences which they might never have if they were not the Lord's children. The Lord does not save from going into those experiences, but in them draws out to Himself by a strong taking hold, when something very critical is threatened, and then Himself comes in, and it is something which is above what man can do, and they have learned their lesson. They have discovered it is possible to live in this world,

where death reigns, and to know victory in Christ by taking hold of Him as their life. He came that for His own He might destroy that law of death by which the god of this world, the prince of this world, holds in bondage his own, and by which he operates against the saints to try and bring them back into bondage, the bondage of death.

Fourthly. His coming was to set up in His instrument, redeemed from the world, that counter-law of a heavenly life, to introduce something else into their constitution. The constitutional law of the unredeemed from the world, of those who are of this world, is bondage to the world. They see nothing beyond the horizon of this world, and all the time the world holds them and carries them on. The tides of worldliness carry this world on, and to try and stem those tides is an impossible thing until something has happened by which there comes about the realisation of this: "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world"; the introduction of that which is an adequate countering to the mighty gravitating affinity in man's nature toward the world. He came to set that up in His own, and here that big difference is recognised, which has been so often pointed out, that if you really do become begotten of God, born from above, there is put into you the life of God. You do not have to give up the world, there is not a struggle to break with this and that and something else, and you never have to sit down and say, I suppose now I am a Christian I have got to give up this and that, and I must not go here and I must not go there. You never have that sort of thing at all; you find a counter-gravitation, you find that something else has come in which has made that kind of gravitation comparatively weak; now your heart is in other directions, drawn to other things. You may test your spiritual life by that.

Now, young people, let me say a word to you. Perhaps sometime in your superficial thinking and imagining you think the world has a better time than you do, and that you would like to have a little more of what the world has. I put it to you, make up your mind to go and have it. If you are a true child of God, start off, and see how far down the road you get. You will not get there; you will turn round and come back. What is the matter with you? Well, something has happened in spite of your thinking and your imagining and those superficial feelings—many of them perhaps the

fruit of the severe time which you have because of spiritual antagonism. In spite of all that you cannot go very far in that way. You know the parable of the squirrel; you know that the gravitation is upward. Although you might just jump down to get a nut, it is not your place. The Lord came to do that, and it is the strategy of the Lord never to say that you must not go there and you must not do this. He puts something into you—a counter-gravitation; a mighty work, which the Lord has accomplished.

Fifthly. To gather out from the world spiritually a people for His coming Kingdom; not to take them away from the world. That would be very nice, but He would take them out from the world spiritually, so that He has here in the world His Kingdom spiritually represented by them. And He is gathering out from the nations spiritually now; a spiritual out-gathering, detachment, a people for that coming Kingdom. He came to do that, and He has made it perfectly clear that His Kingdom is not of this world, that His Kingdom is not of things seen and handled. "I would have you know, brethren," said the apostle, "that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom." His Kingdom is now a spiritual thing in the hearts of those who have been taken out of the kingdom of darkness and translated into the Kingdom of the Son of His love. That is a thing already done. A day will come when He will translate them from this world while He deals with the rest, and purges this world and makes it fit for the habitation of saints, without any antagonism. He came to do that. He is doing it. We know it in our own hearts. That is exactly what has happened with us. We are not of the world. Our life "is hid with Christ in God." We look for a Saviour.

Sixthly. The whole course of spiritual experience is progressive detachment from the world and attachment to Christ. It is a course of spiritual history. It is a progressive thing; not that in the very commencement of our spiritual life we were not severed from the world; we were fundamentally and originally separated from the world, but you and I know quite well our experience has been all in the direction of this world becoming less and less and less, and Christ becoming more and more and more. "Whom, having not seen, we love." "Where our treasure is, there our heart is also." We know something of the

words which we have read: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is....." "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." We know that that is going on in us.

Seventhly. The death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit are the basic factors in this work of Christ. I am only going to mention that, because they will occupy us a good deal more later. Let me repeat it. The death, the resurrection, the ascension of Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit are *the* factors, the basic factors, in this work of the Lord. His death is basic, and we are told that His death is to be entered into by us in faith. "Ye died....." That means we were crucified to the world and the world unto us in Christ. The resurrection of Christ is a basic factor in this work. It means we stand on resurrection ground, and are outside of the world. He never appeared personally to the world again after His death. He will one day, but He has not done yet. So far as this age is concerned He is not on that level at all. He is outside of the world, and for the ago all His own, standing with Him in resurrection, are there spiritually. His ascension means that everything now for this age for His own is heaven-ward and not of this world. The anointing of the Holy Spirit will lead us progressively, ever more and more, away from the world to Christ, revealing His things. These are the basic factors in this great work which He has come to do.

Eighthly. The Church is called to be the collective embodiment of all that truth. The Church is called to be the collective—the corporate, if you like—embodiment of that full, absolute antagonism between God and the world. I realise that is a tremendous thing to say in the face of what is called the Church, in the face of what we know to be associated with what is called the Church. One hesitates in the almost hopeless situation that immediately confronts you when you raise the standard like that. Are we to conclude that what is called the Church is not the Church? At any rate, let us challenge ourselves on that. We can do no more than proclaim the truth and seek that it shall be realised in ourselves. It is not for us to go out and denounce or to judge, we must proclaim; but, oh! beloved, it does raise some very serious questions for many of the Lord's people; to be in any way entangled with that thing, that awful thing spiritually, against

which God as in Christ has been revealed to be so utterly set; to be entangled in that through religion, through Christianity, through what is called the Church! You know quite well if you stand on that ground you will meet the antagonism of the scribes and pharisees. Do not misunderstand me in the using of those words; I only mean in the official religious realm.

The Church is called to be the corporate expression of that antagonism, of that impact, by which Christ has destroyed the power of death, and living in the power of His resurrection. The Church is called to reveal in itself that it is not of this world, and that it is moving steadily further and further away from the world, because Christ is becoming more and more its life;—to be the embodiment of all that is meant by the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the ascension of Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. There is no doubt but that that is how it was at the beginning. Are we to say that that is gone for ever, that that can never be? No, we cannot say that. We may have to come within a very limited realm, but I verily believe that when the Lord comes, and there is that blessed movement toward Himself of the Overcomers, He will have in them the embodiment of all that. They will represent all that.

For myself I cannot see translation possible on any other ground. Is the Lord going to translate this world to heaven? Never! If you are spiritually bound up with it—when I say spiritually, I mean in heart bound up with it, a heart link—I do not know what will happen. It seems to me to be so distinctly contradictory to the law of Christ's work. The work of the Lord Jesus marks the utter detachment from this world, and the consummation is simply the crown of that which has already taken place spiritually, the seal upon what has been done spiritually. That is how I see it, but I know the many difficulties that come up there.

Now let us close, so far as this broad survey is concerned, by just putting our finger upon one or two points. Do you see now why there must be no personal interests on the part of the people of God? What are personal interests? They are worldly in essence, in nature. It is what Paul spoke of when he said: "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." That personal element runs out into so many directions, and is so imperceptible

in many things, that only the Lord can bring it to light and destroy it. Do you see, on the face of it, why there must be no personal interest. that there must be such an utterness of abandonment to the Lord's interests, and that anything else than that is a spiritual link with this world? The enemy can come in and destroy your testimony if you have any personal interests, even in the work of the Lord. Deeper than we recognise there are those things which represent our like and our dislike, our want and our not want, our going to have and our not going to have; all of which give rise to suspicion of others, and then suspicion moves silently and imperceptibly on to jealousy, and jealousy on to a breakdown in fellowship, a strain. Tracked right down to its source it was some personal element, wanting it as we want it, wanting it ourselves, not the utter emptying of self; and in the long run, sooner or later, the enemy has made an awful havoc because there was his link. Do you now see why?

When the Lord really gets a complete mastery of the life, He works to have everything carried on to resurrection ground. That is, He takes everything through a death and a death, where we lose it, and then in a deep crisis, in which we are brought to the point of in heart letting that go to God; not reproaching God, not rebelling against God, not refusing to accept God's way, but where we come to the place where our heart is one with the heart of God over that matter, then so often the Lord gives that back; but it has come back in a new realm. It has gone through death and it comes back by resurrection, and there is something in it now which is not of this world. It is not a time thing, it is not merely an earthly thing, it is not merely a natural thing; there is something about it now which has God in it. It is on resurrection ground, and the world factor in that has been destroyed. Now that is a true spiritual law. Do you see why the Lord must have it that way?

Let me put that in another way. This is why everything must be brought through to the place where it is wholly for God. Everything has got to be wholly for God. The apostle had something to say about the shortness of the time, and those who had wives being as those who had none. Do you think he meant that literally? Ignore your domestic responsibilities; ignore something which was of God; ride rough shod over it for what you call spiritual things? Never! A thousand times,

never! What the apostle meant was this: you have got to hold everything in the light of God's interests, and if you are holding domestic relationships, or anything else here on this earth, on a natural level, where they are for yourself, for time, and for what they mean to you merely in this life—and that is the range of things—well, that is wrong. Everything has got to be held for God, in the light of the Lord's interests. Why? To have that link with this world and the natural life absolutely destroyed, so that the power of spiritual death cannot operate there. Do you not know, beloved, when you as a believer, as a spiritual person, or I, touch things naturally we touch spiritual death? Have you no experience of that? The power triumphant over death is in having everything wholly for the Lord and not for ourselves, not for this world, not for this life. Everything has got to be held for the Lord.

It is so easy to sing hymns of consecration. We can sing about being all for the Lord, and having everything for the Lord, and we can answer to such challenges, but now let us face it. Are we holding everything for the Lord? Have we got something which, if we would only let that go, would in some other life give the Lord larger interests? Are we taking this attitude: now, while this thing means much to me, while in a natural way I have deep sentimental ties with this, and it is not easy to let things go; nevertheless, if the Lord is going to get more by my letting go, giving up, well, that is the thing that counts, that is the thing that matters. That is holding things for the Lord. Are we holding things for the Lord? If we are holding things for ourselves, if we are holding things in this life before those heavenly interests of the Lord we are opening the door to spiritual death. We cannot grow spiritually, we become earth-bound, our spiritual progress is delayed, if not utterly arrested. Everything must be carried over on to resurrection ground, and be wholly for the Lord, wholly for heaven. "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." There is so much bound up with this.

Now do you understand the meaning of suffering? I ask you, those of you who have suffered as the Lord's children, what has been the effect of your suffering; that is, inasmuch as you have not been persistently rebellions and hard because of the suffering, but inasmuch as you have sought to be one with the Lord in your suffering, what has been the effect of it?

Answer me: has it been to make this world much less and the Lord much more, the things of heaven much more? Is that not true? This world has lost its grip, perhaps its charm, its hold. The things which are above have become far more to you through your suffering. Well do you see the meaning of suffering; what the Lord is doing? Why does the Lord empty us out? Why does He pour us out to the last drop? Just so that He can pour in, that is all. Just so that heavenly things may take the place of natural, earthly things. The Lord permits His people to suffer in order that that gravitation world-ward might be weakened, and that that power of death might be destroyed; that they may become a heavenly people, living by a life which is His own life, and which it takes full spiritual intelligences to appreciate.

I mean this: here are two possible courses; the Lord to come in in such a mighty fulness of His own life as the risen Lord, that the individual should never for one moment give the slightest hint that they know anything about death; be always so triumphantly aglow, throbbing with vitality, as though death had never existed for them at all. That is one possibility, or one alternative. What do you suppose would be the reaction to that? I think I can tell you. The natural man would simply say: What a marvellous constitution that man has! Why, if I had digestive organs like him it would be heaven on earth! What a tremendous capacity the man has! They talk about the man, put that sort of thing down to nature. There is the alternative to that. Paul, moving about with infirmity, speaking about knowing weakness, despairing of life. Surely that is not to the glory of God—despairing of life! All this talk about weakness and infirmity and despairing of life! Why, where is the resurrection in that? Where is Christ triumphant over death in all that? Spiritual intelligences know! They know quite well that if that man were left alone without God he would be dead in five minutes, that he really ought to have been dead a score of times. If hell could have had its way he would have been finished up long ago, but hell has not had its way. All the powers of death have not had their way, and the man has come to the time when he is able to say: "I have finished the course." No broken column there; no life cut short by the devil there, much as he has tried; no purpose frustrated by hell there. "I have finished.....!" I have not stopped half way or three quarters

of the way; I have finished! Can you see the tremendous implication of that? The background over against which it is set?

That is the testimony of Christ triumphant, but you cannot recognise that with the human mind; you need a full spiritual intelligence to grasp that. It is only principalities and powers who are able adequately to register the power of His resurrection. They recognise it, they know. So the Church goes on in suffering, in weakness, in infirmity, "in deaths oft"; but the Church will finish its course, the issue will be that the full measure of that law of death operating in this world was taken by Christ in His Church and triumphed over. He is doing something through our weakness. We do not see it, we do not feel it, we very often forget all about it in the presence of the suffering, but He is doing something; that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies should be displayed this manifold wisdom of God. That is the meaning of suffering; the raising of a heavenly testimony: getting us away from the world, and making us live by a life which is hid with Christ in God.

Do you see the utter impossibility of being all the Lord's and having any kind of heart association with this world? That ought to come home to us in a new way. T. A.-S.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

The September Conference at Honor Oak

will be on the 8th and **NOT** the 1st,
commencing at 7 p.m., and **NOT** at
3.30 p.m. continuing over the 9th.

The Prayer Supplement

It will be known to many of our readers that originally we included items of news as to ministrics, etc., in the main body of the WITNESS AND TESTIMONY. Later we separated this and inserted a Prayer Supplement, our object being that the paper itself should be as entirely occupied with the message as possible, and all other matters should be apart. We have now ceased to include the "Supplement" in every copy, and are issuing an occasional prayer letter. This will, however, be sent only to those who are known to be wholeheartedly in sympathy with this ministry, and will share it by prayer cooperation, and not only read of it with interest. Any friends who can go this far can receive the prayer letter by intimating the desire to the Editor.

New Literature

1. Reprint from WITNESS AND TESTIMONY, 'Christ in Heaven and Christ Within.' Price 1d.
2. 'Companion to John's Gospel.' A chapter by chapter spiritual interpretation. Price 3d.
3. 'The Cross and the Life in Christ.' Diagrams of the Letters of Paul for simple Bible Study. Price 6d.

Bible Study Course

For the benefit of readers who may not be aware of it, we give a fresh intimation of the existence of our Bible Study Course. There are now some 500 who have enrolled, and we have many letters saying how profitable the studies are proving to the writers. We suggest

that the greatest profit is to be obtained by circles being formed, or more than one studying together if possible. The original announcement was as follows:—

The object of this Bible Study Course is to seek to provide a means whereby a foundation may be laid for such as have not had a grounding in the Scriptures, and who are conscious of their need of such. It is, however, not our aim to just make possible a knowledge of the letter of the Word, that is, the mere content of the book of the Bible, but to lead to a spiritual understanding, so that heart as well as mind may be instructed and enlightened. The method is to provide a line for the gathering of relevant material, and to conclude from the Word of God in general what it spiritually implies or indicates. The Word of God is its own teacher, but our object is to direct study along lines which will bring about this effect. Within this compass several different lines are followed in the different papers comprising the quarterly sets.

1. You enrol by sending your name and address (whether Mr., Mrs., Miss, etc.) to—
Mr. T. Austin-Sparks,
Heathfield,
Kilcreggan,
Dumbartonshire, Scotland.
2. There is a minimum charge of one shilling per quarter to cover postages, printing, etc.
3. There is no correspondence; neither are there any examinations.

Although we cannot take up correspondence in connection with the studies, we shall be glad to hear from time to time how you are getting on, and whether you find your studies helpful. Should you decide to discontinue please let us know.

TO ALL OUR BELOVED
FELLOW MEMBERS OF CHRIST
WE SEND AS OUR PERSONAL
WORD OF GREETING

PSALM TWENTY.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY.

*"... The Heavens Opened, and The Son of Man
Standing at The Right Hand of God" Acts 7. 56.*

"The Testimony of Jesus." Rev. 1. 9.

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In Touch with the Throne

Some Considerations on the Prayer-Life

(Continued.)

READINGS: Judges vii. 1-7.
Samuel xiii. 2-7., 19-23.
Ephesians vi. 17, 18.

As we come to the end of our meditations on prayer, there are just one or two further things needing to be said. These are largely connected with the passages of Scripture above.

Gathering up the content of chapters xiii and xiv of the First Book of Samuel, the situation is just this: Saul, who officially represents the people, is in a state where faith in God is almost a minus quantity. The result is the domination of fear, trembling is everywhere, and there is a tragic absence of cohesion, oneness. The enemy is in the ascendent. The people are unable to do anything because by a strategic move of the enemy all the weapons of war have been removed, and the forges have been destroyed. In the midst of such a situation there is one man at least who has faith in God, and whose faith sets him in positive opposition to the prevailing conditions. Jonathan still believes profoundly in God, and therefore—not only denounces the existing state of things—repudiates it by setting himself positively and actively against it. Thus he becomes God's small instrument for the overthrow of the enemy's power in a day of almost universal dejection. He raises a testimony in the midst of very general spiritual weakness and apprehension. Such instances are found scattered through the Scriptures, and through the history of the Church since Bible times. There are two things which are significant and especially to be taken notice of in this story. One is

The Strategy of the Enemy.

This strategy meant that the Lord's people were virtually defeated before there was any battle. Their weapons had been confiscated and the means for producing them had been removed and destroyed.

That was a wiley move, truly one of the master wiles of the enemy. Can we not see that in this incident in the literal history of

God's people there is an indication of how the enemy of God's testimony is always trying to work; and is not this the very thing which obtains very largely today? We have seen in our earlier meditation that the weapons of the people of God are primarily prayer and the Word. Bringing that back to this special connection it at once becomes so clear that a master-stroke of the enemy is to forestall us in that twofold direction. It is of no small importance to us to remember that our adversary does not wait until the hour of battle arrives in order to set in motion his forces, but is always at work well ahead in anticipation. It would be as fatal to him as it is to us to do otherwise. So often we have found that when we have actually come to deal with a situation we are unequipped, for the essential equipment has been taken from us in advance. In that hour of emergency there is no facility for getting equipment, and we learn a bitter lesson by helplessness in a moment of great need or opportunity. The demand is that we should maintain a steady and strong life of prayer and in the Word when there is no particular call or demand. Thus shall we be on the spot spiritually equipped when special need arises.

This unequipped condition represents spiritual dishonour and loss of position before God. Have you been struck with the change of title given to the Lord's people in these chapters?

Sometimes they are called "the Hebrews," sometimes "Israel"; and if you look closely at it you will find that the Spirit of the Lord calls them Hebrews when they are on the side of the Philistines, and they are Israel when they are not. They lose the dignity of that name "Israel"—a prince with God—when they are on the side of the Philistines. When they are not on that side, the Lord—even though they may be in a state of weakness, and far short of what He would have them be—in grace still calls them Israel. But the Philistines always called them Hebrews, and the Lord allows the title to stand when they are in Philistine hands. Their dignity has gone as "a prince with God."

What is it that makes us princes with God? It is that prayer-life and that life in the Word. We lose our dignity, our position, our ascendancy if the enemy robs us of our prayer-life and our life in the Word. Is not that true to experience? Of course it is! Probably we were taught this when we were first saved, but, in that larger realm of spiritual conflict and warfare where the whole testimony of the Lord is involved, that advanced position of the people of God, where you get away from the earthlies as Christians, into the heavenlies, as members of Christ's Body, there is a special, a particular activity and determination of the enemy that you shall not pray, and that you shall not get to God's Word. Forestalling, preventing, frustrating, destroying that prayer-life and that life in the Word, he will very soon demoralise the Church and its members spiritually and rob them of their ascendancy.

May the Lord again bring to our hearts the stress and emphasis of the necessity for standing against the wiles of the Devil. For the wiles of the Devil are directed not only to oppose the prayer-life that we have, but to prevent us from having a prayer-life and a life in God's Word more than we have. Do suffer this repetition, I am certain that it is needed. You realise that if the enemy can have his way you will not have a prayer-life. He will put anything and everything conceivable, natural and supernatural, in the way of prayer to prevent it, and in the way of your life in God's Word. These are the two mighty weapons of our warfare. There needs to be that aliveness and awakensness to his devices which puts us also in the place of being able to forestall. Said the Apostle: "We are not ignorant of his devices," and to be aware of what the enemy is out to do is half the battle. Oh! things come along so often to hinder prayer and life in the Word, and they come along in such a natural way, they come along in such unassuming or unpretentious ways, they seem to be such natural things, just the sort of things that would naturally happen and we expect them as the natural and, perhaps, to be expected things of our life, but when we have gone on a few weeks we have found that our prayer-life has gone. How did it go? The enemy did not make a demonstration, did not come in some obvious way and announce that he was going to destroy our prayer-life with this and that, he did not label his means, but it has just happened.

Watching unto Prayer.

Watch *unto* prayer; watching and praying in this sense is watching that you may pray, watching against things that would stop you praying—watching unto prayer. And there must be a "lest" in us. ". . . lest Satan should get an advantage." You see there is forestalling on our part, there is prevention on our part; standing against the wiles of the Devil. And we shall have to have a fresh question about very ordinary natural occurrences, to see if after all in these seemingly very ordinary things there is not some weapon, subtle device of the enemy to rob us of prayer. What is it that prevents the necessary prayer-life, the essential prayer-life? Let us ask whether after all this is a thing about which we have to take a stand, to interrogate the thing. There has to be a greater watchfulness on our part against the strategic movements of the enemy which are in this direction lest we have our weapons stolen or unsharpened. Well, that is a note that needs more and more to be rung out, I am sure. Do watch against the wiles of the enemy which are directed to take your weapons of warfare away, your prayer-life and your life in the Word; to prevent you keeping those weapons of war.

The Place of the Word in Prayer.

These two things are by the Holy Spirit joined together. Of course there is no punctuation in the Greek text but in our English there is the colon between: ". . . the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God praying . . ." The Holy Spirit has closely linked these two things. He might have put the sword in the beginning, or He might have put it somewhere else. You would have thought that taking in that Roman soldier as he stood there, the Apostle seeing the girdle and the sword, attached to the girdle, would have put the sword next to the girdle and said: "Having on the girdle of truth and the sword of the Spirit," but no, he has taken the girdle apart from the sword and he gets on with the other parts of the panoply which are protective and defensive, and then he brings the two offensive things together at the end, the Word and prayer. They are both basic to a life not only of being able to resist, have the defensive, but of actual victory, overcoming—progressively aggressive. That is what comes out in I Samuel, 15. There was a sword with Jonathan and there was a going up on his hands and feet.

There was the activity of faith with the weapons of warfare on the part of Jonathan ; and he overcame. We have said it some time earlier that it is a tremendous thing to be able to come in prayer with the Word of God backing up your prayer, and to be able to say to the Lord: “. . . according to Thy Word” and then give the Lord His Word. It is a great strength to be able to do that.

We were speaking about Psalm 119 by way of illustration and pointing out how frequently in that Psalm the Psalmist used that phrase. “Quicken thou me according to thy word.” “. . . strengthen thou me according unto thy word.” And then we went on to fill in the word that corresponds with the petition. “But 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.” That is God’s Word. It is a great thing to have the Word of God with you in prayer, that you may take it before the Lord, it gives you a place of strength. And it is a great thing also to be able to meet the enemy with the Word of God. The Lord Himself went into the wilderness and was tempted of the Devil forty days. How did He meet the Devil? Just with the Word of God! The Word of God was His weapon, and in the end with that weapon He went through, He overcame. And it is not that we objectively meet the enemy and begin to audibly quote Scripture to him. That may be necessary sometimes, it may be good exercise sometimes to meet the enemy with an audible declaration of what God said, but beloved, to have God’s Word in our hearts so that at all times of temptation and pressure and inward spiritual assault we stand on the promises. We cannot stand on them if we do not know them. There is a great strengthening of position when you have got the Word of God under your feet. A life in the Word is a very necessary thing to effectual prayer, and these two things go together in a positive aggressive overcoming of the enemy.

Prayer and the Overcomers.

Now then this further thing comes out in this portion ; that it is a small company who are there in that position. Jonathan says : “There is no restraint to Jehovah to save by many or by few.” It is a comparatively small company, but they represent for the Lord the

key to the whole situation ; they stand for the others in a relative position, and the Lord only knows what the others would do but for them. The Lord must have that for the sake of the rest. In the final issue the others come into the good which this small company has secured for them. It is what we have so often called “The Overcomer Company.” The little group, comparatively speaking, who are standing their ground and maintaining their prayer-life and their life in the Word. These are the hope of the Lord’s people, and the Lord’s people have no hope apart from them. They are the Lord’s key to the larger situation. He must have them there for the sake of the rest. It is Benjamin again, the link between the alienated and distant brethren and the one who is on the throne. It is the little one who is the occasion of their being brought into the full blessing. It is a privileged position although it is a difficult one, it is a costly one, it is fraught with much travail and suffering, yet it is a privileged position to be in. I must say more to myself, and you must say more to yourself about the privilege of being an Overcomer. I am afraid we are very much impressed with the suffering of it, the cost of it, the strenuousness of it, but it is the privilege of standing in a position which is going to mean much to the Lord in a great number of others who may not be in that position at present.

If the Lord is to bring them He does not do it, and He cannot do it directly, He does it through the ministration of those who are in that close fellowship with Him, which represents a mighty victory over the strategy of the Devil. It is a relative position of privilege. That is why such as are going that way with the Lord become the central object of the Devil’s hate and malice, and why it is such a battle for them to maintain the position to which the Lord has called them ; so much hangs upon them, because the responsibility which is their’s by reason of the link, the value of the link between them and—perhaps—multitudes of others. So Jonathan and his armour bearer (and this is the part of the story that I like so much) had a secret understanding. There were those two massive, forbidding crags on either side, and up there the Philistines in the place of advantage. Their secret understanding was this.—If they say that they will come down to us, allright, we will wait for them ; but if they say, come up to us, then we shall know that the

Lord has delivered them into our hands. You would have thought that they would have put it the other way round. You see all the advantage would have been the other way and that would have been comparatively easy. But to believe that being called upon to scale those difficult, forbidding crags, is the very sign of the Lord of victory; well that makes the situation a very strong one doesn't it? And they said "Come up to us . . .", and Jonathan said: ". . . the Lord hath delivered them into the hand of Israel," and every pace they took on hands and feet, difficult climbing, holding on, yes, really difficult, they said—"The victory is ours," they were climbing in a victory, not for one. They had got their weapons and they had got faith in God, and they stood in a victory and went on in that victory, and Jonathan hewed them down, they fell down before Jonathan and his armour bearer slew them. Then the Lord sent an earthquake, the Lord cooperated when faith had gone as far as it could go, the Lord cooperated and sent consternation among the Philistines. Then the poor weak Hebrews saw their chance and turned on the Philistines. Not very noble, not very honourable, but Jonathan has been the instrument to bring them out of their weakness into strength, out of their indistinctiveness into a clear testimony, out from the place where the clearness of their testimony was lost into a place where now they could take their stand. And a lot of people just need a Jonathan activity to bring them into a clear place. They will come in if the Lord has an instrument strong enough to meet the enemy on their behalf, they will not come in until there is something that begins to smite the Philistines for them. Are you going to be one of these?

The Sifted Company.

Well, this is all good; I must close, but I do want to say just a word about the Lord sifting down until He gets something like that, the necessity for reducing unto effectiveness. Jonathan and his armour bearer and a little company represented a sifted people. They were sifted down on this matter of faith in the Lord, and they had been sifted right down to the ground where prayer and the Word was their very life. Gideon's company represented that. A sifted company brought down to a position of absolute faith in God, for that was what God was after: "Lest Israel vaunt themselves against me saying, Mine own hand

hath saved me." They had got to be right down to a place where God was their only estate, and faith in God was the ground upon which they stood, and then for every man to put his sword on his side and stand in his place. You have a very good picture in Gideon's "Three hundred" of a sifted company standing in prayer and the Word of God: "The Lord of the Sword, the Lord of the Word." The Lord saw to it that all who had heart trouble went home. A fearful heart is no use. Faith is necessary here. A divided heart, that is no use, that disqualifies. A fearful heart was the first test, and a great host went home because they were fearful hearted. A divided heart was the next test; those who went down on their hands and knees to drink the water showed that they were not wholly ready for this business. Those who stood and lapped out of their hands were eager, they kept on their feet; this drinking was only done because it was necessary.

No, those who lapped were of undivided heart, they were wholly in this business; a divided heart disqualifies. The Lord sees to it that divided hearts are sifted out and at last He gets His company and they are all with Him in the faith of the Son of God; a life of deep fellowship with Him in prayer and in the Word. They will always be a sifted company, and we should not be discouraged or think that a strange thing has happened when the Lord begins to sift out and many go back, go home. It is the Lord's way of getting effectiveness. He must sift, He Himself has given us much to go upon in His personal teaching while here on the earth in this very connection. He calls, and the reactions to His call are: "Lord suffer me first, to go and bury my father." And other interests: ". . . I have bought live yoke of oxen and I go to prove them." "I have married a wife": "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it." That is a divided heart. Then His own word: "If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." "Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." That is no faint heart. The Lord calls for that, and by the three hundred He delivers the Midianites into our hands, and by the three hundred He saves Israel. They are the salvation of the rest. T.A.-S.

The Cross and God's Eternal Purpose

The following messages were given at a conference in Basle, and have been translated back from the German. They are here reproduced as translated into English by a Swiss friend.

1.

READINGS : Ephes. i. 11 ; iii. 11.
Romans viii. 28.
11 Tim. i. 9. Colos. i. 27.

WHAT appears in the first instance in these passages is the fact that God has a definite *purpose* in view or, as other versions translate, that everything is ordered after a set plan.

Then we see that that purpose has to do with a *mystery* which has been hid from ages. It is Paul to whom the Lord has revealed in a special way that mystery, and who, therefore, speaks of a Gospel which he calls his Gospel, glad tidings, which were not given him by men, but by the Lord Himself.

This mystery is gathered up in Christ Jesus, with a view to the fulfilment of the purpose of God in Christ Jesus finding its full development through the church. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to lead us into the fulfilment of God's eternal purpose as to our lives. Our lives become definite and steadfast in the measure in which we recognise clearly this purpose and plan of God.

There are two things which must be considered in a special way.

Firstly, that no one apart from the Holy Spirit knows what that eternal purpose of God is. Those who have worked most for God would have been unable to recognise God's purpose without the help of the Holy Spirit. Although God's plan is laid down in the Old Testament, the New Testament only reveals it to us. In the light of the New Testament only do we see in the types and symbols of the Old Testament what God wanted from the beginning, in order to realise it in the fulness of time.

Secondly, we have to note that our fruitfulness in the service of the Lord depends on how much we cooperate with God with regard to His eternal purpose and aim. For everyone who has been called into the service of the Lord there

comes, sooner or later, a time when he recognises that all his own effort and work is for nothing ; that it does not only mean to die to the world, to sin and to self, but that to be crucified with Jesus must embrace our *service also*. But then, when we have denied ourselves in that respect also, when our hope for fruitful work rests only and solely on the confidence that God Himself is going to work out everything in us, will our work bring forth abiding fruit.

Let us, in view of what we have said, recognise :

1. The absolute necessity that the Holy Spirit should reveal Christ in us.
2. The absolute government and leadership of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.
3. The complete subjection of our lives to Christ.
4. The absolute necessity that our life should be completely guided and directed after God's Word alone.

Having arrived there, where these principles fill us, work in us and direct us, God will commit Himself to us, He will take over the responsibility of our ministry, and all things, whatever they may be, will work together for good. The "good" will then no longer be merely our wellbeing, and the fulfilment of our desires. The "good" is *the realisation of the will of God*, so that all things serve this one and exclusive purpose. In the life of the Apostle Paul were many things which seem to the natural man not "good" at all, and even less pleasant. But Paul says that they had been contributory to the extension of the Gospel, and to the manifesting of its power.

What can we do other than say, out of the depth of our heart, Lord, bring my life completely into line with Thine eternal purpose ! When that is done, when that happens, there will be, even in the humblest, most remote life, eternal possibilities ; nothing, absolutely nothing, will remain without significance and importance. Everything stands in the realisation of the highest good ; everything serves

the fulfilment of God's eternal plan. The *many things* will cease; in their place there will be the *one thing*. Activities which before had been valued as a sign of good work will give place to the quiet, deepening work of the Holy Spirit, that He may give His time to all, that He may show us everything in its true light, and all things may serve the one goal.

We know now that God works after a definite plan. We shall see that God is using special methods in the realisation of this plan. There must be a recognition that God, in the bringing forth of His eternal purpose, works after specific times.

An uninterrupted close walk in the Spirit with the Father made it possible for the Son to know moment by moment what the Father wanted, so that nothing was ineffective by its being done at the wrong time. The watchword of our Lord, with which we meet so often, is: "Mine hour . . ." His whole life was concentrated in the hour, and directed toward it. Every act of His was in relation to this hour. And when He said: "Father, the hour is come," His life was accomplished, and that exactly in the hour the Father had appointed for Him.

We are so often defeated because we are not one with our Lord in His time. It would be of tremendous significance for our whole life if we were all the time conscious that the specific purpose has also its specific time.

When God begins to use us, in order to realise His eternal purpose with us in a fuller way, we must not be surprised if spiritual conflict and spiritual sufferings are bound up with it. When Abraham had received the promise (*Genesis, XV.*) and asked for a special sign, he was given the grace to share in the sufferings of God for the preparation of His people. When the sun went down a great fear came upon Abraham, and "an horror of great darkness fell upon him." Previously he had offered the sacrifices, pointing to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Cross of Calvary. He had to fight against the fowls which came down to take away the sacrifices. In that horror of darkness Abraham experienced in some way the anguish and suffering related to the deliverance of a people after four hundred and thirty years of captivity in Egypt. God gave him a share in His own sufferings; and how could God honour His fellow-workers more?

So we see Daniel wrestling in prayer for his people. We see him in great anguish, because of the history which had been shown to him.

Paul speaks of being ready to fill up in his flesh that which is yet lacking of the afflictions of Christ for the Body's sake, His Church.

The highest honour wherewith God can honour us is when He makes us fellow-workers to whom He reveals His plan, and whom He uses as instruments for its fulfilment, and who may share in the sufferings which are bound up with it.

The knowledge of God's eternal plan is given us by the Word. It was a mystery throughout the ages. In the Old Testament everything points to the future, to Christ. He gathers up everything in Himself, and everything becomes in Him highest reality. But then this fulness which is in Him is given to His Church, and from that point on our eyes are not only directed forward but backward also.

The mystery of which the Scriptures speak has three parts:

1. It relates to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. That is why the Scriptures speak of the "mystery of Christ."
2. It relates to the individual believer, whose relationship with Christ is called by Paul a mystery, the mystery "Christ in you."
3. It relates to the corporate assembly, His Church.

We know that the Ark of the Covenant represents the Lord Jesus Christ. Because the Philistines did not recognise that, it meant death and destruction to them. When they had captured the Ark, and triumphantly set it up in the temple of Dagon, they found Dagon smashed before the Ark of the Covenant. Wherever the Ark came there was sickness and death. The "mystery of Christ" was effective in judgment. The Ark of the Covenant manifested itself as "a savour of death unto death," because some did not approach it by the way God had appointed.

The individual believer is in a similar way a mystery to his surroundings. The world cannot understand that he remains perfectly calm in all things, full of peace and joy. The world cannot understand that death does not make him afraid, and that all his hope is set upon that which the human mind cannot grasp. It is the mystery of the Christ in us, which works in such a wonderful way, and

leads men to recognise that Christ is verily risen and lives in His own.

This testimony is especially committed to the whole. It is given to the Church to confirm again and again the fact of the resurrection by the consciousness of her heavenly position, and a walk in the power of the new life. We must not wonder that the enemy is making tremendous efforts to rob the Church of her secret. We must not wonder if he tries to constitute her an earthly matter, a popular Church which may be occupied with social activities, but whose heavenly nature and heavenly being must not appear. We have to say that the enemy has unfortunately succeeded all too well to drag the Church down on to an earthly level, to make her something for men, governed by men, so that her salt and her light has been lost in a great measure.

If we will, as an assembly, cooperate to realise the eternal plan, then we must see to it that we, in every individual member, are filled with the mystery "Christ in you;" that we know in a living way what our heavenly *position*, our heavenly *vocation*, our heavenly *ministries* are, in order to stand as those who represent the Body of Christ on this earth, in such power and such fulness that their Head is "glorified in them." (JOHN xvii.)

HEBREWS : I. i. 1-4.

Christendom of our day has become for many a system of diverse *teachings*. For the believers at the beginning of Christianity it was not a matter of teaching, but only and solely to know the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. All that which belongs to Christian life and Christian experience, all that which embodies teaching and truth, all the orderings in the Church, yes, the Church itself in its purpose and nature, is, in the New Testament, in closest relation to the knowledge which is presented in Christ Jesus Himself. *To know Him means to know every other thing.* Therefore we must not be surprised if the longing of the Apostle right to the end of his life is this one only: To "know Him and the power of his resurrection."

To lead us into the knowledge of Jesus Christ is the ministry of the Holy Spirit, because He only sees and beholds the One—"in whom we are made full," or complete. Jesus Christ is the embodiment of all that which relates to God. In Him appears what

was in the thought of God. He is the perfect revelation of God. "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." How foolish it is to try by this or that teaching, separated from the whole truth, to represent Christ. Our need is that we possess the whole, not making ourselves advocates of this truth or that truth, and thus giving away the truth which in itself is one, complete, connected.

The prophet Ezekiel has to give us, in connection with this, a serious lesson. In chapters XL.-XLVII the full measure of our Lord Jesus Christ is shown to us, because, if in those chapters there is so much said about measures, almost nothing else but measures, what does this mean other than that God wants to tell us most clearly, and bring before our eyes most vividly, that everything depends on *His measure*.

Chapter XLIII. verse 10 says: "Shew the house to the house of Israel." Jesus Christ is the pattern which God has appointed for us. He is the embodiment of all the thoughts of God. If nothing is said of the glory of this temple, if we meet again measures only, it means that the glory of God cannot come in unless the measure of God is complete. Therein lies the message of these chapters. And have we not to confess that the thoughts and purposes of God for His people, His Church, have been lost very largely; that human thoughts have intruded themselves, that human principles have gained ground in the Church. The more we possess in our hearts a living knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, the more the fulness and glory of God will become great and manifest to us.

What we need, therefore, is to know the Lord Jesus Christ as those who do not ask many questions, but who desire to know one thing only, how to walk through Him (as did Ezekiel through the Temple) after the good pleasure of God. The Holy Spirit can reveal Jesus Christ in our hearts as to every detail in our lives. And only in the measure in which the Holy Spirit reveals Jesus Christ to us does He solve also, at the same time, all our problems; because the answer to all our problems is Jesus Christ.

For Paul Christ was the unveiling of a heavenly world. From the time he saw the Lord the earthly order of things had gone for him. It was gone with the crucified One, and

for ever set aside. The Risen One meant "all things new." In Him everything was raised to a new life, and that life was the perfect expression of the Son of God Himself. He was the measure, the fulness of all things. Everything has to be according to Him; everything has to be a reflection of Himself. Paul has accepted in all its consequences the separating line which God had drawn on the Cross between himself and the old world. "The world is crucified to me . . ."

We know very little of this uncompromising, unreserved position, and turning to this new thing. That is why the goal is only dimly recognised, and the methods are so little of a

Divine nature. May the Lord be pleased to turn our eyes away from all that which is of man, and direct them fully and entirely on Christ Himself.

May a deep longing after a fuller knowledge of our Lord fill our hearts. May Jesus, and He as the Risen One, permeate our thinking and life, so that everything is according to His Nature and Being, His measure and His Will. We need Him, not only some teachings about Him. Filled with Christ, the Church has to be His testimony to the world, a testimony which cannot be overlooked, a testimony in the power of his resurrection. T.A.-S.

(To be concluded.)

The Eyes of His Glory

READINGS: Is. xxxiii. 13-16; lxvi. 1-2. Zech. ii. 3-5, 8. Heb. xii. 18-24. Matt. xxv. 40, 45. Rev. i. 12-14; ii. 18; xix. 11-12. 1 Peter iv. 12-14. 2 Cor. viii. 23.

Is. iii. 8: "For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen; because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke *the eyes of his glory.*"

This is a phrase which obviously requires analysing in order to get at its value. Standing just by itself it does not perhaps convey a great deal, but it is round the thought contained in it that we shall dwell for a little.

Commencing with the word "glory," in order that we may know in some measure what the glory of God involves let us read Ezekiel i. 22, 25-28.

"This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." Here is language which seems to betray the completely indescribable character of that which the prophet saw, suggesting that the glory of the Lord is something that cannot, in precise detail, be set forth in words. Here is a man who, by the Holy Spirit, sees, and all he can say is: "This was the appearance of the likeness. . . ." There is vagueness, and yet sufficient detail to show us the constituents of that which the prophet saw. Surely we, too, shall find, in any attempt to speak about that glory, that we can but use words to convey an impression, an atmosphere, and we shall seek nothing more than this in the words that follow.

Let us first of all remark what were the constituents of the prophet's vision. First of all there was a firmament, suggesting that which separated what was above from what was beneath. There is the thought in the firmament of separation from the earth. Then there was a throne of sapphire. The throne, of course, speaks of sovereignty, government; and sapphire speaks of its heavenly character. Then there was a man in the throne. We hardly need to explain that, save to say that it is Christ, the Man in the glory, upon the Throne. Then there was fire in the midst like the colour of amber. It is a throne of holiness, the burning fire of holiness. There was a rainbow round about, so it was also a throne of grace. There was a voice, the word of Him Who sat upon the throne. Then there were the living creatures beneath, suggestive of the Church related, and subject, to Him Who was on the throne.

Those are the elements, broadly speaking, making up the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.

The Divine End—Fellowship in Glory.

Let us note again what it says in Isaiah xxxiii. 14:

"The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling hath surprised the godless ones. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"

Obviously Isaiah is there presenting in a

phrase or two something of what Ezekiel saw in his vision of the glory of God. Ezekiel saw the burning flame of holiness right in the very midst—almost as if coming out of—the man in the throne; the burning fires of holiness coming right out from the Being of the Man in the glory; and now the question is asked: “Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” Who indeed? And yet, in his vision, Ezekiel saw a company in fellowship with that throne; a company brought into association with burning holiness. We know from all the scriptures that the end of God, so far as concerns this age in which we are living, is to secure a people, out of the ranks of sinners like ourselves, a people in fellowship with Him in His Throne. That means of necessity a people in fellowship with the everlasting burnings, the flaming holiness of God. “Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” And if the story was simply left there, and we were bidden to have fellowship with a God of blazing holiness, we know that we should all cry out: “This is not for me, nor for any other who is a partaker of a sinful nature like mine.”

Because of the Blood of the Cross.

Instantly there comes into view the necessity for some other element to be introduced to make possible our dwelling with the everlasting burnings, and at once we remember (and with what gratitude to God!) that precious element of the Blood of the Lamb that, as it were, tempers the fires for us who come in the value of the Blood, and makes possible our dwelling with the everlasting burnings. And so, in the vision of Ezekiel, there appears the element of grace in the rainbow round about the throne. The rainbow brings into view all that the incarnation and redemption through the Lord Jesus involves.

When you read Hebrews xii. you are reminded of the burning holiness of Sinai, so that even Moses said: “I exceedingly fear and quake”; and then you read on: “But ye are come unto.....” this, and that, and something else, “.....and to God the Judge of all.” Not yet have you reached the point when your heart comes to rest. But the last word is: “.....And to Jesus.....and to the blood.....,” and your heart sighs with relief, as if to say: “The fires of holiness need no longer be feared—I have come to Jesus and the Blood of sprinkling!” So essential in the very heart of the

glory of God is the precious fact of the Blood. That makes possible fellowship between a God of infinite holiness, and sinners like us.

There is the glory of God in all its blazing holiness. There are the everlasting burnings. There is One into Whose company we are bidden to come, Who is emanating holiness, His very being like a fire of holiness, and we know that anything of a sinful sort coming into touch with that fire must be instantly consumed. Yet we are bidden to come. First of all, if we dwell upon it the reaction could almost send us fleeing from the whole thing saying: “If fellowship with God in His glory means fellowship with the burnings of that holiness I must keep away.” That has always been the reaction in those of the Lord’s servants who have come into the presence at all of the burnings of His glory. Moses met it at the burning bush. Isaiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel met it. John met it, and fell as one dead. And when you and I meet it in any measure we could almost say: “Lord, this is not for me; keep away from me.” But immediately the incarnate Lord says: “It is I; be not afraid.” Ho Whose Blood was shed for us offers us, by reason of that Blood, everything necessary to make possible our dwelling with those burnings of His holiness. So, the Word says: “Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace”; “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by.....a new and living way.....let us draw near.....in full assurance of faith.” But, oh! how utterly essential it makes the Blood! How beyond all believing does it make the value of the precious Blood of Christ!

The Glory imposes its own Conditions on All.

The reaction of all this upon a heart thus awakened is surely this: “In future I must walk more softly than ever I walked before; everything in the nature of my standing erect before God is impossible if I am to have fellowship with that Centre of blazing light.” And oh! the bowing and the humbling, and the falling upon the face resultant from a new recognition of the awfulness of that, and that only the Blood intervening makes fellowship possible. So the Lord says: “To this man will I look, to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My Word.”

Is not this precisely the experience of those servants of God whose history is given in the Word, and who conspicuously became channels

for the revelation of the glory of God, because they were brought conspicuously into fellowship with it? This being so, we recognise that we need to consider the effect of that glory and the value of the Blood not only in the case of the unbeliever who ".....hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant.....an unholy thing," but in the case also of the believer, who has come into vital touch with the Lord by faith in the atoning work of the Cross. For the unbeliever we know what the end will be. He who more than any other will dishonour the Blood—the man of sin—will meet the brightness of His holiness. We know that today the glory of God, these infinite burnings of holiness, are all in Christ. The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel's land. And when He appears in His unveiled glory the man of sin will be brought to naught by the brightness of His presence, and so also will He take vengeance ".....in flaming fire upon all that know not God and that obey not the Gospel" (2 Thess. i. 8). The very brightness of that glory will work out in judgment. They will touch the fires of the glory of God, and that touch will mean their consuming. But in the case of the believer there is a two-fold aspect to be noted—the one relating to the ordinary disciplining of a child of God, of which we read in Hebrews xii. 5-12, and the other a very solemn warning against presumptuous continuance in a way which is contrary to the revealed will of God. It is clear that the very nature of the glory of God imposes its own conditions upon all that would come into association with it, and that if those conditions are not present there must inevitably be the impact of the glory against that which is unsuitable to its character—an impact in grace and mercy, though, where the precious Blood is truly honoured.

Jacob met God like that. He was a man who had before him God's end for his life. The first recorded incident in his life shows his jealousy for the Divine privileges of the birth-right, that he might possess them; but Oh! how he acts! How repeatedly he goes in a way which certainly denies the meaning of the Cross of the Lord Jesus with its declaration that man is utterly ruled out, and can do nothing. Jacob is at work in the flesh all the time. Yes, but the very nature of the case brings him presently, if we may put it this way, to reckon with the glory. If a man who is out for God's uttermost approaches God in the flesh, the burn-

ings of those fires of glory will touch that man sooner or later, and his thigh, as in Jacob's case, will be crippled. He has come near to the burnings, and the burnings have touched him. But because of his humble dependence upon the atoning work of the Cross he was chastened and not consumed.

We turn to consider the other aspect mentioned earlier in the case of a believer—that of presumptuous continuance in a way contrary to God. Let us beware of making light of sin and assuming more than is justified in relation to the Blood. The matter of the eternal security of the believer is not in our thought here—we are thinking in the realm of the word that says: "The time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God." It is sadly possible for believers to act, consciously or otherwise, in a way which is contrary to the interests of the Divine glory. The Spirit of glory will faithfully bear witness against every such act in the heart of the one concerned, and from the moment of such witness responsibility for continuance in that way devolves entirely upon the individual. The Blood may, in the mercy of God, secure from the eternal punishment due to the sin, but beware how we hide beneath this fact and shirk our responsibility to adjust our way in accordance with the truth. We are touching the Divine glory—and its fires will burn, as they did in the days of Ananias and Sapphira, Nadab and Abihu, Korah and Dathan—though their operation may be less startling and rapid in expression. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God—for our God is a consuming fire.

You see what all this lays upon the heart. The reaction is this: "Oh, Lord, empty me of every vestige of pride; bring me down lower and lower in the presence of that glory, to a place where I dare approach it; and give me such confidence in the precious Blood, in the meaning of the Cross, that I can approach it unafraid." There is the two-fold reaction which it would be exceedingly healthy for all of us to know in deeper measure: "Hide me, Lord; put me out of the way; make the meaning of the death of Christ more utter in me; but, Oh, draw me on with deeper confidence in the meaning of Calvary, and with full assurance of faith to know that I have a place there right at the heart of that glory, that I dare to approach it, and that that is my place in the desire of God." If we are partakers of His sufferings so shall we be of the glory.

Such is the character of the glory of God. Its very nature makes necessary certain conditions, and if those conditions are not there then its nature becomes destructive. Paul said: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men." He had seen the character of that glory, and he knew that if man touched that, met that, as all men one day will meet it, but met it apart from the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus, that is terror. Knowing that terror he beseeches men, pleads with men; for God's sake save yourselves from meeting that glory. The more we share the same consciousness of the character of the Divine glory, the more shall we know that passion for other souls. The terror of the Lord is a very good spur to urge us to run with greater speed in the proclaiming of the Gospel, both to the men who are out of Christ, and to those who are in Christ.

The Glory a Defence.

There is another side to the whole matter. The Lord says in Zechariah: "I . . . will be . . . a wall of fire round about, and I will be the glory in the midst . . ." Then He goes on to say: ". . . I will dwell in the midst of thee . . ." Three times in a few verses He says that. The Lord of glory in the midst of them, and they dwelling happily, contentedly, prosperously. The dwelling-place for the Lord of glory is in the midst of His people. What that means for His people! Here are we today in the midst of a world full of antagonism, and the Lord say: I will be the glory in the midst of you; I will dwell in the midst of you. All that burning glory is for us if we are for it. Remember the Word of the Lord through the prophet to Asa: "The Lord is with you, while ye be with him." If you are meeting the conditions demanded by the nature of that glory, then all that glory, in all its awfulness, as well as in its blessedness, is for you. That is something worth gripping in these days. Increasingly we shall meet with the antagonism of the Devil, and of men stirred up by the Devil against the Testimony of the glory of the Lord, if we are in fellowship with that Testimony. The joy is this; all that that glory is, is for us against them. It seems that there is in that single fact all the assurance that any heart can want. That does not mean, of course, that the glory will be such in its activity that nothing of evil is ever able to approach unto us, or to lay its hand upon us physically,

or to do us any hurt, so that we seem at times to be worsted by it. But it does say that that glory is for us.

"The eyes of His glory." There is the glory of God; Jesus Christ in the Throne; in effect, there are those eyes like a flame of fire, watching the Lord's people, like a little flock in the midst of wolves. We thought when we were out that we were all alone! No! The eyes of that blazing glory were watching us! Yet our enemies were able to touch us, and molest us and drive us. Why did He not intervene? We do not know, except this: He is only waiting to break forth at the most suitable moment, when by so doing He will accomplish the maximum good. But let us get the thought that the eyes of His glory are watching. They have been watching all the time, and not simply watching as a casual spectator. He has said: "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye." Remember that the vision of the glory was of this One upon a sapphire throne, above the firmament, a heavenly Throne, above the earth, and it is this Throne that rules even in the affairs of men; and although there may be seemingly no interventions by the Lord, the eyes of His glory are watching and recording all that is going on.

Has He not said: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye did it unto me," and "inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these ye did it not unto me."? That is the One Whose eyes are like a flame of fire. That which happens to the least of His little ones here on earth He says has happened to Him. He says, in effect, "I have to answer that; I have registered that; that is a deliberate act against Me; they have touched one of My little ones, and they have touched Me." That is what Saul of Tarsus met. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Why did not the blazing light of that holiness destroy him? Just for this reason, that Saul verily thought he did God service and up to the light he had he was moving toward God's end. In effect it was this, that Paul was not knowingly flying in the face of that glory; he thought he was moving toward it and serving it. So when he touched the glory the precious Blood shed for him intervened, by the mercy of God, to prevent those everlasting burnings from withering him up, and he instantly humbled himself before the light so startlingly shed upon his way. But when Ananias and Sapphira in the midst of

the Church came and with deliberate purpose of heart lied against the Lord, that burning met them and judged them. They presumed upon, or else ignored, the real implications, of the precious Blood. Let us say solemnly again that it is sadly possible, even for one who is a child of God, to act wilfully against the interests of that glory—perhaps because of something that they were not prepared to yield in their own heart, some humbling of self that was called for and the price was too much. If the Lord wakens us to see that some attitude of ours has actually been against His interests, wisdom dictates a humbling before the Lord, not a persisting in that way, that the Blood may speak for us, our iniquity may be pardoned, our folly put aside, and we may be drawn on again in fellowship with that glory and not against it.

There is immense consolation in the knowledge that the eyes of His glory are upon us. They are often referred to in the Word, and always with the suggestion of a tremendous protective or providential power operative through them in behalf of His own trusting people. Hagar was in the wilderness, and the angel of the Lord met her, and her conclusion was: "Thou God seest me." The eyes of the glory were upon her in the wilderness. In Ezra v. 5 we read that the eye of the Lord was upon the Jews that they should not be made to cease the work. The Lord was looking (He is the Lord of glory always) and the full effect of that look was that He said: "You shall not make my people to cease the work." Again in Exodus 44 we read: "The Lord looked forth upon the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and discomfited the host . . . and he took off their chariot wheels . . ." What is it? It is the eye of His glory that is intervening in the behalf of His own people and causing their enemies to drive heavily. When the Lord, with His eyes of glory, looks upon the enemies of His people it is always hard work and heavy going for those enemies. Of course, the circumstantial intervention depends upon the sovereign wisdom of the Lord. If the end does not come in any other way, it will come when those enemies meet the revealed glory; or He may, as in the case of the Israelites fleeing from Pharaoh, instantly bring circumstantial deliverance. But in either case the eyes of His glory are watching. He is taking full account of everything. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous . . ."

Can we get the meaning of that? The eyes of His holiness, the eyes of His glory, are upon us who are righteous in virtue of a humble walk in dependence upon the precious Blood. If we seek to go the way of the Lord His eye is upon us. It is the eye of that burning, terrible, mighty glory that is upon us, and the terror of that holiness will blaze for us against them that are against us when the Lord's hour for intervention comes. There is encouragement, and a ground for cheer.

The Glory seeks its own Reflection in the Church.

When Solomon had built the Temple, his cry to the Lord was: "That thine eyes may be opened toward this house night and day," and the Lord's answer was: "I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually." That place in its entirety spoke of the perfections of Christ. We see what those eyes of glory are looking for. If you like, the Lord is seeking here upon earth the reflection of Himself—the expression of His own attributes, His own nature, His own character, and He rests those eyes of glory with pleasure and blessing upon all that is of Himself, and He is utterly *for* that. Hence, the degree in which those eyes of glory will be for us here is the degree in which Christ is wrought in us, manifested in us, the degree in which He sees His own nature in us. The contrary is the effect where His own nature is not revealed; that glory is against such.

That brings us to the thought in 2 Corinthians viii. 23: ". . . they are the messengers of the churches, they are the glory of Christ." The suggestion here is of those eyes of glory seeking Christ's likeness here on earth and it says of certain men: ". . . these are the glory of Christ." It does present this challenge to us; we see what that glory represents, what its essential character is, what its effect is. Now we read of certain men that they are the glory of Christ. Supposing He said to you and me: "You are My glory!" It would mean that where we were concerned there were present, at least in measure, the elements that Ezekiel saw in the glory. First of all a holiness that burns like a fire, so that in our presence sin is immediately made conscious it has touched something contrary to itself: men who are sinners, regardless of God, would know when we approached them the burning conviction of

sin. Then the other elements—the Man in the Throne, ruling from heaven, and His Church subject to Him, cut off from earth, everything governed from heaven by his Word. If we are the glory of Christ, then the effect we register upon people is this; Here is a man who is living a heavenly life, whose whole life is ruled from heaven, so that he is a servant and not a master; he has the appearance of obeying all the time. Is that not true of men in whom more than in others you see the revealed glory of Christ? Think of such a man. Is he not marked by something which leads you to say: “He gets his orders from somewhere else.” Though he may rule a situation in a masterful way, the impression he registers upon you is that he is getting his orders from somewhere else. He would confess; I can do nothing of myself, but I do all that I do by the grace of God working in me. He is one who obeys; not one who rules in his own right. He defers to a greater Master. He is not a little dictator in his own realm, to lay down his own laws. Other people may of necessity have to look upon him as their leader under God, but the impression he gives is that he has another who is Head, and that Head is not an earthly one, but a heavenly.

There are features of the glory that Ezekiel saw; Holiness, heavenliness, government; and on the part of man, submission, subjection. For such as walk in that relationship the Word says: “He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.” Here is one on earth in fellowship with One in glory. Let anything touch that one on earth and it has touched the apple of the eye of His glory.

That eye of holiness is watching you and me, requiring consistency with its own nature. Hence let us walk humbly with the Lord. Even though the least of the little ones is a very poor specimen of what they ought to be, it is not given to us to take our tongue and whip them with our words. “Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least . . . ye did it unto me.” Let us seek grace to walk softly.

very humbly with the Lord, bowed ever lower at His feet; and then to walk with renewed boldness, knowing that just in the measure that we take our place thus humbly, in exactly that measure may we run to Him with boldness, to the Throne of Glory and of Grace, and enter into the closest and most intimate fellowship with Him; so that, like Moses, because of the Blood shed at the foot of the Mount, we may go right up into the Mount where is the glory of His flaming holiness, and yet be unconsumed. And then, as we are occupied with that glory, it will be reflected from our faces, and we shall become the glory of Christ, the messengers of the glory, those partaking of its very essence, those revealing its very nature. That is the Will of God.

All that glory is for us. God knows how we are going to need that kind of assurance in the days that lie ahead, and how multitudes of the saints today are needing it. If some knew that, in spite of what is happening, the eyes of the glory are upon them, saying: “Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” “Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm,” they would surely be “strengthened according to the might of His glory unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness,” and in faith be able to await the day of His vindicating, when the fire of His glory should break forth in judgment against their enemies. They could afford to say: “Alright, Lord, You have noted all this; in due season the fire will burst forth and You will vindicate, You will deal justly and mercifully, and all circumstances which to us are hopeless problems, baffling puzzles, when the time comes not a single iota of the whole charge will be forgotten, every whit will be remembered against the enemies.”

We do not say that vindictively against the human enemies of the Lord's people, but we do say that the Lord will, in due time meet out upon the head of the Devil and of all those who have been his willing instruments, that final judgment which will be vengeance for all that His saints have suffered. G. P.

The Spiritual Background of the Word of God

Conference Talks with Workers

(Continued.)

FROM this point two things start their course :

(A) God having a specific relationship with this world and a testimony in it.

(B) The Adversary seeking to counter that.

Now these two things embrace all the Scriptures and you cannot touch the Scriptures at any point without touching them. If you pause even for a moment and reflect upon that you will see that the Scriptures in every part from Genesis to Revelation touch these two things—God having a specific relationship with this earth and a testimony in it, and the Enemy seeking to counter that. While that is true in general, there are certain things within that compass, of a specific character. These two things embrace all Scripture, and specifically four things under number one, that is, God having a specific relation to this earth and a testimony in it.

God's Basis of Relationship is the Cross.

"A" (1) The basis of God's relationship. What is it? It is the cross! That is quite clear from the fall. By the altar the cross is signified as the basis of any specific relationship that the Lord has with this world, and He never has that relationship only on the ground of what is contained in the cross.

Always allow your minds to expand when you get a thing like that; cover the whole range of things, and recognise that if God is going really to have a definite and positive relationship with anything here, it is only as what the cross represents and contains is established. The cross in its spiritual meaning has got to be represented, and God does not come into relation to anything where the cross in its spiritual meaning is not truly and livingly applied and represented. The cross in its active meaning is the very first thing, the basis upon which God comes in.

What do you mean by God coming in? Well, the Holy Ghost manifesting that He is there. You take the simple and well known

illustration of the Moravian Missions in the cold regions of the far North. The missionaries who went there and started work amongst the Eskimos told the stories of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus to the Eskimos, tried to attract them, interest them and win them by His works, His miracles, His kind acts, His character, and they went on and on and on and nothing happened; not a soul was saved. And they could not understand why it was that there was no soul being saved; and after some time, a long time of failure, they were sitting in their hut one evening, and they were singing a hymn together; all unconscious of what they were doing other than that they were expressing their own hearts, they sang a hymn about the cross, the death of the Lord Jesus for the sinner, His giving Himself. It was the story of Calvary in a hymn. An eskimo woman outside heard them singing, drew near and listened, and presently she came in and said: "You never told us that!" "That is something you never told us." That woman was the first one saved. God came in on that; the Holy Ghost came in on that. Just a simple illustration of a far reaching truth. The Holy Spirit, the Lord comes in on the ground of the cross. And beloved, that has got to work out to very fine details and applications.

It is not only true in the matter of salvation; it is true in the matter of God's cooperation. We have sung: "Oh, to be nothing, nothing....." Now, we have been standing on our dignity, standing up for our rights! Someone has been making nothing of us—and we have not liked it, and an impasse has arisen, a deadlock, an arrest, things have got difficult; a good deal of prayer appealing to the Lord has gone on for the clearing up of the situation between us and someone else, and the Lord makes no response, nothing happens until we crash and come down to the place where in emptying of ourselves we apologise, we repent, we take the position of a crucified one, and all that flesh is surrendered

to the cross. The Lord comes in there; the Holy Spirit allies Himself with that. It is the principle of Calvary always, and as those who have spiritual responsibility it is important that we should recognise it. We come up against difficulties in the work of the Lord at home and abroad. Do we want the Lord to come in on it? In what way is it necessary for the cross to operate? When you have discovered that you have the Lord coming in.

The basis of God's specific association for every purpose, salvation, fellowship, co-operation is always the cross.

The Means of God's Testimony is the Church.

(2) Secondly, what is the means of God's testimony? The Church! The Church is implied right from the beginning, and, of course, coming out in type continuously.

Take your great foundation in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Abraham is the cross; he is the altar; the altar is with Abraham. If you want the *symbol* of Abraham's life it is the Altar. Isaac is the issue of the altar in resurrection. Abraham, the altar on the death side; Isaac, the issue of the altar, resurrection. Jacob, the issue of resurrection, the Church, Bethel, the Pillar. Bethel, a place outside of the world. A pillar set up and anointed, marking the place of an opened heaven, of Divine revelation and Divine communication. And then, mark you, Jacob after the flesh incapable of abiding at Bethel and having to go on into a spiritual experience of the destruction of the flesh for twenty years, and then changed from the carnal to the spiritual, coming back to Bethel where he can pour out his drink offering, and abide. His first word, in the flesh is: "How awful is this place" meaning: "I cannot stay here." His ultimate word is: "How glorious! I can stay here." In between the man of flesh has been changed for the man of the Spirit. That is the Church. Those features are the features of the Church. "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" and you cannot divide those things. That is only an illustration which can be expanded continuously, that the means of God's testimony is the Church; it is the pillar and ground of the truth. We know pillars in the Old Testament were made and pillars, obelisks were set up as monuments of a covenant, an understanding, a witness. "These stones shall witness between us."

God's Methods with Man—Emptying.

(3) Thirdly, the nature and methods of God's dealing with men. Let us get the link again: God having a specific relationship with this earth and a testimony in it. The basis of God's relationship—the cross. The means of God's testimony—the Church. Now thirdly, included in that relationship and that testimony, the nature and methods of God's dealings with men within the compass of His specific relationship and testimony—emptying.

The nature and method of God's dealings with men in connection with His Own specific relationship and in connection with His specific testimony in the earth, all His dealings in that two-fold connection have been along the line of emptying. The cross, the basis of God's relationship declares it. The Church, the instrument of God's testimony declares that; it is Jacob. You can never have that true Holy Spirit association, relationship, and you can never have that true instrument of testimony, nor the testimony itself, only in so far as that emptying work has been done. It is an inseparable part of the two things—God's association and God's testimony. And the test as to whether the thing really does carry God with it and is of God, the test as to whether it is a true testimony, a true representation of the Church is as to how far that thing has been poured out unto the emptying of what is of man by nature. You cannot come into the testimony of God in a living way without coming through an awful experience of emptying, until there is nothing left in the end. "How awful is this place"; and it is! The Church is an awful place for the flesh, if it is really the House of God spiritually. It is not something to be jumped at. The testimony is not something to be grasped at. It is something to be looked at and you say: "If I mean business with God, being absolutely poured out until there is nothing of me left.....if not I had better not go this way." The flesh cannot go this way. The Master says, always on that side of the cross: "Whither I go thou canst not follow Me now." After the cross—"You shall follow Me afterwards." It is only after the cross you can follow that way. It explains a very great deal. The Lord Jesus never left us in any doubt about this. He made it perfectly clear that to follow Him meant denying self. That means something much deeper than the mere phrase "self-denial." Taking up the cross daily. Into this every kind of

relationship and resource is cast father, mother, sister, brother, children, houses, lands, everything. Emptying, stripping: not always literally in those connections just mentioned, but the law of emptying so that in the end nothing of nature really remains as a factor. The Lord, and the Lord alone is the Factor, the Fulness. Well, again let your mind expand, run right through the Word of God and see if that is true. It was true with Abraham, true with Jacob, true with Joseph, true with Moses, true with David, true with Paul; true all along.

The Fundamental Factor in God's Success.

(4) Fourthly, the fundamental factor in God's success. What is it? Now we come to the kernel of everything.

The fundamental factor in God's success is putting Christ into things, getting Christ into things. If you think for a minute you will see that God aims at getting His Son into the very constitution of things, and the ultimate secret of God's success is that Christ is in it. Get Christ in and you are there; God is there, you have reached His end. Christ in you is the hope of glory, and the only hope of glory.

Now you will see how true that is when we begin on our next section. But I want you to dwell upon that, and think about it, and get as much of the force of it as you can. If only you can get Christ into that man, that woman; there may be a terrific battle, but if only you can get Him in it is all right, you have little to worry about. This is the fundamental factor in God's success. If Christ can be got into the constitution of anything He is Eternal Life. Get life into the constitution and see what it will do. But when that Life is Christ, what is He not capable of doing? It is not getting Christ before Calvary in, but it is the Christ of resurrection with all that it carries with it, the Christ of the exaltation Who said: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." Get *that* Christ into the constitution of a thing and it is terrific in its potency. There are no limits to the possibilities when Christ is really in. You will notice God's objective is to put Christ into things.

Take the types of the Old Testament; they carry that as their central element. Christ is implied here. What is the tabernacle? It is Christ in completeness put down in the midst of a people, and when the relationships of a people are right and true, all the combined

forces of this world are incapable of standing against that people. As that tabernacle passed over Jordan into the land, as that ark was carried around Jericho, it was Christ in the very constitution of things, and nothing could stand. There is your type. What was there typically and objectively in the Old Testament, in the New Testament becomes actual and subjective. Have Christ in His Church, and nothing can stand when the relationships are right and the spiritual side of things true. Whenever there is a conformity to the spiritual reality of the truth: "Christ in you," and "Christ in the midst of you," then God has got the ground of His ultimate success. You can have all sorts of substitutes for that which simply counters the ultimate issue, but once get that and you can afford to be at rest. Now you see the special value of putting this in a certain way; it carries that particular value. God, putting Christ, His Son, into the constitution of things is the fundamental factor of its success.

The Age-long Antagonism.

"B." The Adversary seeking to counter that. We said that these two things embraced the whole of Scripture and specifically under "A", the four things just mentioned. Now we deal with "B." The means and methods of the Adversary's countering.

At that point we ought to stop to try and enumerate some of these; the means and methods of the Enemy's countering. The countering of God's basis of relationship; the Cross. The countering of the means of God's testimony; the Church. Countering the nature and methods of God's dealings with men; emptying. Countering the fundamental factor in God's success; putting Christ into things.

Suppose first of all you made a list of the titles of Satan, you have practically got your key to his system of working. Take some of those titles and see what they imply.

As to his method: as "Satan," he is the "Adversary"; the one set against.

"The Accuser"; his method is here given away by the title.

"The Dragon"; the devourer.

"The Lion"; the destroyer, tearer.

"The god of this age"; an object seeking worship. There he is the supplanter, the usurper.

Satan's Methods of Countering God's Purpose.

The point is that if you take the titles they very largely cover the ground of his methods of

countering God's purpose, but we can, I think, gather up the whole in two or three broad words. We will take six, dividing them into two.

1. Independence of God. That covers a lot of ground.

2. Substitution for God.

3. Imitating of God.

You will have difficulty in getting outside of those three dealing with his methods and means. You will have to think them out. We have not time to go through the Scripture with them, but there they are.

The second three :

1. Direct assault.

2. Subtle deception.

3. Intriguing mixture and corruption.

And it is an extraordinary thing how subtly he does work. You take the book of Numbers, chapters xxiii. and xxiv., as a very simple illustration. As you see they are occupied with the prophecies of Balaam. We know the story of Balaam being hired to curse Israel, and the Lord's intervention in turning the curse into a blessing, so that Balaam was compelled to bless when he came to curse. "And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel....." He had to bless under Divine compulsion, and when he had blessed to the full, Balaam returned to his place and Balak also went his way. You notice it goes on immediately : "And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab....." The whole chapter is one of ghastly tragedy and Divine judgment. Nothing is said whatever there of how it was done.

You pass immediately from a chapter of blessing into a chapter where the people are under the judgment of a curse. The blessing commanded and given by the Lord is, with apparently no interval, changed for a curse. You want your New Testament to explain that, of course. 2 Peter ii. 15, 16. Something which changes the whole thing from a blessing to a curse. It is that intriguing mixture and corruption of the Enemy, that when the Lord blesses right up to the hilt something just creeps in even while the blessing is there and corrupts the spirit, and the next thing is the Lord is not there. What has happened? Something was gloriously in the blessing of God and suddenly loses the marks of that blessing, seems dead and withered, and the Lord is not there. Even in the presence of blessing something creeps in underneath. Blessing is a perilous time. Some

stream of the flesh flows in quietly when the Lord's blessing abounds. The Enemy takes advantage of a great time of blessing just to pour in something of the flesh. Is not that the history of the Church? Just to counter the Lord's end.

Now we must remember that over all this the object of the Adversary, the Enemy, is to circumvent that fundamental factor in God's success, that is, his object is to prevent Christ from getting into the constitution of man and things. Recognise that and your Word lies open before you.

What are his methods and his means to prevent Christ from getting into the constitution of man and things? "The God of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them." Now he will go from the first degree to the last embracing everything and anything that will be suitable to his end, changing his method and his means, adapting them, so long as that ultimate thing is frustrated. By his open antagonism and fight as at Philippi or Ephesus. Here is Christ coming, and Christ must not get in here. So with open vicious antagonism he will seek to prevent Christ getting in to a place or in to a man. If Christ has the facilities on His side as in a Christian country where the Gospel has been preached, as differing from places where Christ is not known, his method will be a substitute for the indwelling Christ, an external Christianity. There are few things which are more terrible barriers to the Christ within than the formula of the Christian system.

Take that as a key to everything. His object is to prevent Christ from getting into the constitution. How does he do it? By what means? On the one hand with the unsaved, and on the other hand through professed instruments of God. Satan has his ministers amongst men. The test of ministry is this, the test of everything in the ministry of God's people is just this—how far does it register a blow, an effectual blow at Satan's ultimate design, keeping Christ from becoming the very life within all His Own? Put that another way, on the positive side. How far does that minister toward Christ having His place and His way within the life of His Own? You have got to know how, and how alone Christ can dwell within the heart. That can only be through new birth. Now one of the cleverest methods of the Devil against the truth is the

counterfeit of that very truth, the Christ in every man. He patronises Christ now, just to divert from the truth, and he will talk about "the Christ in all of us." The Christ in the unsaved man! "Find the Christ in him; meet the Christ in him." It is pure pantheism not regeneration. Elevation, but not regeneration. You see it is a counter, and a very successful one.

Now we see our calling, brethren, we see what our ministry is, we see what the effect of our ministry ought to be. It ought to be the exposing of the works of the Devil on the one hand, an opening of eyes, a making a way for

Christ into the life, into the heart along His Own lines, on His Own terms.

We have really touched the central point in the work of the Church, in the testimony of the Church, on two sides, the for and the against; that God's objective is getting His Son into the constitution of things; the Enemy's objective is to prevent that. And even with the Lord's Own children the Enemy tries so often to get them to accept something less than the fact that Christ is in them. If he can do that he really has broken them.

There is much meditation to be done upon all that we have said. T. A.-S.

The Battle for the Throne

(Continued).

READING: Psalm viii. 1-6; Hebrews ii.

WE have now to speak of the Fall and to notice three things about it, namely, its object, its nature, its consequences.

The Object behind the Fall

What was the object of the fall, so far as the Adversary was concerned? It was nothing else than world dominion. It was not just to mar God's work, not just to spite God, not just to gratify some unholy and malignant whim. It was to possess a position, to obtain a place. What Lucifer has failed to achieve in heaven he will seek to achieve in earth. What he has failed to accomplish against God directly he will now seek to accomplish against God indirectly through man. He was aware that dominion was vested in Adam; spiritual dominion and the government of the Kosmos. He was aware of the conditions upon which that dominion rested and was held, namely, faithful obedience and allegiance to God. He was also aware of the threefold faculty of that dominion, the faculty of prophet and of priest and of king. His object was to secure that Kosmic and spiritual dominion which was vested conditionally in Adam, and for which Adam had been constituted. The thing in view with the adversary was world dominion. We know from the rest of the Scriptures, and especially from specific statements in the New Testament, that he got it, and even Christ did not dispute that he had it.

The Nature of the Fall

The nature of the fall makes very clear that the adversary directed his attention, firstly to the condition of the dominion, and then to the character of the dominion. The condition was faithfulness, obedience, allegiance to God. He struck at that. That is so familiar that we need not analyse it nor say any more about it. It is quite clear that it was in the direction or in the realm of Adam's relationship to God in the obedience of faith that the enemy directed his attempt, his effort, his energies.

(I) The Spiritual Mind

He also recognised this three-fold basis or faculty in dominion, that of the prophet, the priest and the king; and, seeing that in the first case it was the spiritual mind which was the feature of his dominion he struck at it, and dealt with man along the line of reason. Thus he countered spiritual-mindedness with merely human reasoning. There is a big history attached to that. You notice how he argues. (The very fact that man will listen to the devil arguing is a sure way to his being dethroned. Argue with the devil and you will lose your spiritual position. And do not let the devil argue with you. The Lord Jesus had none of that. When Satan would argue with Him, He said: "It is written....." That is final; He does not argue, the thing is settled.) The realm of the mind was assailed by the devil. God had said, and that ought to have been

enough (it was enough for the last Adam). But the mind was assailed and the mind was opened. Beloved, there is never anything wrong in having your mind assailed, the wrong is when you give the mental assent to the assault. Demas departed from Paul and went back into the world, and we are told that it was because he loved this present evil world. But that is only the end of a history. The world made its appeal. Demas could have shut the door and said, I will have none of it ; but he assented to the appeal, and that is where his fall came. In the same way Adam, instead of at once closing the door to such arguments as were bringing into question God's known mind, assented to the assault in that realm and lost his prophetic faculty. You see the first realm of the attack.

(II) The Pure Heart

Then the priestly faculty was assailed—the heart, the desire. The whole thing, of course, was very beautiful, dressed up, gilded as not to appear wrong and unrighteous, but something to be desired. Oh ! what a lot that gives away —“to be desired.” The heart, the desires, the whole direction was unrighteous, wrong, but the priestly function was assailed in the heart with an unrighteous desire.

(III) The Holy Will

Then the dominion, the kingly faculty, the will. Once the mind and the heart are captured, it is not far to go to catch the will, and that is the order. Reason over on the side of the devil, desire over on his side, and it will not be long before the will follows. So the authority is assailed, the dominion. But there was a deep-seated principle of spiritual holiness.

That is the nature of the fall. The prophet, the priest, and the king, in all that that means spiritually, as spiritual features, were assailed and, by consent, surrendered to the enemy.

The Consequences of the Fall

What are the consequences of the fall ? They are quite obviously and naturally in keeping with the nature. They are, in the realm of the spirit or the spiritual mind, blindness and darkness. And that is how we find fallen man : “Having the understanding darkened.” The whole teaching of the New Testament on spiritual blindness, spiritual darkness—“the god of this age hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving”—is bound up with the fall.

The spiritual mind is not in the natural man. He has lost the knowledge of God, spiritually. He has no spiritual understanding. That is the prophet.

In the realm of the priest, the heart, there is malice or enmity against God. That is the natural man. You see the opposites. The true priest represents the love of God, the heart side of things. Aaron always represents the heart aspect of things. God read Aaron's heart right at the beginning. The very first thing that you have said about Aaron as he comes into fellowship with Moses is, from God to Moses : “.....Aaron thy brother.....when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.” That is the Lord having read Aaron's heart, and Aaron comes in on the heart side of things. He always represents the affections, just as Moses represents the government. But now you see the heart, or the priestly feature and faculty, has been interfered with, overthrown, and now, instead of love toward God, it is enmity against God. That is the natural man, and it does not matter what you say about multitudes of good people unsaved in this world not being at enmity with God, and repudiate strongly any such suggestion, the fact remains. There is not a man or a woman who has ever been on this earth who, if put into certain given circumstances, would not manifest enmity against God. It only wants circumstances to do it. Try them on Job's line and see !

The will—the king ? Where is the natural man if he is not in bondage in the realm of his will ? Say what he may about liberty, freedom, there is no man free. There is no such thing as liberty in this creation. Bondage to sin and to death, and also—unconsciously with many—to the devil.

The prophet, the priest and the king in spiritual meaning has simply been overthrown in the fall, and these are the consequences ; consequences with which we are all too sadly familiar.

The Spiritual Battle of all Time

Now, in the realm of the three-fold function of man according to God's mind the fact and nature of the fall is continuously manifested. This will head up to and in Anti-Christ for its full expression. What I mean is this ; whenever God has raised up an instrument, either individual or collective, of this character, and with this object, to fulfil this function of prophet, priest and king in principle, to express

the Divine government, the battle has immediately commenced along these three lines.

THE PROPHET.—The battle commences along the line of the prophetic function, that is, along the line of the spiritual mind. What is the nature of that assault? Unbelief! Unbelief is the first step in the assault upon the spiritual mind. That is the first step, therefore, in the assault upon the prophetic function, as an expression of God's thought. But then it intensifies, and history is full of it from its first phase of—shall we say—simple unbelief, through all its intensified phases of rationalism.

Rationalism.

Rationalism is a direct assault upon the spiritual mind, and therefore an assault upon the prophetic faculty. That is, God's thought represented and expressed. Rationalism is against that. Atheism resulted. Unbelief, rationalism, atheism; these are the direct methods of attacking that which is meant by the prophet—a spiritual revelation of God's mind. It is tremendously illuminating if you follow it out. Put on one side spiritual revelation of God's mind, the expression of the mind of God as given by the Holy Spirit. Over against that you have positively set, unbelief, rationalism and atheism. Is that not so? It assails the prophet, which every man and woman in living relationship to God is called to be. The prophet is not a specific office, but an inherent constitutional faculty in every man according to God's will. That is, you and I and every child of God—all the Lord's people—are called to have the spiritual mind, the knowledge of God by revelation of the Holy Ghost. That constitutes a prophet. I know that there are various aspects of prophetic expression, but that is the principle, whatever the aspects. If it is forth-telling, well, the only forth-telling that comes within the compass of God's appointing is by revelation of the Holy Ghost. That the fore-telling is that it goes without saying, but it is the unveiling of God by the Holy Spirit. Over against that are positively set these things mentioned.

While that is the direct method, there are less direct methods. The apostle speaks and warns about philosophy: ".....lest any man SPOIL YOU through philosophy." That word "spoil" is an exceedingly interesting word in the Greek. It means, to separate you from the source of your life. Now think of that! The devil was out to spoil the Lord Jesus, therefore the Lord

Jesus was out to spoil the devil, and spoiling there means, cutting clean in between the object and his base of operations, and cutting him off. Now, ".....lest any man spoil you through philosophy," cut you off and separate you from your true source, your true life. There is nothing more materialistic in its effect than philosophy.

Mysticism.

Then there is mysticism, an indirect assault upon the spiritual mind. Oh! how subtle it is! You can have a mystical presentation and interpretation of the New Testament and of all the Scriptures, which is very beautiful. It makes a tremendous appeal to the artistic faculties and temperament. Some far-reaching, mighty religious systems owe the whole of their strength to mysticism, the mystical representation of Christian truth, appealing to the æsthetic, the artistic. Mysticism is not spirituality. But, oh, the multitudes carried away by that beautiful, artistic, mystical presentation of Christianity! It is an assault upon the spiritual mind, and this is where our peril so much lies in relation to truth; the appeal so wonderful, beautiful, and our own natural, rational response to it; the sublime ideas, these wonderful conceptions; and then grasping it like that, holding it in our æsthetic sense, in our soulical mind, and thinking we have got the truth and always talking about it, how wonderful it is, and yet there being a background of fundamental contradiction.

We are in dangerous realms. When God by His Spirit breaks clean through and reveals a thing He turns the life upside down and inside out, and you can never be the same again. Do not talk about the wonderful, sublime, beautiful things. These things have become something far, far deeper than that. You know quite well that there is a sense in which they are terrible things, marvellous but terrible. You can never contemplate God as a beautiful work of art, about which you talk sublimely. He is wonderful, He is marvellous, but, oh! He is awe-full! Those two things always go together. Mysticism is one of the devil's most cunning inventions and means of side-tracking from real, genuine spirituality. It is a blow at the spiritual mind, a substitute for it and a delusion.

Educationalism.

Forgive me if I add one other of these indirect means of attack upon the prophetic function of man according to God. It is educationalism.

Now that wants guarding. Let no one think for a moment that that means that we are against education. I have not said "education"; I have said "educationalism." What I mean by that is this; the theory that you can educate people up to a Christian standard and into acceptance with God, and that education can become a way by which you come into the Kingdom of God. Today there are great Christian institutions labouring under that lie, that deception. They are out to educate, educate, educate, by slow absorption of Christian knowledge, Christian ideas and ideals, along the line of education. Thus shall we bring in the Kingdom of God, they say. And that, being what we mean by educationalism, is a blow of the devil at this very thing, spiritual-mindedness. You and I can never by searching, by study, or by education, by the development of our brains along any academic or scholastic lines enter the Kingdom of God, nor even apprehend the very minutest degree of spiritual truth. That is only possible along spiritual lines by the action of the Holy Spirit. Educationalism as such, used in relation to the things of God, is in the same category as mysticism and philosophy, and they are only other aspects of unbelief and rationalism.

I hope I am not tiring you, but I do feel that the foundations of God's people have got to be well and truly laid, so I am going on. The natural and carnal mind, at their very best, are still enmity against God. Nothing—mysticism, educationalism nor philosophy—alters the basic fact, nothing changes the nature of man as the result of the fall. Now that deals with the line of the prophet, or the spiritual mind.

THE PRIEST.—We are saying that the nature and fact of the fall are continuously manifested through history in this three-fold realm.

Mixture and Loss of Distinctiveness.

Then, in the second realm of the priest, where do we trace these marks of the fall? In the loss of distinctiveness between good and evil, right and wrong. "If thou shalt take the precious from the vile....." You see, God demands a separation. But in Israel, when those words were uttered, there was no clear apprehension of the distinction between the two, the precious and the vile. It became so mixed up that the people in general could not discriminate between the two. And then in the upsetting of standards, calling evil good, and good evil. Do you see

that at work today? It is spreading through this earth like a disease. Those old standards are being cast down, those land-marks are being removed, and evil is being called good, and good is being called evil. Why, right across the whole of the system of Communism, religion, Christianity, God, are called evil things. That is, in its intensive form. In less intensive form the same thing is going on in the world today, and in a very general way. Good is being called evil, and evil is being called good, and so the standards are being upset. The sinfulness of sin is being modified or extracted. With what object? It relates to the heart that is, it is an easing of the way for human desires and passions. Men desire, want, and have passions for certain things, and therefore they must modify the sinfulness of those things, or extract from them—for their own satisfaction, and say they are either good or, "necessity knows no law." Do you see it is a heart matter? You are touching the priest here.

THE KING.—The fall is shown continuously through history in the realm of the kingly, or dominion calling and constitution of man. Firstly, along the line of substitutes for the pure, Divine, kindly faculty of government. What are they? Despotism on the one hand, and, on the other hand, democracy. Again, autocracy and communism. These are substitutes for the true, Divine government and faculty. What do they lead to? Anarchy! What does that represent? The overthrow, the destruction of a true Divine order of government as represented by the king.

The Spiritual Background of World Dominion.

Now what have we done in this survey? We have seen that at the back of history there is a spiritual thing going on. At the back of history as seen there is a history which is not seen, and it is in that realm back of the seen that the real issue is to be fought out. Do you understand why the Lord Jesus put back and put back all suggestions and attempts to set up a kingdom amongst men, when He came, when they would take Him by force and make Him King, and when they would talk about the Kingdom? "Dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel." They expected that the Kingdom would immediately appear, but all the time He is thrusting it away. "Art thou a king then?" "My kingdom is not of this world." Why? The issue was not in the foreground, it was behind, and He was going

to deal with the whole question of the curse, in the spiritual realm. In His Cross and by His Cross He stripped off principalities and powers, He got behind everything. He starts behind things. He will finish in the foreground with the Kingdom and dominion restored, but that is where you and I are, beloved. We are in the background at present, we are not setting up a kingdom before the eyes of men, we are not out for this Kingdom of Heaven which is a seen thing that can be displayed to the eyes of men. What you and I are in is the great spiritual conflict back of everything else, the issue of which is the dominion of this universe. "Our warfare is not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, the world rulers of this darkness, the SPIRITUAL hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies." That is where our vocation is as prophets, priests and kings. It is back there that you and I have got to have the spiritual mind, the spiritual knowledge of God, by revelation, the only thing that counts. It is back there that you and I have got to stand in that righteousness which is of faith, as a mighty thing against the assaults of the enemy, having on the breastplate of righteousness. It is back there that you and I have got to reign as kings, to know what spiritual dominion over the enemy and all his forces is. That is our calling. Later it will be displayed to the universe, later on it will come into full view. When He is manifested we shall be manifested together with Him, but now it is spiritual.

THE WHOLE vocation of the Church in this dispensation is spiritual, and in the realm of principalities and powers, and, mark you, you

will never be able to deal with souls of men only in so far as you know ascendancy over the power of the enemy behind. You will never be able to deal with situations which arise only in the measure in which you know how to deal with that situation behind as the work of Satan. The whole issue is one of spiritual dominion, and we are in the battle for the Throne. Blessed be God, we know the issue, but the battle is a very sore one, at times it is a terrific one. Every time there is going to be a little addition to the saints along the line of spiritual revelation, which will constitute them prophets in that spiritual sense, or an addition to the saints of righteousness by faith, which will constitute them priests unto God, those two things directly point on to the Throne, and the spiritual ascendancy of the saints and dominion; and so every time there will be a strange, a mysterious, unaccountable—unless you know the spiritual history of things—conflict to start with. Yes, before the thing begins, perhaps weeks before. The enemy knows our programmes and he knows what the issue of spiritual people coming together for a season means for him, therefore ahead he starts the battle, and we know days, sometimes weeks, before we are coming together what it is to enter into a terrific conflict, a withstanding, and every attempt is made to destroy that thing in advance, to make it impossible. You see what the issue is. It is dominion. We ought to be reaching out to see that we are going to move into whatever God is after. They that have the abundance of grace shall reign in life by that one Man, Jesus Christ.

T. A.-S.

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The Incense - Bearer

Witness.—The Incense-Bearer. 1.

2 Corinthians ii. 14-16.

“.....and by me sends forth the knowledge of Him, a stream of fragrant incense, throughout the world. For Christ's is the fragrance which I offer up to God, whether among those in the way of salvation, or among those in the way of perdition; but to these it is an odour of death, to those of life.” (CONYBEARE.)

The Minister and His Ministry.

The Apostle Paul is setting forth one of his conceptions of what the minister of Christ is, and then what the effect of the ministry. He is thinking here of the minister of Christ as an incense bearer. The picture at the background of these verses is one with which we are well acquainted. Verse 14 of 2 Corinthians ii. brings into view the triumphal procession of the victorious warlord as he moves from place to place with his captives behind him, celebrating at many points his victory, and using them for the purpose of evidence as to his victory. But also in the procession there are those who carry vessels of incense, and the incense being diffused everywhere speaks in two ways, to two different classes of people.

There are some who are going to celebrate this day of victory by being slain. It was a custom to hold certain notorious or distinguished captives in bondage until the day of the great celebration of the victory, and then that day was marked by their being slain. On the other hand, there were those who were appointed to be released as a distinguishing mark of the day, To the one the incense brought death near, and made them know that their hour had come. To the other the same incense made known that the hour of emancipation, of liberation, was drawing near. The same incense proclaimed death and life, life and death.

In the second part of the picture the Apostle himself passes from the first, where he has been viewing himself as one of those prisoners, led in the triumphal procession, as an object of public exhibition as to the triumph of the great Warrior. He has seen himself as in the train of the triumph of the Lord, being on full view as a demonstration of the greatness of that

victory. Now he passes himself into the second part, and takes the place of an incense bearer in the procession, and says that he passes on through the world bearing incense, and that incense is saying two things, having two effects, speaking to two different classes of people. It relates to life and death.

But the Apostle carries that thing inward, and he does not regard himself as simply carrying a censor of incense. He regards himself as that vessel, and as—in a strange, deep, inward way, so as to become a very part of his own being—the incense itself. He thinks of himself as being, not only the giver forth of the sweet savour, but that sweet savour itself; that he is the means by which this effect is registered upon these two different classes of people.

In that presentation of the servant of the Lord there is a deep, strong and solemn word for all of us who stand in that position as the Lord's servants. The thing which is going forth from us, the thing which is the effect of our lives, according to these words, is the knowledge of Christ. Everywhere, not just as by us, but because of us, men are coming to a knowledge of Christ. The very object of our being is that Christ should be known because of us. The Divinely appointed way of men coming to know Christ is by our being here, moving amongst men.

The Vital Element in Ministry.

That is simple, and perhaps we recognise and accept it, but the extra point which has to be noticed is this, that it is something more than our giving out knowledge concerning Christ; it is that we are to men the knowledge of Christ. There is a very big difference between giving out the truth concerning the Lord Jesus—even in large measure, in a great fulness, truth which cannot be denied because it is the truth—and that strange, deep, indispensable element that we are that truth, that that truth itself takes its power, its strength from the fact that here are those who are the living expression of it; who have gone through the depths, been tested, been tried, been taken from place to place, been subjected to experiences of intense

severity, and in the fires have learned Christ, and are therefore themselves the embodiment of the knowledge of Christ. Wherever they go it is not that they have truth to give, but it is that men and women learn Christ because of them, and they are able to say: It is not what they say only; there is something coming from them. There is an indescribable "something" which is an extra element to what they say. That thing has its reality in their being, and you feel that it is not only the words but the very virtue that comes out when they speak, or by reason of their presence. It is that of which the Apostle is speaking.

That is the real value of any knowledge of Christ which we can give, which others may come to possess by us. It is not that they come through us to know more about Christ, but that there is a ministration of Christ. That is the thing for which we should seek the Lord very earnestly.

The Costliness of True Ministry.

We should recognise that this represents the costliness of ministry. Ministry of this kind is an intensely costly thing. It is so different from being a preacher as a preacher. There may be a glamour about preaching, a fascination about gripping a congregation, and all that sort of thing, which is not costly but gratifying to the flesh; the snare of the limelight, the snare of publicity, the snare of that satisfaction, feeling power over other people, which has robbed preaching of that essential blood, and passion, and anguish. Paul was not a preacher of that kind. It is all very well to talk about Paul as the great preacher and orator, and to try and be another Paul along that line. But to be a Paul is a desperately costly thing, and to minister Christ is a thing into which our very blood will be poured.

This kind of ministry can bring no satisfaction to the flesh. This kind of ministry is not something for which to reach out for ourselves. This kind of ministry is something that we should plead to be delivered from unless our life and heart passion is that Christ Himself—not ourselves, but Christ Himself—should be known. Suffer that word thus to you who minister in the Name of the Lord.

That is the true value of ministry. It is indeed a costly thing, it is a thing of suffering, but it is the thing which goes beyond words, far beyond clever thinking and clever expressing, far beyond that acute needle-like brain that

grasps truth and then begins to give it out. It is something which is an extra factor, without which the very best equipment in nature will fail to reach the Divine end. It is, in a word, Christ ministered, not Christ ministered about, but Christ ministered. Paul saw that there was no doubt about it, that this ministry was effective, although effective in two directions. Not always did it result in people leaping into life, but it always resulted in something. If it plunged some people more deeply into death it was a proof that it was effective. If it brought death home to some consciences that proved its power. To have real spiritual effect demands that this shall be the kind of ministers that we are.

The living knowledge of Christ, brought near to us in vessels which have been shaped and wrought through the fires, will, in the first place, discover our state, and then intensify our state. It is bound to do those two things. The two states are here presented as: In the way of life, and, In the way of death.

The Effects of this Ministry.

I. From Death unto Death.

(a) As to the Unsaved.

Let us get quite clear on this matter. This does not for one moment suggest—let alone support—the idea that some are elected to death and perdition and some are elected to life and salvation. That is not the thought. What is here is this, that there are those who are refusing life, and therefore put themselves in the way of death. There are those who are open to life, and therefore may be in the way of life. It is really a matter of the attitude of the heart. It has nothing to do, in the first place, with the Divine predestination. It has to do with our attitude toward Christ, our attitude toward the knowledge of Christ brought near to us in a living way. It is very simply explained. It can be possible that there are those who are not open to Christ. They have no intention whatever of giving their lives to the Lord. It is far from their meaning that they shall be saved or shall become Christians, however they would put it. It is not their thought or intention. They are not open, they are quite closed. It is quite a settled matter with them that they are not going to be Christians, or religious, or converted, or however they express it. For them the situation is, as bad as any situation could be. Christ in

a living way is being brought near, and they are not open to Him, and they cannot remain as they are. They are going to be intensified in their position, and more definitely and positively shut up to death by being where Christ is brought near, unless they change their attitude.

They may not be any more conscious that they are more set, but they are. The coming near of Christ is going to be according to the Word, and according to truth, death unto death, from one measure of death to an intensified measure of death, from one point of distance from Christ and salvation to a removed point, further away from Christ and salvation. If ever the day comes when they do turn and desire the Lord, they will have a tenfold more difficult time than they would have had, and their salvation will be fraught with the most terrific suffering. The infinite peril of that sort of thing is that: "He that being often reproved hardeneth.....shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Pharaoh hardened his heart once, twice, thrice at the call of God, and then God came in and shut his heart, and Pharaoh was incapable of opening it, though he had wanted to. That is the danger of being where Christ is livingly brought nigh and our hearts being closed, unresponsive.

(b) As to the Saved.

That does not only operate in the matter of our salvation in the first instance. That operates in the case of believers. It was not only Pharaoh who fell into that awful and tragic and disastrous state; but Israel in the wilderness, who had been saved from Pharaoh, fell into it. The words of Hebrews iii. were addressed to Israel in the wilderness, and that whole generation failed to come into God's full purpose and thought. Why? Because there was brought near unto them the purpose of God, the will of God, and they stopped short in their response. They had gone so far, they had come out, and had moved to a certain point, and then they went no further. For some reason or another they ceased to go on with the Lord from a certain point. Do you think they remained the same? The Word of God makes it perfectly clear that they did not just stop there, but, having stopped there, there set in an intensifying process which eventually made it impossible for them to come into what God had appointed. Things so strengthened that

even in the day when, seeing what they had lost, seeing what they were missing, they reached out, cried out, and made a frantic effort to possess it. God said, No! You remember that when the Lord told that generation to turn back to the wilderness, they said they would go in, and moved to do so, with disastrous consequences. It was too late. For forty years God had held the door open, but again and again their hearts had turned away from God's purpose, held back for various reasons.

It is just possible that we should belong to the Lord, and have gone so far, and then stopped; and yet from the day that we stopped, when we ceased to be obedient, to follow the Lord, to respond to His revealed will, Christ has been brought near to us again and again and again in a living way, all with a view on the Lord's part to getting us to move from that position, to move on; but, No! Every time there has been the recoil instead. There has been a failure to rise up and say: I am going on with God! Those people do not remain in that condition. All the time, perhaps unconsciously, there is a hardening within, which presently will be manifested as a situation which is impossible of overcoming.

There is a passage in the Word which speaks of those who even touch the fire and are not conscious of it; of those upon whose heads there are gray hairs and they know it not: the marks of lost vitality, lost life, time going, and not conscious of it. It is a terrible thing to suddenly wake up and find that your life has gone, all that could have been for God no longer possible. As we become older, and are naturally more occupied with the past than with the future (spiritually we do not do that), life holds a great deal more in the past than in the future; we see how much more there might have been, and we regret that we have not made more of the opportunity and of the years. We wake up to the fact that no longer have we the powers for mastering, no longer is it possible for us to make good. Think of that in relation to eternal things! Christ constantly coming near in a living way, and yet all that that means never being entered into. But, more; that only strengthening our position in death. Oh! terrible thought! That which is meant for life working out in death.

Is this not a very strong appeal to our hearts, that we should rise up and go on, that we should

consider our state and say : Am I locked up ? Am I becoming incapable of moving ? Whereas at one time it might have been difficult, but if I had resolved in the grace of God to move I should have moved, I should have been in a different place from what I am in today, today I am finding it less possible than ever to move, *and*, as things are brought to me, as Christ is brought to me, the truth is brought to me, and appeals are made in my presence, I find myself less inclined to respond ! That is a terrible situation, the knowledge of Him meaning death unto death. Oh ! do shake yourself from the dust, if you should be in that position ! If you have had Christ brought near in a living way for years, and you have not come into the living value of that, now is the time for you to get before God and say : This must stop ; this death regime must end ; this bondage must be brought to a conclusion ; I must break and go on with God ! Seek the grace to fight that thing through, *lest* all that was meant for you by the Lord coming near again and again should be eternally missed.

There is no getting away from the fact that Christ is effective. If He is not effective unto life, He is effective none the less. It is impossible for the Holy Spirit to bring Christ near without a result. There is no such thing as God's Word returning to Him void. It *will* accomplish a purpose, and the purpose of Christ is not to leave people where they were, but, if possible, to lead them into life ; and, if they will not, to intensify their state, so that in The Day they will have no ground whatever on which to stand. If God condemns He condemns thoroughly, and leaves no room for argument.

II. From Life unto Life.

The life may be in very simple forms. It may not be in a large measure. It may only require openness of heart, willingness of spirit, but that is toward life, life in its simplest form reaching out, incapable of doing very much, yet open and stretched forth. Ah, yes ! the very heart open to the Lord, ready for the Lord. The coming near of the Lord means a ministration of more life. Increase of life requires that the life that is should be active. Even though it be in its simplest and smallest forms, yet to be active.

It is only a state of heart. Are you dead, or are you alive ? Are you indifferent, or are you

reaching out ? The Lord draws near to minister more of Himself in life to every heart open to Him. It is wonderful and blessed to see what happens when the heart is open and the spirit is pure. There may not be a great deal of energy, a great deal of understanding, a great deal of instruction, a great deal of truth and teaching, but the most blessed results are not always in the realm where there is a great comprehending of truth, but more often in the realm where there is a simplicity, honesty, and openness of spirit. Some people are far too well informed to *live*. Some people's heads are the great obstruction to their spiritual enlargement. It is noticeable today that the Lord is not particularly active amongst the people who know such a lot, and He is not seeming to be working to lay hold of the clever people, the well informed people, the people who are recognised as the authorities. The Lord is moving in a wonderfully blessed way amongst people whose hearts are open, whose spirits are simple, and who have little to throw off in order to go after Him. Are we active to the Lord in heart ? Are we really going on, or have we come to a standstill ? Have we never started ?

Here is Christ brought near, and there can be an increase of Christ, an increase of Divine life. It will depend upon whether you are open, whether you are not very concerned, not particularly interested, passive, perhaps antagonistic ; or whether—not that you have a great deal of ability, or knowledge, or understanding of the meaning of it all—but whether, your heart is open and reaching out to the Lord. Marvellous things can happen if you are in that state. It is not that you should have a perfect understanding of everything, not that you should have confidence in yourself, that having moved you can keep going, but it is that your heart is livingly toward the Lord ; then everything is possible. That is the way of life (and to be in the way of life may only mean at its beginnings, that you are reaching out for the Lord), that is the direction of life. That you are in that state is the way of life ; that you are obeying whatever light the Lord has given you ; that you are obedient to everything that He has made known to you as His will, that is the way of life, and the way of an increase of life.

The way of death may be, at its beginning, no intention whatever of being the Lord's. Or, at some point further on, where the Lord has said in your heart : That is My way for you ; that is

My will for you! and you have perhaps not said, 'No, Lord' in as many words, but that is what your life is saying. That, No! has now been hanging over your life for perhaps five, ten years, perhaps longer. It is not that you have never said positively: I will never be obedient; I am not going that way! It may be that you are simply doing nothing. That is a negative! That is, No! It is not Yea! to the Lord. The issues are tremendous. When we think that there may never be a presentation of Christ without one of two results: we may either increase or decrease; we may be more positive or less so; we are either in a fuller way of death or a fuller way of life; it is a

tremendous thing. It is impossible to get away from the alternatives.

The Apostle felt the solemnity of this, and surely we feel the solemnity of it! The Apostle was so deeply conscious of, and moved by, the solemnity of this position that he said: "Who is sufficient for these things?" Think of it, that wherever I go the effect of my life is more life or more death! It is serious to be bound up with anybody's life.

So we would entreat, and would plead, lest it should be death unto death. Open the heart! Reach out to the Lord! Move in obedience to every bit of light which He has given, and it shall be a savour of life unto life. T. A.-S.

The Fulness of Christ

THE field of our meditation mainly will be the book of Joshua and the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians. The fragment which is the key to this meditation is in Ephesians iv. 13:

"Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

This verse might very well be placed at the commencement of the book of Joshua, and it would give a very good interpretation to that book, and be a guide for the spiritual reading and study of the book. It would explain all that is happening after Israel has crossed the Jordan and entered the land. It would explain things from both sides; from the side of the Divine intention, and from the side of the adversary's withstanding. It would represent what the Lord is seeking, and what the foes are against.

"Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith . . ." Carry that first clause of the verse through the book of Joshua, and it is very illuminating.

". . . and of the knowledge of the Son of God . . . ;" the same applies there. It will be necessary to take just a fragment from the letter to the Hebrews perhaps, to help us in that connection as to Joshua being appointed to bring into rest. But Joshua did not fully accomplish that purpose in bringing into rest "There remaineth therefore, a rest for the

people of God" (Hebrew iv. 9). That "rest remaining" is found in Christ. The book of Joshua is intended to point to the fulness of the knowledge of the Son of God in the saints; of coming to finality, to rest;

". . . unto a fullgrown man . . ."

and that clearly stands in contradistinction from the wilderness life of spiritual immaturity.

". . . unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

It is only possible to understand the land in the light of the fulness of Christ. All the superlative promises connected with that land are transferred spiritually to the Lord Jesus. He is God's fulness for His people in every respect.

Truly this 13th verse of Ephesians iv. is a magnificent introduction to the book of Joshua. The last clause embodies all the other clauses: ". . . the fulness of Christ." That is the end in view.

The letters to the Ephesians and Colossians as a whole have to do with the fulness of Christ. In the Colossian letter it is the fulness of Christ as Head; in the Ephesian letter it is the fulness of Christ as Head over all things to the Church which is His Body, *which is* the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

The Trinity in Action.

Returning to the typical, or illustrative side of this spiritual truth as brought out in the life of Israel, we might begin by noticing the

three sections of Israel's history. Firstly in Egypt and the deliverance; secondly, in the wilderness; thirdly, in the land. Each of these represents a specific relation of the Godhead.

I. The Father in Egypt.

The first—Egypt and the deliverance—sees God the Father acting in Sovereign grace. The thought of the Father is very definitely introduced when the commission is given to Moses. Moses was told to say to Pharaoh: "Let my son go that he may serve me; and thou hast refused to let him go; behold, I will slay thy son, thy firstborn." It is God the Father acting in Sovereign grace in relation to Israel in Egypt, and Israel's deliverance. It is God, Whose heart is set upon His family, His children, Who takes the initiative in relation to men and women in the bondage of the world of sin, and Satan. It is God who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. The paternal element is there in Sovereign grace to secure a family.

II. The Son in the Wilderness.

In the second case—in the wilderness—it is Christ as the pattern and basis of life. The pattern, perhaps consummately represented in the Tabernacle and all the ordinances of the Tabernacle, is Christ in Person, and Christ as a heavenly order, a spiritual system, to which the people of God are to be conformed, unto which likeness they are to be brought. It is brought out very clearly in the New Testament. Christ is there spoken of as the basis of life. In the wilderness there were many types of Christ as the life of the heavenly people, the Manna, the Bread: "I am the bread of life"; "Your fathers did eat the manna in the wilderness . . ."; "I am the living bread." The water from the rock is referred to by the Apostle Paul: "I would not have you ignorant brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea . . . and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them; and the rock was Christ." And so on many other occasions we find Christ in the wilderness as the basis of life.

The Spirit in the Land.

When we come to the third case—in the land—we come to the Holy Spirit; the Holy

Spirit in energy concerning attaining unto the fulness of Christ. Joshua, as we well know, is a type of the energy of the Holy Ghost. Joshua came under the government of the Captain of Jehovah's hosts—The Holy Spirit in relation to Christ in the place of absolute authority.

These three sections of Israel's history bring into view the three relationships of the Godhead in their specific expression; the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. The Father and redemption; the Son and the redemptive object; the Holy Spirit and the redemptive energy.

Four Features of the Book of Joshua.

The book of Joshua corresponds to Ephesians and Colossians in four things, in the main:—

Firstly, in Christ risen—on the far side of Jordan.

Secondly, in the heavenlies in Christ. A people who are regarded as entirely detached from this world and who are forbidden to have any kind of voluntary relationship therewith.

Thirdly, spiritual increase—going on unto full growth, to God's end.

Fourthly, spiritual government.

Those are the four things which are the main lines of the book of Joshua, and they are the four things which characterise in an outstanding way the letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians.

The important thing to see is that these are successive steps, each of which makes the other necessary, both before and after.

If you are in Christ risen, then, as Paul says in Colossians iii. 1, you must seek, those things which are above, where Christ is. The risen life with Christ demands the heavenly position and the heavenly life in Christ.

To have a heavenly life with Christ now you must know resurrection life in Christ. It is impossible to know a life in heavenly fellowship with the Lord if you do not know Him in the power of His resurrection. It is a thing which is basic. It is a crisis at a certain point, but it is a thing which goes on all the time. Every day, in order to maintain and continuously enjoy our heavenly life and position in Christ we have to apply the power of His resurrection; that is, live upon His risen life. If we are daily and really living upon the risen life of the Lord Jesus, we shall know what heavenly fellowship is. These things demand each other, both ways.

Then, if we are risen with Christ, and in a heavenly fellowship, we shall move to the third thing spontaneously—spiritual increase; growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; moving on to maturity, to fulness.

Let us work back again. There can be no spiritual increase only as we are living out of voluntary contact with what is meant by the world spiritually and morally. We can never grow in Christ if we have any kind of root in, or link with the world spiritually or morally. If we have, it will keep us back from spiritual growth. We can never know spiritual increase only as we know the energy of the risen life of the Lord Jesus.

Then the fourth thing follows—spiritual government, ascendancy, authority, power, dominion. That is something more than position. That is putting your position into an executive form. You may have a position in which you are not functioning. That wants explaining, but it is easily made very simple and very practical. What is spiritual government? What is spiritual ascendancy? Some people have, it seems, reduced this question of authority, government and power to apply merely to the realm of direct power over the enemy, and whenever authority or government is mentioned they have some idea of exorcism and dealing with demons, and so on. That may be quite a proper realm for the exercise of authority in Christ, but more often than not the experience of the average Christian is dealing with demons indirectly, and not directly. If someone just crosses a desire, a preference, a like of ours, and becomes thereby a means of irritation or annoyance, there is plenty of room for losing your position and breaking down in your ascendancy. There is, on the other hand, the very opportunity for proving that you are above and not beneath. In a thousand different ways in ordinary everyday life, the whole question of government is involved. Every provocation is a test of spiritual government. Why does the Lord not remove difficult and awkward people from the sphere of our lives, but leaves them there? We may have prayed many times for the Lord to take them out of our range, to deliver us from them; and the Lord ignores all such prayers. He is simply saying: This is unto the enlargement of Christ! How? Simply by our getting on top of the situation by

faith's appropriation of Christ. That is the government of Christ. That is spiritual increase. That is spiritual ascendancy.

Countless are the ways in which we can go up or go down almost any day, and many times in a day; and whether we go up or down depends entirely upon the measure of Christ that is in us, to which we have attained. If there is a large measure of Christ, then we shall be able to meet evil with good, and so triumph. That is government. Indirectly we are simply dealing with the foe. The enemy counts upon that ground of fleshly reaction for his victories all the time. If he has no ground of fleshly reaction—that is, if we do not react in the flesh—the enemy is a defeated foe, and we are in the place of authority over him. Authority is not simply official; it is spiritual, it is moral, it is "Christ in you . . ."

Spiritual and Moral Ascendancy—God's Desire For Us.

That is what the Lord is after. He is after getting His people into a place of spiritual elevation, *above* with Himself. That should be the outworking of our risen union with Christ, our heavenly fellowship with Christ and of our spiritual, increase in Christ. Working backward, it is so plain, so patent, that you can never know spiritual dominion, moral elevation, unless you have the increase of Christ, growing spiritually, and unless you know what heavenly union with Christ is, and unless you know the power of His resurrection.

Note some of the corresponding features of Joshua, Ephesians and Colossians. Here is a little basis of study in these three books. See how many times in the first chapter of the book of Joshua there is a call for spiritual strength, or to be strong. In that first chapter the Lord says again and again to Joshua: "Be strong, and of a good courage"; "Have not I commanded thee, be strong . . ." Turn to the letter to the Ephesians, chapter iii. verse 16:—

"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man."

Chapter I, verses 19-21:

" . . . that ye may know . . . the exceeding greatness of his power to-us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and made him to

sit at his own right hand . . . far above all . . . ”

Or again, in Chapter VI, verse 10 :—

“ Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might.”

We must recognise that all that is unto something. It comes in the first chapter of the book of Joshua, and in Ephesians what is in view is brought so clearly out. It is a spiritual conflict, for which nature makes no provision, and for which man finds nothing in himself.

Turn to the Colossian letter, Chapter 1, verse 11 :—

“ Strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory . . . ”

Look again at Joshua, chapter iii. There you have the crossing of the Jordan. The typical meaning of Jordan is identification with Christ in death, burial and resurrection. It is the Romans vi, position.

Turn to Ephesians, and in chapters ii and iii, you will find the Jordan aspect of things referred to quite definitely :—

“ And you did he quicken, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins . . . and raised us up together with him . . . ”

Then in Colossians, chapter ii, verses 10-12 :—

“ And in him ye are made full . . . in whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ ; having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.”

Three Features of the Land.

In the book of Joshua you are at length in the land, and being in the land represents three things :—

1. Resurrection life with Christ.
2. Heavenly union with Christ.
3. Fulness in Christ : The measure of Christ.

When you turn to these two New Testament letters, you see how much there is said about these three things.

In Ephesians it is : “ And raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavens, in Christ Jesus.”

In Colossians it is : “ If ye then were raised with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your affections on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon

the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

The fulness in Ephesians is : “ That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man ; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith ; to the end that ye . . . may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the knowledge surpassing love . . . ”

The fulness in Colossians is the matchless representation of Christ's fulness, and then we are told that we are made full in Him.

So that over Jordan, in the land, all these things as spiritual realities obtain.

Further, in the book of Joshua there is the conquest.

In Ephesians, in the heavens, “ our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness . . . ” That is a Joshua touch.

As you pass on in the book of Joshua you find that you come to the question of relationships. A very interesting and illuminating section of Joshua has to do with relationships in the inheritance. In the corresponding Scriptures in Ephesians there is so much about relationships in Christ. Chapters iv. and v. have to do mainly with relationships in the Body of Christ. The same thing is in Colossians.

Then as to government. Joshua brings the government very clearly into view. One little touch alone will at once show that line of things in the book of Joshua—the bringing of the kings, and the command to put the feet upon the necks of the kings. That will carry us to the New Testament, and on our way through (so to speak) to Ephesians and Colossians we pass through Romans, and we see :

“ And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” (xvi, 20.)

In Ephesians the word is : “ Far above all rule and authority and principality and power.” We are called into that heavenly union with Him in ascendancy over these spiritual forces.

So we see the corresponding features between these books of the Old and New Testaments.

Having paved the way for a meditation we can go a little further in seeing the present spiritual value of all this. What we need to see, in the main, is God's purpose, and then God's means and methods of reaching His purpose.

God's Purpose.

God's purpose is clearly revealed to be the bringing of the saints to the fulness of Christ. Paul would put that in various ways. He uses that word: "Till we all attain unto the fulness of Christ." In another place he will express it in this way: "That we may present every man perfect in Christ." To go through Paul's letters alone with the thought of spiritual completeness, perfection (in the right usage and meaning of that word "perfection"—it means completeness, fulness), is to see how tremendous this matter is in the Divine thought. God's purpose is shown to be, by an overwhelming amount of Scripture, the bringing of the saints to the fulness of Christ. What follows is God's means and methods of reaching that end.

Some Things which are Basic to the Purpose.

If God is going to get His end; that is, the saints brought to the fulness of Christ, then some things are necessary *to Him* for His end, as well as to us to get to God's end.

The first thing is a heart which is wholly set upon the Lord. Unless the Lord has that in us He has no hope, no chance; and unless our hearts are wholly set upon the Lord, all the Lord's purpose can never be our blessed experience.

Joshua and Caleb, as embodying the company that went into the land, clearly represent that principle. They wholly followed the Lord, and, doing so, they are set in contrast with the ten spies who accompanied them in the first investigation of the land. The others did not wholly follow the Lord, simply because their hearts were not wholly set upon the Lord; and the history of the generation which fell in the wilderness is simply the history of a heart not wholly set upon the Lord.

If you want proof of that from the Word, you may have it in such portions as we find in Psalm lxxviii, 37, or in Psalm cvi, 24:—"They despised the pleasant land . . ." That shows quite clearly that their heart was not set upon the land, and wholly after the Lord.

If you want a more vivid, and perhaps more terrible analytical commentary upon their history you have it in I Corinthians x, 6-11. That is a statement that their hearts were not wholly set upon the Lord; therefore, they did not enter into the land, come to the inheritance, nor attain unto God's end.

A heart wholly set upon the Lord is one which has clearly discriminated between salvation for its own sake, for blessing and gain;

and salvation with God's purpose in view. There is all the difference between those things. Salvation for its own sake, just to know that you are saved, for blessing and gain to the one who is saved, is one thing. But salvation with God's purpose in view is quite another thing. Of course, that generation of Israelites wanted to be saved. The idea of salvation in Egypt was a great idea, they would respond to it; but in their minds salvation meant something better for themselves. When at any point it seemed as though salvation was not working out as they had expected it would work out, for their own good, and they were being tested, then they regarded salvation as not being the blessing that they thought it was. This showed quite clearly that salvation for them was purely a matter of personal good, personal gain, personal blessing. It was salvation for its own sake. Joshua and Caleb, and the people who were of their spirit, went in with God's end in view. It was the Lord's delight which was in view. What was it they said? Was it not this: "If the Lord delight in us . . ." It is a question of the Lord's delight. They had their hearts adjusted to the delight of the Lord.

The wilderness is a very great demonstration of the larger purpose of salvation; that is, that the Lord has interests, and that His people can only know the full meaning of their salvation as the Lord has His object. The fact that they perished in the wilderness shows quite clearly that failure to apprehend the Lord's interests and the Lord's object means that we never come to the full enjoyment of our own salvation. To put that the other way; to enjoy salvation to the full it must be swung right away from ourselves and be regarded in the light of the Lord's glory, the Lord's interests, the Lord's object. The wilderness is a great demonstration of that. They never came to the full blessing of their salvation because they fell short of what the Lord was after in their salvation. The Lord said of them: "This people have I formed for myself." Over against that, this people sought to have all that the Lord meant for *themselves*, instead of for the Lord.

The wilderness represents the life outwardly in relation to the Lord, but inwardly in relation to self. On the outside they would claim to be the Lord's people. On the outside there would be all that which was the constituent of a people of God. But on the inside the whole relationship was with self. T.A.-S.

The Eyes of His Glory

(Continued.)

BIBLE READING: Ezekiel i. 25-28; Exodus xvi. 1-15; Psalm lxxviii. 18-22; Phil. iv. 11-20; 1 Cor. i. 29-31.

THE quest of God is for a people in fellowship with His glory, who here on earth reveal the essential character of that glory—in measure before men, and in fuller measure before principalities and powers.

Though the Lord had a people from the beginning, when He called Abram and from Abram's loins there issued a nation which was His earthly people, a type of the Church, unhappily that people did not represent in completeness the thought of God; there was always breakdown somewhere. But we can equally say that right through the long history of Israel's disappointments, and of that which is the anti-type of Israel, the Church, though the Lord has not found a people in entirety after His thought, He has always had some, however few, in the bigger company who did represent in a real degree what His thought was. It may be only one or two out of the nation, but still some to whom the Lord could really point and say: "This is after My thought; I go on with this little unto the final realisation of My end, even if I have to put all the rest aside."

That principle is seen operating right from the beginning of Israel's history in the wilderness, and we pick up the story at the sixteenth chapter of Exodus and say immediately that that which represents God's thought in a real measure is not the whole of Israel, but Moses and Aaron—at any rate in the portion that we shall be concerned with at present. There is a significant exception in Numbers xx. 1-13, but we do not purpose to deal with that at this stage.

They represent God's real thought as over against the company who did not so represent His thought. We shall observe again and again that in connection with these two men—sometimes with one or two others added—we are told that the glory of the Lord appeared, not necessarily to them, but to the rest of Israel. We can say, therefore, that Moses and Aaron represent that which in the New Testament is

called "The glory of Christ" (2 Cor. viii. 23). God can point to these two on the earth and say: "These are My thought of glory." If we can analyse the characteristic features of these two men, we shall see what it is to have the glory of the Lord upon us.

God's End—Conformity to Christ.

We may put this question to ourselves: How, in such a day as ours, are we to know which are the people after God's own thought? The answer is a simple one. The more the glory of Christ is manifested through a people, the more are they according to God's thought. That must be a question of degree. You could not point to any man on the earth today and say: With that man the glory of Christ is revealed in fulness. But of some you can say: There is a wonderful Christ-likeness in them! That is to say, the essential features of Christ are seen in them. Well, the more that is true of a man the more does that man represent God's thought; and this is an obviously true statement because we know that the revealing of the glory of Christ through a company of people is God's whole purpose in this age. The more the glory of the Lord appears as alongside men and women, in that measure do they represent God's thought. So when we pray that the Lord may make us a people according to His own heart, all that we are desiring really is that more and more may the essential features of Jesus Christ be seen in us, through us, and accompanying us wherever we go. The glory is the attestation which God gives that such a man is after His own heart.

As has been said earlier, the first result of really apprehending the glory of Christ and the meaning of the Blood in relation to it is an instinctive consciousness of our own not daring to approach, and the consequential working in us of the sense of the utter baseness of ourselves and the need of humbling ourselves before the Lord. You will remember that it is said of Moses that he was very meek. Here was a man who went right up, typically, into the glory,

and he was the meekest man on the face of the earth. Moses illustrates that side.

Then there is the terror of the Lord, relating to the touching of that glory other than under the cover of the Blood. You will remember that Moses and Aaron spoke ill-advisedly, they got out of their cover in the Lord, they touched the fire of that holiness, and God said: "Because ye believed not in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this assembly into the land....." It illustrates that even a Moses, even those who are God's precious witnesses, dare not deal with that glory in any presumption or get outside of the cover of the precious work of Calvary, lest that glory break out on them, and work some consequence which means the loss of something precious to them and to God, because they did not regard the holiness of the glory of the Lord.

Glory Revealed as Faith in God.

Exodus xvi. 10: "And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud."

You have here the children of Israel embarking at length upon their wilderness journey. They have come through the Red Sea in good spirit, and now they are out in the wilderness, and no doubt by this time the provision they brought with them has come to an end, and they are beginning to realise a little bit what they have come into. Just as when we came to the Lord we did so with great delight of heart, but very soon we woke up to the fact that we had come into something we did not quite realise before, something which faced us with situations we had never bargained for. Even had we stopped to think what would be the further steps in the way, we could never fully have known, but as we advanced we found ourselves very seriously up against things. These people of Israel are taking their first steps in the life of faith, and they have suddenly awakened to the nature of the thing that they have moved into. They have suddenly discovered that in this life nature offers them nothing at all. They have got into a wilderness, and where are they going to get their resources from? Being the people they are, babes as yet in spiritual education, at heart an unbelieving company, they at once begin to murmur,

The Psalmist in Psalm lxxviii. tells us the kind of language they use, in addition to the words reported in Exodus xvi.: "Can God?" That is typical language of the people who are launched out on a life of faith, but who are not spiritually big enough to go through as yet. It is the evidence of their need for being educated. So they murmur.

They murmur against the Lord's servants who have brought them out. The Lord's servants wisely remind them that it was not they who brought them out, and that their murmurings were not against them but against God. Then Moses and Aaron, under the instruction of the Lord tell the people that the Lord will provide, and we read that the people looked toward the wilderness, the place to which they were going, the place in which this position was going to be still more acute, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. Here the appearing of the glory of the Lord is like the sudden manifesting of those eyes of glory that have been watching, those ears of glory that have been listening, as if in protest against the murmuring and complaining on the one hand, but in attestation of the strong faith on the part of the two men, Moses and Aaron, who by contrast are standing for the Lord's true thought, The eyes of His glory, as it were, are making themselves evident, as much as to say: "I am here with My two witnesses; I am standing absolutely with them." We can interpret it as meaning this, that the glory of the Lord was revealed by the attitude and position taken up by the two men as opposed to the attitude of all the other unbelieving company. !!

So there you have one element in the revealing of the glory of the Lord by a man or by a company. It is this—standing in a day when nature can offer nothing, when resources are at a discount, when everything counsels hopelessness, impossibility, despair, death. In such a day there is a man who says: God can! And if you and I stand like that we are revealing the glory of the Lord. *

The life of faith is in its essence the corresponding thing to that which we saw in Ezekiel's vision—a firmament and a throne above the firmament. Everything is directed from a realm which is cut off from the earth, separated from the earth, separated from nature, everything coming from above.

It is obvious that if the Lord is going to have

a people on the earth now to manifest this aspect of His glory, it demands that that people be so located that they have to draw every resource from above. That is the expression of the glory of the Lord, because not only does the world at large say: "Can God?" but the greater part of the people of God say: "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" As far as we know, all the people except two here said that. That is the typical language of the majority. The language of these two, revealing the glory of the Lord, is: "God can!" It is the reversing of the natural order. It is essential for God's testimony that He gets some people into such positions where they are forced back to this: "We have no resource anywhere else, but we know God can and God will." So perhaps if you are a little surprised that the Lord is so shutting you up that you simply have no resource anywhere, and do not know where to turn except to Himself, you are in the day of demonstrating the glory of God in a way you never dreamed of.

Gloiy—not Remote, but for Daily Realisation.

To illustrate this turn to 2 Chron. xxxii. 30: "This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper spring of the waters of Gihon, and brought them straight down on the west side of the city of David."

Sennacherib had not yet come up against Jerusalem, but he was drawing near, and it was evident that his arrival could not be long delayed. Verse thirty tells us what Hezekiah did in advance of the coming of the Assyrians. It is necessary to know the geography of the city to get the significance of his act. The City of David stood upon a hill and the waters of Gihon by nature sprang up outside the city wall and flowed down the slope of the hill away from the city, thus benefiting Judah's enemies in the event of a siege of Jerusalem. Now before ever the enemy came near Hezekiah so acted that those waters, which would have flowed down to serve the enemy were turned inside the city. That which would have been strength to the enemy was so turned inwardly that it became sustenance for the Lord's people. This was done before the crisis.

If you study the language of the Assyrians, you will see that it is always along the line of: "Can your God deliver you, when the gods of all other nations have failed before us?" This is the language of sheer unbelief. Hezekiah takes pains in advance of the big crisis

to turn to his own account that which would otherwise sustain unbelief. For us the principle is this: If, in the presence of the comparatively small trials of faith that come the way of all of us day by day, we ask ourselves fearfully: Is the Lord able to save us in this trial? Can He supply this need of ours? Is not this situation hopeless and had we not better give up in despair?—such language will quickly feed the natural unbelief in us, and when the really big crisis comes we shall be overwhelmed. Turn the waters of your daily trials into the city, that faith and not unbelief may be sustained by them! Cultivate the holy habit of reasoning with yourself thus: "Here is a difficulty, but, glory to God, there is a way out of this! God can! I know that all things are possible to Him!" Supposing that is the acquired habit of our lives; supposing that is the way we look at every thing, big or little that comes along! Well, in the hour of the big crisis we shall find, for our consolation, that in our hearts there has been developed faith in God's ability to do the impossible, and when we face the terrible crisis of the Assyrian besieging, our attitude will not be: Can God? but God can!

Of course it is more than a mere habit. It is the exercise of faith in God, of believing in the victory of Calvary, and the all-sufficiency of Christ, of seeing Christ as the Store-house of every necessary resource, as ALL and in all. The Lord will send us plenty of problems of the minor kind, through the ordinary duties of our life, to encourage that holy exercise. So often the first thing many people say is: We shall never get out of this! That is the spontaneous expression of natural unbelief. The man of real faith would say: Here is a situation for the Lord to prove Himself in! I wonder how He will solve it! You could allow unbelief in your heart to carry you away, and say: "Can God?" But the man who has seen anything of the Lord, who knows anything of the glory, who recognises that the Throne of glory is for him in all situations, though he may say it tremblingly, yet he will say triumphantly: "My God shall fulfil every need according to His riches in glory." The riches are in the Throne of glory. The man who thus walks in fellowship with the Throne is the man who, in the hour of a supreme crisis, is not going to say: Can God? But: God can! You see what it is to turn the waters which could serve

the Adversary, so that they serve the interests of the Lord.

This is fellowship with the Throne which is separated from the earth, a heavenly fellowship operating along the line of faith, with Philippians 4-19 as one of its foundations. It is worth noting that that text, which is so often tritely quoted, demands a revelation of the glory of Christ for anything like its adequate comprehension.

Do you see the character of the witness who is going to reveal the glory of Christ? One feature is, that having seen that glory, he is able *in all circumstances* to say: "It is allright; earth offers me nothing; nature says No. So far as I am concerned, things are hopelessly impossible, *but* God has a way, God can!" Hezekiah bade his people say nothing to the Assyrian: "The people held their peace, and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, saying, answer him not," Do you see the spiritual principle? Take on the argument of unbelief and begin to reason with it, and you will go down at once. Let unbelief come and knock at the door of your heart with all manner of suggestions; the man who knows God has his eyes on the Throne and in his heart is saying: "Our God is able . . . and he will."

Hezekiah's prayer to the Lord is: "Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear; open thine eyes, O Lord, and see." He is appealing to the eyes of glory to deal with the situation. He is not taking on the argument of; Can God? He is resting in the fact that God can, and he says: "Lord, let Thine eyes of glory behold this challenge; we are counting on the Throne."

Glory is Revealed through the Cross.

There is a deep principle behind, something which leaves none of us untouched, because we are all called to the life of faith. It is not only those who leave business, who cease to receive a regular income and trust the Lord to supply their needs. That is not the life of faith in its entirety. Certainly the principle should operate in that matter, but the life of faith is just as necessary in the matter of patience as of finance. The Lord may put you down in a provoking situation to lead the life of faith. You say: "Lord I want to glorify Thee here." What does it mean to glorify the Lord? Well, this—that in that situation, which is so provocative that you have no patience in yourself to meet it, you

have all the patience you need as you hold fast to the Lord in glory, and people are bound to remark: "You are very patient under this provocation! How is it?" And in that moment the glory of the Lord has appeared and others have seen a patience in you which was not of yourself. That is the glory of the Lord appearing in the wilderness. Other people see in you an expression of Him Who is in the Throne. The Lord has to put us into circumstances which force us back on Him for the resources we do not possess in ourselves. Hence in every experience that makes a demand upon the children of God for something that they do not have by nature, or that they cannot acquire in any way from nature, and which can only be had from God, in so far as they draw from God they are revealing the glory of God.

The way out from the circumstances of difficulty and embarrassment in which you are found is fellowship with the Lord in glory. Of course, that involves this—that you have utterly renounced the world and its resources. There are some realms where you might go to the world as a matter of physical possibility, and obtain resources; you might have your bazaars to raise your funds; but that is a realm which you have voluntarily renounced. On moral and spiritual grounds you have said: "I am crucified to that, and that is crucified to me; the Cross has come in between, and beyond the line that the Cross makes is forbidden ground." Equally the realm of the self life is beyond the pale for the spiritual man. His language is: "I can of myself do nothing." But it may be argued that in certain realms a man is gifted by nature. Is this not a capacity that can be drawn upon? No! In this matter he is as though he had nothing, though he be the most gifted man on earth. Hence the need for the Lord to weaken our strength in the way. But deeper than we realise there may be a leaning upon some sense of enablement which is in us by nature, and the Lord has to allow certain experiences which so find us out that when we do rest upon what was there we find it is not sufficient to bear the weight. And so often breakdown, failure, disappointment, collapse, and sometimes shame come to us until we wake up to the fact that we were trusting, after all, in something which was in ourselves. The thing which alone glorifies God is that

which is from above—in other words, the life of the enthroned Christ mediated *through* us by the Holy Spirit.

Glory is Measured by Heavenly Standards.

There is one other point we must stress. Paul said: "And my God shall fulfil every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Just before this he has said, speaking of the gift which Epaphroditus had brought in the name of the Philippians: "I have all things, and abound; I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you . . ." O, then, what Epaphroditus brought was such a large hamper that it kept Paul in provisions for a long time! No! not at all! He goes on to say: ". . . an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." That is what has made Paul so satisfied. He has received that which has come to him as the odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. You see what it suggests. It suggests that for this man, who was a New Testament counterpart of Moses and Aaron, an entirely different scale of values is operating from that which the world would have; and he is finding his satisfaction and delight, not in the possession of some material thing, as other men would have done, but in the *spiritual* value attaching to it. The gift might have been of little intrinsic value. He values it because of its spiritual preciousness in the sight of the Lord.

We are in a materialistic world, and often the Lord's people judge everything by its physical, financial, material value. They count the number of people attending your meetings, and if there were three hundred they say it was a good meeting, and if there were thirty they say it was a poor one. This is a scale of values which may be utterly of this world. Paul had a scale of values which was not earthly but heavenly, not material but spiritual.

That is a challenge. What scale of values have we? By what do we measure success? Is it the intensity of our outward activities, the number of meetings we take, or the length of the message we find we are able to give? We can have this wrong scale of values, and it all detracts from the glory. The glory is not in that.

Glory in Christ.

What does Jeremiah say? That which is taken up in 1 Cor. i. 30-31. In Jeremiah ix. there is this:

"Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth, and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."

The Apostle Paul takes that up, and after saying:

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption," he goes on: "that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

What the Apostle is stressing there is this, that there is a far greater reason to glory in what Christ is to us, than in all our riches, in all our wisdom, in all that we have, and all that we are, and all that may come to us in the course of our ministry and our life. The thing that matters most is that we should know the Lord. By that standard how much worth are we? Our true value to the Lord is not in what we *do* but in what we are. You may have seemed in a given period of time to have done little that can be outwardly viewed and measured, but those who are spiritually discerning may see that you have grown in that time from a spiritual pygmy to a giant. True ministry is not what we do, but the measure in which we express the One in the glory. That is service; that is ministry; revealing the glory of the Lord here upon earth wherever and in whatever circumstances we may be in the will of God. Paul gloried because there was a sweet savour of Christ by the gift from the Philippians. He has just said: "I have all things, and abound....." He is not going to be overwhelmed with delight because he has received the gift—the gift was nothing to him in itself. He could go on and trust the Lord without it; but he says: "I am so full because Christ hath been glorified by your gift!" You see the scale of values is tremendously high.

We must put this question to ourselves. What is our scale of values? Where do we stand? What is it that constitutes for us the real measure of anything at all? God's measure is the degree in which He sees the likeness of His Son, the degree in which the Spirit of Christ is expressed, the degree in which those who are concerned with that thing are

growing in grace. That is God's scale of values ; so he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. Christ is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. What a contrast between the bulk of the Lord's people and the few ! The bulk measure everything by its outward effect, its visible dimensions, and the few measure everything by its spiritual value. It is the inward growth of Christ, the measure in which Christ is developed in a soul or in a company, that makes the true measure of that company. Laodicea says : " I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing....." Ah ! there is a wrong scale of values. The Lord's comment is : " I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich.....and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see." When your eyes are anointed so that you can see, you will see the eyes of glory up there looking down, and what they are looking for is their own likeness here. That glory yonder is seeking to find some reflection here.

It is the life of faith into which we are called that will be the glory of Christ in us. The Lord will see to it that we are touched somewhere. He will so place us that we are forced to recognise we need something we have not got. It will be some moral grace very likely, patience,

love ; we shall suddenly discover that instead of being radiant with holy joy we are presenting a miserable face to the on-lookers, and we have said until now : " Well, I am placed in a very difficult position ; you would not enjoy life if you were placed as I am." Paul was in a prison when he wrote to the Philippians, and the key-note of his epistle is joy ! It is the very opportunity for us to reveal the glory of Christ, to obtain from Him the joy necessary to triumph in a hard place. And those who witness us will have to confess that our joy is not of nature—it is from another source ; and our testimony is : " It is the joy of the Lord which is our strength." That is only putting in another way : The glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. All Israel saw the glory in the case of Moses and Aaron, and all will see the glory of God in us, as Barnabas saw when he went down to Antioch—he saw the grace of God in them and was glad. We know that His glory is the glory of His grace. May the Lord see it in us more and more.

This is just one phase of the life of faith ; everything out from God. Let us urge again the cultivating of that holy habit ; saying in all circumstances : God can ! when all the rest of the people are saying : it is hopeless ! That is the glory of the Lord.

G. P.

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1934

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The Spiritual Background of the Word of God

Conference Talks with Workers

(Continued.)

WE have seen that on God's side the basic factor in His success is putting Christ into the constitution of things; but there is man's side, and on man's side there are two laws of God's success, they are faith and obedience.

Two Laws of Divine Success—Faith and Obedience

Now these two laws should be traced in the life and history of every instrument in relation to God's purpose. That is something with which to pause. Let our minds run over the means used by the Lord throughout the ages in the direction of His purpose and we shall see that from the beginning invariably these laws governed every instrumentality. On the other hand it should be noticed what the consequences have invariably been of the breakdown of these laws. We are not going to stay with that. It is mentioned and left for your fuller consideration, but it is tremendously important to recognise it. There are, therefore, two sides to God's success. His Own side, in getting His Son into man and into things; and there is man's side also; and man's side has to do with this dual law of faith and obedience. God can only get His Son into things as faith and obedience are granted Him. They open the way for the Lord, for His success. Where faith and obedience are reserved, God is rendered incapable of realising His end.

Now I want to take another wide sweep of the whole ground, coming right back to the beginning and tracing the course of things which seems to be apparent as back of the Word of God.

The Eternal Counsels of the Godhead.

I. We might have as our foundation, the fact that there has been from the beginning a cosmic struggle for the mastery of this universe. I think few of us will doubt that; very few of us will fail to recognise that. But it is not only a fact stated, it is something which implies a good deal, and it is the implications of that fact which will largely govern our further consideration. We follow the apparent course of

things and begin at a dateless period with the Godhead in the eternal counsels. It is mainly through the Apostle Paul that we are introduced to those eternal counsels of the Godhead. By the utterances which have come from him we are taken back into the times eternal before the world was, and are told certain things about God foreordaining, predestinating, foreknowing, and then doing certain things according to His foreknowledge, and these are what we term "the eternal counsels of the Godhead."

Christ appointed Heir of all Things.

II. Out of those eternal counsels of the Godhead, the one preeminent thing which issues is the appointment of God's Son Heir of all things. "God.....hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the ages:" (Heb. i. 2). This refers to some definite act, some precise issue from the eternal counsels in the Godhead; the appointment of the Son as Heir of all things.

Lucifer enters the Scene.

III. We are introduced by the Word of God in the same period (at what point in that period we do not know, but at some point) to another whose name is Lucifer, the Anointed Cherub that covereth (Lucifer, as we know, simply means luminary), who was an angelic being. Three things seem to be quite clear about him. (1) He occupied a very high position, but yet he was a servant.

(2) He seems to have had a specific and particular relationship to this world, a relationship which most probably existed before this present creation in a previous order of this world; and he is recognised as the prince of this world, and almost all the relationships which the Scriptures mention where he is concerned are with this world. His interests are all represented as focussed here, both by what the Scriptures tell us and by deduction from the main revelations of Scripture which probably we shall see more fully presently. We may be quite right in concluding that this world was the special

sphere of his relationship from eternity, and of his office.

(3) Iniquity was, at a given point, found in him. That iniquity was firstly the iniquity of pride leading secondly, to jealousy or envy. His heart was lifted up with pride and he became dissatisfied with his position as a servant and essayed to occupy a higher position which had not been given to him, coveting that position—jealousy and envy; and thirdly, as the active outcome—rebellion.

Lucifer Cast Out.

IV. Lucifer is shown to have been cast out with the angels who had entered into rebellion with him, the angels "which kept not their first estate."

A Parenthesis on the Mortality of the Body.

A question arises here, by way of parenthesis which may be a little speculative but is not altogether without reason; the question as to whether the bodies of Lucifer and his angels which were spiritual bodies, became mortal by their sin and perished, and both Satan and his angels became houseless. Satan and his angels are now disembodied spirits, and that their one craving is for a body. We have no record at all of them appearing in bodies of their own, but they are always seeking to take possession of bodies. Satan was unable to come in in his own body at the beginning, he had to assume the body of the serpent, and ever since that has been, so far as the Scriptures are concerned, his method of manifestation when he has really manifested himself. And this question as to whether the bodies of these angels (for angels have bodies) by reason of their sin became mortal arises. Mortality, of course, is death, and the history of this present creation is the history of sin resulting in mortality and death. We have very little indeed to go upon that would give us a ground of argument that Adam's body was an immortal body before the fall, or that a change took place physically at the fall, but if we argue inductively or deductively we know quite well that the mortality of the body is the result of sin, and that the redemption of the body is the final destruction of sin in the body. Therefore the destruction of death in the body, and the consummation of the redemptive work of Calvary is this mortal putting on immortality, this corruptible putting on incorruption.

Then, again, that is an inheritance. We inherit a spiritual body, an incorruptible body.

We inherit it by our spirits first of all being born of incorruptible life, and the spirit becoming possessed of incorruptible life in new birth is the seed of an incorruptible body which it will inherit. That is not just going to be a mechanical procedure. It is going to be the reward of saints, that spiritual body, that incorruptible, resurrection body. It is the completing, the complement of their new birth, or shall I say of the Spirit of sonship (I am coming to that more fully presently, but it rises here in connection with Lucifer). As to these facts, that evil spirits have not bodies and that their craving is always to occupy a body, that angels have spiritual bodies and have been seen again and again of men, there is no question. Lucifer was an angel. His spirits were angels, They have lost their body. How did they lose it? Is it that of which things later, in the case of all lost ones, are a repetition? Well, we just put the question in there by way of parenthesis because it does arise, and it may help us presently.

Lucifer's World Destroyed.

V. Then the world of Lucifer was involved and destroyed; how soon after his rebellion and being cast out we do not know. A previous creation existed; there is no doubt about that. This world in its present creative order has not been so for a hundred thousand years. There was a time when some of us used to be fearful for "Genesis," when we heard of skulls and skeletons being found which were more than six thousand years back, etc., etc. But there was a previous creation. That creation suffered in a way which resulted in things being as we find them at the beginning of the book of Genesis. The previous world was involved and destroyed. It was the world of Lucifer if our deductions are right. God has done that more than once with this world. We have a phrase now on record as to this present world order: "the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." Well, it is but a repetition.

A Question on the Third Creation.

Now here another question arises, and I raise it simply for its interest; I am not basing anything dogmatic upon it. Is this new creation which eventually comes in with Christ through His resurrection, the third? Does the third day relate to the history of this world?

We know the stamp of number three in everything ; we saw it in all parts of the creation. I have always had some difficulty in understanding the real value of "the third day" as related to Christ's resurrection. How emphatic it is ; how precise. "Today.....tomorrow..... and the third day I am perfected." Why this emphasis ? What is the necessity ? It is not just putting three on things ; surely there is something back of it, because all things which are of God are not petty and small and local ; they are universal and they are eternal. They relate to the whole range of things in principle ; they are vast. And I just raise the question : Is this new creation which comes in with Christ in resurrection the third ? And inasmuch as it comes in now with Christ in resurrection, it is the last. It is in the power of a life that is indestructible. You carry the principle of indestructible life through the very universe eventually through Christ. I just mention that because we are getting to the spiritual background of everything and it may be of help. There again it is but one fragment added to our progress toward the end that we have in view.

A New World.

VI. A new world. I am not now speaking of this new-creation-world in Christ through the cross ; I am speaking of this world order from the beginning of Genesis. A new world, and three things in relation to it :

(1) Out of the eternal counsels, Christ is its Prince. Mark you, Lucifer is deposed from the principedom. In this new world Christ is appointed Heir of all things. He is its prince in the appointment of God. Now note, a difference has taken place. This Prince is not a member of the household as a servant, as was Lucifer, this Prince is the Son.

(2) Christ's identification with the creation before the fall. That was mentioned before, you remember, and I said that we should come on it again. We must remember that the Christ of the New Testament is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. And we said that before the fall God walked and talked with man on the earth, and that implied thought and intent. Now He identifies Himself with the world of which He is Prince and comes to it and walks and talks.

(3) The fall. He is separated from it by the fall, yet retains a link with it and a testimony in it. The link and the testimony from Abel onward

is the Testimony of Jesus ; it is Christ implied.

It is so patent that everywhere from Abel on through the whole Scriptures Christ is in evidence in that specific relationship. All the types whether they be personal or whether they be symbols, are types of Christ. They are here on this earth, they are virtually Christ here, and everything in relation to them has to do with His supremacy, His sovereignty, His Lordship. As we have pointed out, that when there is a right adjustment and relationship to those types of Christ in the Old Testament, and when they are given their right place in the life of God's people, the issue is absolute pre-eminence all the time. Lordship, Sovereignty, Dominion. The Tabernacle, the Ark of the Testimony : these are centres, which, when occupying their right place spiritually in the life of God's people, produce amongst those people the mighty powers of absolute victory and triumph all the time, and they are the testimony of Jesus. (What I have in view is to get you to the heart of the testimony of Jesus, to see what it is.) You see He is by the fall separated from His world, yet He retains His link with it along the line of sovereignty, dominion. Christ is everywhere in evidence through the Old Testament dispensation.

The Incarnation.

VII. The Incarnation. The Son comes in the flesh personally. Three things :

(1) Identification with, and at the same time separation from, the world. On the one side He identifies Himself with this world and with its race by His incarnation. Yet at the same time, on the other side, He is distinct from it, He is not of it, He is separate from it. United with it, yet separated from it. Identification and separation in the incarnation.

(2) Redemption. The redemption of the race and the potential redemption of the world, the kosmos, and the casting out of the prince of this world. Now we must retrace. Lucifer was cast out. The Son was made Prince. The cast-out Lucifer returns to the domain of God's appointed Prince and recovers a kingdom in this world morally. What was before geographical afterwards became moral. Now you get your order of Christ's redemption. Christ comes, redeems the world and casts out the prince of this world anew, but this time he is cast out morally. Satan is now set at nought on a moral ground, and the success of the Lord Jesus was because the prince of this world

came to Him and had nothing in Him. It was a moral victory, a moral power which was his undoing. Well, there in the Cross redemption was secured for the whole race—and more than that ; for the whole creation potentially. That is in Christ's victory at Calvary, and Satan cast out. He is still here, but morally cast out. Thus we have identification and separation ; redemption, and the casting out of the prince of this world.

(3) The malignity of Satan from the beginning of the life of Christ. He has recognised the Son, and he has recognised what the issue will be of the Son having come. Therefore, at His very birth he will stand at nothing in cruelty, downright wickedness, to destroy the Son. Having failed there, the Son being under a special protection from the Father, in the wilderness he will try other methods. His point of attack is : " If Thou be the Son....." You see that is the point. And he persisted along that line to the end, seeking to get in between Christ and the Father with a human reasoning and judgment which would make Him doubt His Sonship. God has said through an opened heaven : " This is my beloved Son." " This is a poor plight for a Son to be in ; do you think it is true ? Do you believe that if you were the Son of God....." You see ? And the human side being stirred, provoked, worked upon to thrust itself between what was true of Him in His spirit in relation to the Father. It is our temptation all the time. The human side of our life is in suffering, in affliction, and by reason of the suffering is worked upon by the Enemy to bring about doubt as to whether after all, in the deepest reality of our being, we do belong to the Lord, we are joined to the Lord, that God is our Father. We understand it. It is an attempt through the channel of the human in its time of suffering, to question sonship. That malignity against the Son is seen from the beginning ; set against His life and the coming through with His work ; eventually working upon men to influence Him out of His work. God's charge against Israel was that they killed the Prince of Life. They cast the Prince of Life out of His Own world.

But that is only point seven, you cannot complete the circle without point eight ; and eight is always the resurrection number.

Resurrection and Ascension.

VIII. Resurrection and ascension. Five things :

(1) A Spiritual Prince enthroned. " God hath made Him a Prince and a Saviour." Now

this is not just a physical, geographical thing ; there is a sense in which without any of the work of Calvary at all the Godhead is absolute Sovereign in this universe though there be fifty thousand Lucifers. It is a moral thing through and through. The whole drama of Calvary is a moral drama ; so that Christ's enthronement now is not the enthronement of God as God over His universe because He had been pulled out of His place as God of the universe. The enthronement of Christ is a spiritual and moral enthronement. It is literally until all His enemies shall be made the footstool of His feet, but He reigns now in virtue of a moral victory : " Wherefore God hath highly exalted him....." and that " wherefore " relates to the specific character of the work of His Cross, His death.

(2) From a spiritual Prince there begins a spiritual people. He the Firstborn from among the dead, then a spiritual people begotten in resurrection ; a new creation in Christ. Not a physical or literal thing yet, but spiritual.

(3) The Day of Grace. Given, allowed for man to make a choice under the proclamation of the truth concerning Christ. What He has done, and where He is. During that Day of Grace there is a dual growth. On the one side a development with the false prince, the cast out prince ; on the other side a development with the enthroned and true Prince.

(4) After the Day of Grace the effected universal separation. (We are not filling in all the stages and movements ; we are taking the broad development.) The universal separation between these two things which have been growing, developing, is effected ; then the Day of Judgment.

(5) The new heavens and the new earth ; Christ universally Sovereign.

Now that is the cycle of things, but there are one or two things of which I want us to take special account as arising out of that. So far we have covered broad stretches ; we want now to get specific values.

The Testimony of Jesus.

The first is as to the Testimony of Jesus. What is " The Testimony of Jesus." Usually the testimony of Jesus has been considered to be that concerning His Godhead. That is, Who He is as a Member of the Godhead as differing from His being just a Man, a good Man, the best of men, the super-man. The Deity of Christ, the Godhead of Christ, that has been considered to be the preminent factor and

feature of the testimony of Jesus. I am not coming down from that, but I am going to say that that is not all. The Testimony of Jesus is that, but what that means. It is not only the Divine Sonship of Christ; it is that as Son He is Heir of all things, and God's universal Prince. It is not upon the Deity of Christ that the Devil rages. The Devil rages upon the truth that, being the Son He is Heir of all things. And it is not just that you can teach and preach Christ as God that provokes the Enemy, but it is the implication of that which stirs the Satanic animos; that being the Son of God He is destined to the Princedom of this universe. The testimony of Jesus is not "Jesus is God" alone; the testimony of Jesus is this: Jesus, being Son of God, is Lord. Now the apostolic message is that. It was the exaltation of the Son of God, not the fact of His Sonship only, but the exaltation of the Son of God to the right hand of the Majesty on high, with what that means; because that stands right over against the original position of Lucifer. That represents for ever the doom of Lucifer. He recognises that if that becomes recognised and accepted he has lost everything and if that acceptance grows apace his time is shortened; that every fresh one who accepts that shortens his time that much. He knows that it is only a matter of time. Does he? "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment before the time?" They know the time factor. They know that their eternal torment in that specific sense is bound up with His Coming and His work. You reach out to lead men and women spiritually into the truth of the absolute sovereignty of the Lord Jesus and you are shortening the Devil's time, and you are provoking him. It is not a cold theology, or even a fundamentalism of the Deity of Christ that stirs the kingdom of darkness. It is, in the power of the Holy Ghost, Christ declared as Lord, Son of God but Lord, Heir of all things. And the testimony of Jesus is something more than the doctrine of the Deity of Christ. It is the Holy Ghost making the Lordship of Christ a reality.

Sonship in the Saints.

The Testimony of Jesus has as much to do with His perfect humanity as it has with His deity.

Secondly, the nature of Christ's cosmos will be that of sonship in the saints. Now you get to the heart of things if you recognise that.

You see we pointed out that when God moved after Lucifer's fall, his relation to His eternal counsels, it was not a member of the household whom He appointed in the second place, it was the Son over God's House, and it was on the principle of sonship that He was going to establish His order ultimately and eventually rid the universe of that evil thing that had come into it. It was by sonship. Now, if it is a spiritual and moral thing this redemption and this establishment of God's eternal intention, that is going to be a principle in God's cosmos eventually, sonship; not servants but sons. So that sonship means, carries with it inherently, inheritance and dominion. The letter to the Hebrews teaches that throughout; that sonship carries with it inseparably inheritance and dominion. The nature of Christ's kosmos is going to be sonship in the saints. It is "Christ in you." ".....but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." That is the spirit of sonship in us that is pointing on to the nature of Christ's universal dominion. We are not to be servants in the House of God, we are to be sons. The House of God, beloved, is a very big thing. It is not the local assembly, nor all the local assemblies on this earth; they are of the House of God, but the House of God when it is fully manifested will be universal. There may be differences of position in the House of God, there may be degrees of glory and honour in the House of God, but it is going to be the House of God and the principle is going to be that the Spirit of sonship was introduced into everyone who came into it. Everyone born from above by the Spirit of God has the Spirit of sonship. They may be children for a time, they may, many of them, remain little more than children, but potentially the spirit of sonship is there, or the spirit of sonship is there with all the potentialities; the measure of inheritance will depend upon the measure of growth in sonship, but to get into the House does not require full growth in sonship. Sonship is implicit in the babe, and there is no membership of the family without the implicit sonship. So that the nature of Christ's kosmos, the redeemed kosmos will be that of sonship in the saints.

Sons of God in this World, and the Challenge.

Thirdly, what sonship carried with it in Christ when He came into the world applies to every believer. That is, it means identifica-

tion and separation. We are here related to this world in a very real and positive way for the Lord. At the same time there is a true separation from it. That is what Christ's sonship meant in incarnation, and that is true in our case. We are here for real purposes. It is not only for our training and discipline. That is a part of it. We are here in relation to the testimony of Jesus. If our lives are wholly ordered and governed by the Holy Spirit, and the Lord has His full way. He will put us down on this earth in some place, some sphere, with the intention that there, that place, shall represent the absolute Lordship of His Son because we are there. Our being there will raise hell to get us out because of the implication of our being there. The Enemy regards us as intruders and would force us out, but we are here in a very close identification with what is Christ's by right and what is Christ's potentially by His Cross. And yet there is another sense and realm in which we are absolutely separate from it. That is the nature of sonship. Sonship is eventually related to this earth for eternity as Christ's inheritance. It may have a larger sphere, or door of operations. It may not be earth bound and earth limited, but it is related to this earth and when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and His Christ we shall have some relationship to this world.

We have got to take that position for the Lord here where He puts us, and see that we never move out of it other than by the Lord. We have got to be where the Lord puts us and go where the Lord takes us, because just there, for eternity something is represented, and we shall only defeat the Lord's ends in our lives if we begin to make our own programmes.

The Universality of Everything in Christ.

Fourthly, we must, therefore, recognise the universal relation of all testimony and ministry in the Holy Spirit. There is nothing in the Holy Spirit which is merely local. And there is nothing in the Holy Spirit which is merely temporary. The Holy Spirit always works in relation to the universality of Christ, and He is doing so now. You may, and I may, be in a locality, but immediately we become insular, local, parochial, water-tight, we have cut ourselves off from the greater resources of the Holy Ghost. We have got to recognise that every place in which we may be, though it may be a small place, is never looked at by

the Lord as something in itself. It is always regarded by Him as being but a point in the universal, and is always related to all the rest spiritually; all the rest is affected for good or ill by what goes on there. The Testimony of the Lord Jesus is one testimony; His Lordship is one Lordship; and to stand in one place in His victory absolutely is in itself to be involved in the battle with all the powers of darkness, not with a local company of them. Do you get that? Not with a local company, a local assembly of evil spirits. No! They are all interested in that place and the Devil himself is interested in that place. It may be one tiny spot on the earth with only two persons, two saints there, and the whole system of darkness is interested in that. It is true! And the more clear and positive the Testimony of Jesus is in a place, the more universal that place becomes in its significance, in its accountability; the more it draws the attention of the Adversary. There may be focal points but they are the focal points of the universal, and we must recognise this, the universal relationship of all testimony and all ministry is the Holy Ghost. We must seek to break down every kind of artificial barrier that localises, and we must seek to recognise, and operate in line with the recognition of the fact, that from this point, this small out of the way point on this earth, the whole range of Christ's interests and of Satan's interests can be touched. You can touch the whole kosmos spiritually from any point. The Lord would work that out with His people I believe. It is one of the wonderful things.

When you get away from the old system of organising Christian work, which is usually departmentalising, a putting up of that which constitutes something in itself, technically constituted Christian work with various kinds of boundaries, human controls and so on—when you get, by the work of the Holy Spirit lifted clean out of the whole system of human organisation into a realm where the Holy Spirit does the organising, the governing, the running of the whole thing and you are not trying to bring anything about at all, you are working in cooperation with the Spirit, not enterprises, but you are in the Testimony of Jesus in the Holy Ghost, you will find that that ministry steadily, quietly, extends of itself far beyond your local boundaries, and reaches out until it reaches the bounds of the earth and you may have a voice for the whole earth. The

testimony of Jesus is universal; it cannot be local. It has a local application, but it can never remain local, because in this spiritual realm of His Lordship and of Satan's attempt to counter that, everything is universal. It is not only earthbound; it reaches to the encirclement of the earth unto principalities and powers. That is the range of this Testimony of Jesus. And the great need for so many of the Lord's people, the Lord's servants, at this time is to be delivered from all that which is so much less than universal. They are just in their own small local circle, their own little kingdom, and that is the beginning and the end of everything for them; and there is no recognition of the mighty impact upon the forces of evil in the universal Testimony of the Lord Jesus. The Lord make us, in Christ by the Holy Ghost, universal factors. But it represents a good deal of breaking, smashing up of our ideas. It does represent a terrific stripping off of a

system in which we have grown up, in which we have been trained; but when the Lord has done it it is marvellous. You look back and say: "There was a time when that, and that, and that was everything to me; it was my system, my line of things, my very life. I did not see anything beyond it." But the Lord has done that great emancipating thing, and you laugh at your utter folly that ever such things should have been of any account at all. There is emancipation from what is so trivial and petty and earthly and man-made, all that sort of thing, out into the universal, and when you get out there there are no limits to spiritual possibilities. But of course, you do meet things! You meet something else which you never met in the same way before. That is the position and it is there that the Testimony of Jesus counts.

May the Lord make it all profitable to us and lead us out.
T. A.-S.

SPECIAL GATHERINGS AT Honor Oak

Sat : Sun : Mon : 5th, 6th, 7th Jan. 1935

(IF THE LORD WILLS)

The Motto for 1935 is now on hand

Gatherings in Switzerland

BALE 11th to 13th JAN.

VENNES and LAUSANNE 15th to 18th JAN.

The Cross and God's Eternal Purpose

The following messages were given at a conference in Basle, and have been translated back from the German. They are here reproduced as translated into English by a Swiss friend.

Part II.

READINGS: Hebrews viii.
Ezekiel xl-xlvii.

Let us—before we continue—just say a word about the purpose of these messages. They are intended to serve this end: to “present every man perfect in Christ.” The deepest desire, the earnest prayer behind the giving of them is that all who read may be led into the fulness of the glory of God in Christ.

This is not to criticise the Church. It is not intended to uncover faults. Whoever desires to accuse the Bride of the Lamb? Who wants, in the joyful knowledge that the Lord sees His work as finished to reprove the poor earthly, form of His Church? But because the glory of the Bride is so unspeakably beautiful, because the calling of the Church is beyond all expectation so mighty, because the Lord is waiting and longing for the growth and the completion of His Body, therefore, and therefore only, do we speak, with the earnest prayer that it may please the Holy Spirit to raise up this testimony in the hearts of all who read it, that it may be realised and carried forward, and serve in the accomplishment of the eternal purposes of our heavenly Father.

The typology; that is, the symbolic meaning, of the Old Testament, is known. On the pages of the Old Testament the Holy Spirit speaks of things which should have their fulfilment only in our time. But everything is gathered up in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who said Himself that the Old Testament was pointing to Him, and represented Him.

If we keep that in view, then chapters xl-xlvii. of the prophesy of Ezekiel will get a new meaning for us; we shall recognise that these are not merely things which were intended to serve the Jewish nation, but their deep meaning is to show to the Church of God in a clear way that everything in her midst has to be according to the measure of Christ, Who alone is the foundation, content and accomplishment of His Church. That is why everything in the Church has to be brought back to the measure of Christ. And every individual member of the Church should fulfil their

measure according to the measure of Christ.

It is remarkable that Ezekiel gives us exactly the day in which the Lord brought him in spirit to Jerusalem in order to show him there the Temple. It was in the tenth day of the first month.

This statement is very significant, because it calls to our remembrance the day when the history of salvation for Israel began. And as the vision of the Temple is bound up with the memory of the slaying of the Passover lamb in Egypt, there is shown to us how everything is turning around our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One Who works for His people's salvation by His Blood. He is the Temple in which everything must serve His revelation. We are, therefore, each time we come to an important fragment in the history of Israel, brought back to the day in which the Passover lamb was slain, in which an epoch in history of slavery was brought to an end, and an age of liberty began.

The forty years of wandering in the wilderness was a sad time. We see Israel in weakness. Outwardly it is separated from Egypt, but Egypt is in its heart. The people murmur against God, quarrel with their leaders, until judgment upon the fleshly minded generation is inevitable, and all who once had gone out die in the wilderness, except two.

With the passage through the Jordan a new section begins. In the tenth day of the first month the people celebrate the Passover of the Lord, after having received the circumcision, and by it confirmed that they belonged to God, Who had delivered them out of Egypt, and brought them into the land of promise.

In Nehemiah also the work of the building of the Temple begins in the tenth day of the first month. So, in the book of Esther, where the deliverance of the people out of the cunningness of Haman takes place. And again in Ezekiel. Although the Gospel according to Mark (Chapter xi.-14) does not mention the specific day, nevertheless everything which happens in these chapters is closely related to the tenth day of the first month. In the cursing of the fig tree the Lord is anticipating the judgment over unfruitful Israel. The

magnificent Temple which the Jews had before their eyes stood in contradistinction to the thoughts of God. The outward Temple was not counting before God. Jesus was the Temple of God in this earth. With His resurrection appears the new House, the spiritual House, of which Peter speaks ; the new Temple, about which Paul writes in the letter to the Ephesians. But this Temple could only come into being after Jesus Christ, as our Passover, had been slain ; after that which once had happened in the tenth day of the first month had found its highest fulfilment in the death on the Cross of the Lamb of God. A whole system of symbolic foreshadowings is come to an end. A new world of spiritual realities is here. The history of the Church which is seated with Christ in the heavenlies has now begun.

We see what a fulness of the thoughts of God is hound up with the tenth day of the first month. And if we will become co-workers with God, if we desire to be in fellowship with God's eternal purpose and work in hearing fruit, then that which happened on the tenth day of the first month must become the foundation of our life. We must recognise our being crucified with Christ in His death. We must go through the Jordan and enter into a life of victory which stands under the direct leading of the Spirit. We must and we will seek to know the thoughts of God which have found their expression in Christ Jesus ; because God's purpose and aim is set upon His House, a spiritual Temple, His Church. It is that which is no longer linked with this world, just as the Risen One does not belong to this earth. The only relation the Church has to the world is by her testimony that Jesus Christ is Lord. Thereupon God works. To bring that into view is the concern of the Holy Spirit.

Much weakness comes from not having recognised that. Men have brought their own ideas into that which is God's. That is why He leaves the burden upon their shoulders. He lets them feel the responsibility of such an action. He lets them find the means to do what God alone can do. But the moment we set aside all that which is of man, making room again that God alone can work, God comes in and takes care of His work ; but we have the wonderful and blessed assurance that we are co-workers with God, His instruments, nothing less nor more.

But that means that we have to be ready to

go the way of the Cross. We must have arrived there, where the natural history of man ceases to be ; in the tenth day of the first month, when the Lamb was set apart, and from that time on, all salvation was found in His Blood alone. When the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ has become our Cross, where we have been crucified with Him, a new thing can begin. The Cross is the foundation for everything. Therefore Paul says : " We preach Christ crucified . . . the power of God and the wisdom of God."

READINGS : Matthew xxi. 33-46.

I. Peter ii. 1-9.

--- THREE things we have already seen :

1. God has a definite plan.
2. That plan is a mystery, hidden from ages.
3. That plan and purpose of God is gathered up in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Now we come to the fourth thing :

4. The realisation of His plan in His Church.

Jesus had said : " I will build my church." And from that time on He began to tell His disciples that He must suffer the Cross.

That shows us that the Church stands in closest relation to the Cross. The Church has been actually the purpose and aim of the coming of Jesus ; but the Cross was the way to call her into being.

Nobody has such a right to interpret the word given to him as Peter himself : " Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." The interpretation Peter gives of this word shows clearly and unmistakably that it never came into his mind to regard himself as the rock upon which the Lord wanted to build His Church. Firstly Peter had not seen further than the Cross, and he shrank before the thought that his Master should be treated in the same way as the prophets of Israel had been treated before. He could not know that the Cross was inevitable and necessary if, beyond the Cross, on the ground of resurrection, established on " the living stone " the Church should come into being, made of living stones. But after the resurrection of Jesus, Peter apprehended that inherence in a wonderful way, and made it clear in these words : " To whom coming as unto a living stone . . . "

Jesus as the Risen One is the Living Stone, the Foundation which has been laid. That which is going to be built on that Foundation, as the Temple of God must be according to its Foundation or, in other words, only as we are risen with Christ can we constitute the spiritual House of which Peter speaks. Only as separated from the world, by being crucified thereto, can His Church be that Holy Nation, the people of His own possession.

In order to understand that expression "holy nation" we must turn to the parable which Jesus tells in the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter xxi. The husbandmen to whom the Lord had entrusted His vineyard did not only rob Him of its fruit, not only beat and mock His messengers, but they seized the Heir Himself and killed Him. The vineyard is the Kingdom of God. It is taken from those who have showed themselves unworthy of it, and is given to "a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." That nation is the Church. She has taken the place of Israel, and is commissioned to reveal in her nature that which Israel had not been.

Balaam's prophecies in Numbers xxi and xxiv reveal to us the special nature of the Church as typified by Israel. The Church is a nation outside all the nations. She is, although *in* the world, yet not *of* the world. The New Testament does not know anything of a national Church. The Church is supernatural. She also is not an organisation which would be subject to human opinions. She is His Church in which the Lord reveals Himself as King. The shout of victory is in her midst. She is a testimony to the power and glory of the resurrection of her Lord. So it was as seen of God according to Balaam's prophecies. Israel was in the eyes of God the most royal nation. In the place of death in the midst of the wilderness it was full of life, and was victorious because of the Lord.

Now the Church, which has taken the place of Israel, must be a testimony to His life. But that she only can be if, separated by the Cross from the world and gathered around the Cross and the Risen One, she fulfils her testimony in *His* power. Wherever the Church has sought to link herself with the world, when she forgot her unique importance, when uncrucified flesh and unsanctified human ways rose up in her, her power was gone, her testimony was lost. The purpose of the Church is to "show forth his praises." The fruit of the Spirit must

be found in her. That which Israel refused the Lord His Church must give Him, in richest fulness, in willing obedience, and doing this, she realises the plan of God, and becomes the instrument according to His will through which she reveals Jesus Christ to the visible and the invisible world.

READING : Ezekiel xl.

If we would rightly understand the description of the temple in Ezekiel, we must keep in view that it was the ministry of the prophets to continually direct and lead back the people of Israel to that which God, from the beginning, had in mind for His people. The urge : "show the house to the house of Israel" has that purpose, to direct the people through the image of the temple to that One Who is the temple—Christ. It was to show the people again the measure of God, and to help them to grow into the full purpose of God for His people.

The purpose of God for His people, and that is now the Church of Jesus Christ, is to lead them into the full measure of the stature of Christ. For the whole Church, as well as the individual, everything depends on our recognising and taking our place "in Christ." We cannot emphasise enough that all our believing, all the light and all the knowledge, are in the end, not only valueless, but they increase the judgment for all those who are not really "in Christ." For those who are in Christ Jesus, faith is life, and all the light and all the knowledge serve now to the furtherance and manifestation of that life. Our time is rich in theological knowledge, but poor in resurrection life, without which there can be neither testimony nor fruit for Jesus Christ.

Over ten times we find the expression "chamber" in chapter xl. All the chambers are measured, and have their order and appointment through God Himself. So there is brought before our eyes in an image the purpose we have mentioned above, that we are appointed to be "in Christ." Yes, when we look closer, that whole vision of the temple is in the end nothing other than an unveiling of what it means to be in Christ, because all these chambers speak of our abiding in Christ, and of our ministry in Him. Levites and priests are appointed to dwell in these chambers, and because the Church of the New Testament is a priestly people, it is her destination and her

privilege to dwell in Christ. But each one has to take the place appointed unto them. We all know that tendency to take the place of another. The place and the position of another seems to us so often much better than the corner in which we are called to work. If we do not remain where the ministry is given us, if the flesh is rising up in order to seek one's own satisfaction in another place, it brings disorder into the House of God; and the testimony which should have been raised through the oneness of the Spirit is destroyed.

Beloved, let us enter into rest in recognising and taking our place in Christ. Let us be entirely surrendered to the Lord, that we may know that the Lord Himself is working everything in us and through us; then the peace of God will come into our hearts, with abiding joy.

Abiding in Christ gives power to our lives. Our Lord could say of Himself that He was abiding in the Father. He abode in the Father because He did nothing out from Himself, because His whole life was a life out from God. Therefore there was no unfruitful hour in His life; therefore everything was so marvellously ordered and fulfilled.

In that picture of the temple we further see how the priests and the Levites received their portion in the temple. In the language of the letter to the Ephesians this means: "God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ." And in the letter to the Philippians: "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Not only our position and our ministry, but all our needs also are supplied in Christ. To abide in Him does not only mean to take our appointed place in order to work in rest, but also to live out of the fulness, in order to accomplish all the duties of the daily life in that capacity which is given us in Christ.

Beloved, Christ is not only the object of our thoughts, not only the living contemplation

of our hearts, Christ is our world. It is, as it were, through the Cross of Calvary that we have gone out of the world of things, and entered into the world of God, where that which is Divine is drawing and filling us; where we walk in Christ and live unto Him Who encompasses us on every side; so that we meet all the temptations of this earthly side of things in His power and stand against every opposition in His victory. That is the experience of the Apostle, who exclaims: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Of all that which we have worked and done on this earth there remains only that which is according to the Lord, that which we have done in His power, according to His measure and in His time, according to His commission and His will. And our place in the glory depends on the measure in which we have grown into Christ, and He has become manifest in us.

Another thing. The chambers of the temple remind us not only of our position in Christ, the provision made for the priests in the temple, of our fulness given us in Christ to meet every demand; there is yet another factor which is significant. Let us take note that the chambers in the temple are connected with each other. In Christ Jesus we are closely united together. In Him there cannot and must not exist any separation. It is the devil's purpose to destroy this oneness of the Body of Jesus Christ. The testimony of Jesus rests upon that, that we recognise our oneness in Him. "For by one spirit we are baptised into one body." Jesus Christ as the Head has received the anointing for all His members. In the anointing of the one Holy Spirit we stand in one testimony for the truth of the one Body and the one ministry, which can be no other than the glorification of our Lord, Who wants to become everything in us, that we too reveal His fulness in every part by mutual love and fellowship.

T. A. S.

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