

Baker

*The Battle for the Throne
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In the face of Jesus Christ*

A
WITNESS
AND A
TESTIMONY

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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.*

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The Nature of the Testimony

Life Incorruptible and Indestructible

READING : Hebrews xi. 1-19.

WE are going to meditate upon the innermost nature of that Testimony which relates to the Lord in this earth, and in this universe. This whole chapter is occupied with that Testimony, but we are going to take but a part of it, seeing the Testimony as touched upon by the first four of the people mentioned.

Let us remind ourselves that *the* heart of the Testimony of the Lord is life ; a life which is incorruptible and indestructible. We know, of course, that that life is bound up with a Person, "this life is in His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord." When we speak of the Testimony of Jesus we always keep in view the Person first, but then there comes that for which the Person stands, that which is the preeminent element in the Person and in the work of that Person. When you ask the question as to what it is that the Lord Jesus stands for in His very Person, and what it was that He came, lived, and went to the Cross for, the answer is found in one word, **Life**. He came that life and immortality might be brought to light, and He Himself *is* that life.

So that the Testimony of the Person, Jesus, is the Testimony of life incorruptible and indestructible, and that is the issue of the ages. That is the thing upon which everything has been hanging from the beginning. It was on that matter that the battle took place in the first instance in the Garden. It was the issue of life or death, and it has been that issue all along. Inasmuch as we are related to the Testimony of Jesus we are bound up with that issue as the primary thing in our beings, and therefore in our work, which we may call our ministry. If the Church has been brought into being as, above all other things, the Body of Christ, then it is in that Body that this Testimony has to be deposited and manifested, and when we speak of the Body as a whole we speak of all the members individually.

That is familiar ground, but it is the centre,

the heart, of everything for us. It really defines what it is that we are called into, what, in the first place, is the very nature of the believer's relationship to Christ, the basis of that union ; and then, in the second place, it defines the very object of the believer being here on the earth.

When we turn to this chapter we find that this central reality of incorruptible and indestructible life is illustrated, set forth, in principle in various ways, from various standpoints. The first four people mentioned in this succession of the Testimony bring before us a very real presentation of the basis, nature, and outworking of this life.

Abel—the Basis of the Testimony.

We begin with Abel, in verse 4 :

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect of his gifts ; and through it he being dead yet speaketh."

With Abel there is introduced the basis of the Testimony. The Testimony begins with Abel, and we know that wherever we find the beginning of a thing we always find all the subsequent development in germ form, and everything subsequent will, therefore, work back to that and be included in that. That is very clearly seen when you recognise that the basis, the introduction of the Testimony of life incorruptible and indestructible is by the shedding of blood. With Abel the shedding of blood is introduced in a definite way as the law and basis of the Testimony of Jesus. That leads right on to Christ, and includes every drop of blood shed, from the day that Abel offered his sacrifice to the day when Christ offered Himself in the shedding of His Blood.

There are two ways of taking up the Testimony, becoming bound up with it from the beginning. There is the way of becoming terribly responsible for it, so that that Testi-

mony represents death and judgment and destruction from the presence of the Lord, the Testimony testifying against. But there is the other way, by a living relationship to the Lord Jesus coming into the whole Testimony from—Abel onward, and into all its value—inclusively on the ground of the shed blood. Because of that shed blood he was instantly involved in the battle of the ages, the spiritual conflict of all time. From the unseen there immediately emerged one who was *the* antagonist of that life, him that had the power of death, and through Cain he slew what was mortal of Abel. But after millenniums the Word of God says he yet speaketh, he is not dead. His testimony was in relation to a life indestructible, and he still lives, “he being dead yet speaketh.”

Abel was the first link in the chain of the overcomers, and you can relate the end with the beginning and declare from Revelation xii. that he overcame because of the Blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of his testimony, and he loved not his life even unto death. That was true of Abel, the first witness, the first link in the Testimony. It is the mighty power of the Blood of the Lord Jesus which in type is introduced with Abel, which is the inclusive ground of the Testimony of a life which is beyond the power of Satan and hell and men to touch and to destroy.

The Word of God makes it perfectly clear that everything in the life of a believer is related to that precious Blood.

Salvation is by the Blood. Just as Israel came out of Egypt to be God’s people through shed and sprinkled blood, so alone are men and women saved from sin, from hell, from judgment, from death, from the power of Satan, by the precious Blood of the Lord Jesus. The sinner, then, finds salvation in the Blood and only in the Blood.

The saved find their *life in the Blood*, for they have, in that spiritual sense, still to continue to drink the Blood for their very life. The Lord Jesus said: “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves,” and we know that the tense is: *Except ye keep on eating and drinking ye have no life.* He, in the value of His own Being, made over to us by the Holy Spirit becoming operative in us by Divine energies, becomes our very life as believers, to maintain us. So that the eating and the drinking continually are basic to the life of the saved.

Sanctification is related to the Blood. This very letter to the Hebrews tells us that in the second Chapter, verse 11:

“For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one . . .”

Link that with Chapter xiii. verse 12:

“Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered without the gate.”

“. . . they that are sanctified . . . that he might sanctify the people through his own blood . . .” So that our sanctification rests upon the Blood of the Lord Jesus.

All our *prayer has to be based upon that Blood* for its effectiveness. There is no effectual intercession apart from the value of that Blood. Again this letter tells us that in Chapter x. verse 19:

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus.”

You see, this is coming into the place of intercession, of prayer ministry, and that is made effectual by the Blood. There is no prayer which avails apart from the Blood of Jesus. That Blood is the effective element. It is the living factor in our salvation, our sanctification, our intercession. It makes prayer living. If you want to get over death elements in prayer, that with which probably you are not a little familiar, if you want to know the deliverance from those forces which descend upon you in the time of prayer to quench you, your appeal must be to the Blood, and you will find that it is effective. It is the power of life which conquers death. Praying *through* is praying in virtue of the Blood of Jesus.

Not only are salvation, and maintenance, and sanctification, and intercession based upon the Blood, but *our victory continuously and finally is on the ground of the Blood.* Again this letter tells us that in the second Chapter, verses 14-15:

“Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

By Blood, you see, He destroyed him that had the power of death, and delivered those who were in bondage because of the fear of death. Surely we can link with that again, Revelation xii.: “They overcame him because

of the blood of the Lamb . . . " Victory, then, is bound up with the Blood.

Everything that comes out in a fuller revelation of the life in relation to God is based upon the Blood, and all that is found in germ, in principle, in the blood which Abel shed in offering his sacrifice to God. Very comprehensive is the first step in the Testimony.

Enoch—The Outworking of the Testimony.

Hebrews xi. verses 5-6.

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God translated him: for before his translation he hath had witness borne to him that he had been well-pleasing unto God: and without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him."

Here we have something which is tremendously striking and impressive, that with one bound you leap from the beginning to the end of the Testimony. It is as though for the moment the Lord has set aside, kept in reserve, all that lies between, and shows us what the end of the Testimony will be as related to the beginning. He brings the two immediately together. Here is the Blood in the first instance as the basis of the Testimony, as containing the Testimony in itself; life which conquers death, a life incorruptible and indestructible. Then He looks right on and sees the end of that as typified in Enoch; that overcomer company lifted clean out of the realm of death, where death is raging, and translated that it should not see death.

We are too familiar with the Old Testament chapter in which the translation of Enoch is mentioned for us to go back over it again, but let us just call to mind the fact that in a chapter of considerable length, which contains the constant and monotonous reiteration of the death and burial of a whole succession of men, there is, right there, that one break that, although the course had been in case after case, "and he died," there suddenly comes a rift, ". . . and he was not; for God took him," and then the old story goes on again. It is life breaking into the course of death, conquering it, and not going that way at all. The end will be that. We sing sometimes, and our hearts always throb and thrill when we sing:

"Oh joy! oh delight! should we go without dying."

That is not a vain expectation. That is secured in the Blood of the Lord Jesus for a company which will realise God's full thought. May we be of that company! In any case, whether we go through the grave or without going through the grave, we are called into this Testimony that death has no power over us. May the Lord find us in the way of faith, in that matter, because Enoch attained unto it by faith, and we need faith unto victory over death. The enemy is always seeking to bring down our faith in that direction, and to get us to accept death, not merely physical death, but all kinds of death, and all forms of death's expression, to accept it. Faith says the Blood of Jesus Christ has secured victory over death in all its forms. May we be of the succession of those who overcame by faith in the Blood.

That is all we intend to say about Enoch at the moment, but it is a very impressive thing that the Lord should bring the beginning and the end, the end and the beginning, together here, and show that, because of that Blood of the Testimony, the ultimate issue is *this*—RAPTURE!

We return to that which lies between. The two things which follow, which are really between Abel and Enoch spiritually speaking, are related respectively to those things. Noah is related spiritually to Abel, and Abraham is related spiritually to Enoch....Let us see how that is.

Noah—The Testimony in its Ministry to the World.

Hebrews xi. verse 7:

"By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith."

Noah is the Testimony in the world, the ministry of the Church. God looked and saw that iniquity was well nigh universal, that wickedness filled the earth, that every imagination of man's heart was evil. Where there is no righteousness there must be condemnation, judgment and death. But Noah lived in the midst of a state like that, a state of sin, and death, and he lived against that state of things, he did not live with it. He stood as a rock in the midst of that evil current, that tide of

Testimony, as to the nature of the Testimony, the explanation of it, but you can never carry the Testimony out into this world by taking out a form of doctrine, by taking out a system of truth. We can never take the Testimony out by what we say. *The* battle of the Testimony is usually fought in the spiritual realm, and that is why so often, before we begin to say anything, there has to be a mighty battle, and something has to be settled in the unseen in relation to the Testimony before the words are spoken. It is a position which has to be secured in advance. Life has once again to register itself triumphantly against the forces of death. The word can then come through in the power of that life, in the power of that victory. It is that very conflict which gives to the word subsequently spoken its power, its life, its effectiveness. If those of us who have anything to do with ministry simply climbed on to platforms and never had a background conflict in relation to those things, they would be mechanical, there would be nothing in it; but because there is continuously that background fight, that gives the very meaning, virtue and power to that which is said. The word comes out then in virtue of a fresh registration of life over death.

Much of this is said for those who are familiar with the phrase "the Testimony." It is said, for one reason, to clarify the nature of the Testimony, and for another to call us again to see that it is not a mental apprehension of things said which brings us into the Testimony, but it is a spiritual position. The thing that we are to seek from the Lord is not that we might understand all the teaching, but that we might be brought into the power of His resurrection. That we may

know that life, and know how to live by that life in the mighty virtue of His precious Blood, in all that the Lord Jesus has accomplished by His Cross. We are living on the opposite side of Calvary from that of Abel and these other witnesses. Their testimony led on to Calvary, ours comes out of Calvary. We stand in the positive realisation of that toward which their faith looked.

We are surely called, equally with them, to be men and women of faith. It is putting it mildly to say equally. All this means our positive attitude of faith. It is faith basically in all that that Blood represents, includes, signifies, secures, and faith for all that that Blood works out to. If you believe that the Lord Jesus really has conquered death, and has given to you the very life by which He conquered death; if you believe it with all your heart, then you ought not to be a victim of the dead state of things all around you. You ought to be in a state of life triumphant, even though death presses on every side; and you can be. Your faith will put you in that position of ascendancy over death.

The Lord is truly seeking to get His company, by which the full issue of that life shall be displayed to this universe, be wrought out in this universe, a translation company. The rapture may take place in the lifetime of many of us. That is a possibility, at least. Some of us feel that it is a probability, but if we leave it just as a possibility surely we should be completely stretched out, that it should be true of us that the final phase of His victory is displayed in us in a life which displays the fact that Satan, who had the power of death, is a truly conquered foe. May we live unto that from day to day. T. A-S.

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READINGS : Philippians i. ; iii. 8.

I.—The Fight for a Continent.

THE letter to the Philippians will mainly occupy our attention, but before we come to it actually we shall be more in that chapter which brings before us the establishing of the Lord's Testimony in Philippi, namely, chapter xvi. of the book of the Acts. I think that very few of the Lord's people who have read it thoughtfully have failed to be impressed very deeply with the little letter to the Philippians. It is one of the gems of Scripture, and perhaps its outstanding feature is that more than in any other instance the Apostle found it possible to open his heart widely, and just pour out a stream of affection. In no other place do we find him in that matter so unrestrained.

There are special things about these Philippian believers which make that possible, and which so draw him out. When that is recognised as over against his great difficulty in opening his heart in many other directions—the longing, but the inability because of prevailing conditions, because of so much which had to be waded through of what was not according to the Lord's mind, all of which straightened him in his desire to get into the closest personal touch in the life of the Lord—I say when we recognise that, we are bound to conclude that the Philippians represented something very precious for the Lord. They stood in a position which—if the Apostle himself reflected the Lord's own relationship to them—brought great joy to the heart of the Lord. We have come to know this letter as the letter of triumphant joy.

There had just streaked across the horizon slight vapours. At one point it seemed almost that a cloud crossed the sky, a cloud of very unpleasant memory. But apart from those passing clouds or vapours the letter is just full of joy, wonderful, overflowing joy. And if these Philippians were the occasion of it, as undoubtedly they were, remembering the conditions and the position of the Apostle at the time, then surely they present something in which the Lord has great delight, something which stands for the Lord as being of great value to Him. That being the case, it is always good to

look at the history of such a people, and especially at the commencement of their spiritual history, or of their relationship to the Lord. Thus we turn back to chapter xvi. of the Acts, to see something as to the spiritual origin of the assembly of believers in Philippi.

A Great and Effectual Door.

We know that Philippi was of very great strategic value so far as the Gospel in the nations was concerned. We know that Philippi was the door into the Western world, into Europe, and it was through that door at Philippi that the Gospel came to us, and into these Western nations. So that, so far as this world is concerned with the Gospel, Philippi was of great strategic value. You are not surprised, therefore, that the opening of that door, the passing through it, and the establishing of the Testimony on the other side of it, was fraught with terrific conflict ; a conflict in which it seemed that all the cosmic and universal forces became engaged.

The Divine Mind and our Sanctified Common Sense.

Glance through chapter xvi. with that thought in mind and you will be impressed with the forces which were active in relation to the Testimony being established in Philippi. You begin with—we will not say a conflict—but a difference between a good sanctified human judgment, and the revealed will of God. That is where things commenced. You find that Paul and his companions, Silas, Timothy and Luke, were moving in a certain direction, and their own minds were undoubtedly working with certain fields of labour in view. There was the great, and apparently wonderfully fruitful, field of Asia. Think of all that there was in Asia ! Wonderful possibilities ! Their minds were moving in that direction as the field of activity. Then we are told that they were forbidden to preach the Word in Asia. Then they assayed to go into Bithynia. The mind is working in another direction, and has definitely decided that that would be a fruitful field for the Gospel. And so they follow—or assay to follow—that sanctified human judgment. We

mean by that that all their powers are on the Lord's side, mind, heart and will, spirit, soul and body. There is no question about that. They are wholly consecrated men. There is no working for themselves; there are no ambitions of their own; they have no personal enterprises and interests to realise; they are wholly out for God, and in that devotion to the Lord, and in that full consecration of their entire being, they contemplate certain things, they assay to move in certain directions. Then even so they come up against something else, which transcends even a consecrated human judgment, and they are forbidden to preach the Word in Asia, and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not to go into Bithynia. That is something to think about!

You see you have laid down a law, established a principle, right at the outset, by which the fulness of Christ is to be realised. I believe that that is a basic law to this very thing which we have in view, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. We have no wish to stay with that very long; we mention it as something to take account of. We hear people reason that way in these days. Well, use your sanctified common sense! they say, as though that were the last word in direction. But here it is clearly revealed that there is something which transcends sanctified common sense. There is a revealed will of God which is other than the very best consecrated human judgment.

So often a position like this arises, and we assay to proceed along lines which are commended to us; by our very devotion to the Lord. We are all out for the Lord; we are consecrated to the Lord; we are quite sure that we are not actuated by personal ambitions, and it is not that we have plans of our own that we are trying to carry out, but we really are for the Lord; and because of that we would allow our own activities of mind, and heart, and will, in the interests of the Lord, to dictate our course, to create our policy, and we would think that zeal for the Lord, devotion to the Lord, heart consecration to the Lord warrants our doing anything that comes into our mind for the Lord. Even so we often live to discover that that is not the most fruitful way, that even that zeal for the Lord may mean that the fruit is much less than it ought to have been.

The Things which Differ.

We are seeking, by the enablement of the Lord, to keep very close to the text of the letter

to the Philippians, and in that chapter it seems that (although we do not suggest that this relationship was in the mind of the Apostle) in the mind of the Holy Spirit there is an underlying relationship between what we have just mentioned as a principle and that word of the Apostle to the Philippians: "That you may be able to discriminate between the things which are excellent." The Apostle is saying that it is not a matter of discrimination between right and wrong, good and bad. That is not what is in view at all. He is speaking in the excellencies. There is a very high level here. He speaks about the excellency of the knowledge. The word really is "super-eminence." There may be very eminent things in Christ and in the Christian life, but Paul is after the super-eminence, the transcendence, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, something above the average. And so he says to them, not that they may be able to discern, judge, discriminate between good and bad, right and wrong, the things which are of the Lord and the things which are not of the Lord, but that they may be able to discriminate between good things and better things, or the best things and the things which do not just reach the best, but which are superior. It is good to be wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord, thoroughly consecrated to the Lord. It is very good to have consecrated spirit, soul and body, mind, heart and will, and all your powers to the Lord. But there is something above that, and the something above that is that the Holy Spirit may be even better than our very best consecrated and sanctified judgment. The Holy Spirit may even go one beyond our most ardent devotion to the Lord and swing us in the opposite direction from that in which our devotion would take us. We are not to make our consecration to the Lord, and the fact that we are out for the Lord, the governing factor in the planning of our life, in the arranging of our course.

Every Need is not a Call.

The Lord's servants thought of preaching the Word in Asia. Very good! Ephesus, for instance, needed the Gospel, and was a great field of opportunity. Yes, in Asia there was a great field, and perhaps, prompted by a sense of the need in that direction, and a desire that Christ should be fully known there, they felt for the moment that was the thing to do. Then, being forbidden in that direction they

turned to Bithynia. Bithynia needed the Word; Bithynia needed the Lord; surely the situation in Bithynia constituted a call. No! not every need constitutes a call. A good many of the Lord's servants think that because there is a need that is a call. Bithynia will have what it needs in the Lord's time, so will Asia, but just at the moment the Lord has other things, and if you run off to Asia or to Bithynia out of the Lord's time you will find that *you* miss the Lord's transcendent best, and something may be lost there, time may be lost there, the Lord's plan may be upset. The thing which comes in unto that transcendent fulness of Christ is that there must be something even more than our devotion to the Lord; there must be an absolute government by the Holy Spirit, even of our consecrated judgment. We must at times be prepared to put aside all our most devoted and passionate reasonings and desires for the Lord's glory, to take perhaps another course. The door into the fulness of Christ, the supremacy of Christ, is the absolute mastery of Christ.

That is how Philippi came in. It is wonderful to see Philippi coming in in that way. They owed everything, and Europe owed everything of the Gospel to the fact that here were men who were passionately devoted to the Lord, and were willing to subject their judgement to the Spirit of Jesus.

Do you want to know the excellency of Christ? You will have to come one step further than consecrated common sense. What is that? The absolute Lordship of Christ to dictate everything, even if that means contradicting your best and most sanctified human judgment.

The whole thing commenced there for Philippi and for Europe. It commenced with, not a conflict, because there was no conflict, there was no battle over it, but a recognition and acceptance of a difference. Very often it is a conflict with some people. We have known of a real battle going on between this consecrated common sense, this sanctified human judgment, and the dictates of the Holy Spirit. Very often there is a battle on that ground, but in this case there was no battle. The fact of the difference is made perfectly clear, and everything for Philippi and the Western world, so far as the Gospel is concerned, had its rise in the establishment of that truth of *Christ even above the best,*

most devoted judgment as to what would serve the Lord's interests most.

After all, that is only a negative side; but when that is settled you have opened the way for something else. You make a positive aspect possible. I am quite sure that there will be a great deal of arrest as to the positive side of the Lord's purpose until this matter is once and for all settled.

The Cleft-Stick Test.

The next thing you see, having cleared up all that and having completely obeyed the Lord, is that you must remember there was a gap (even if there were only a gap of hours) between what we have called the negative and the positive. Put yourself into the position of these four men, having been forbidden to preach the Word in Asia. They might have said, very well, we only meant it for the Lord, we were out for the Lord's interests, our hearts were set upon the Lord having all that He could have in Asia, but the Lord does not want it. What is your reaction to that? I was aflame for the Lord, to be used of Him for His glory in a certain direction, and the Lord simply shut the door in my face. You can take two lines in the presence of a situation like that. You can say: Well, evidently the Lord does not want me there, and I had better give it all up; it is quite clear that the Lord does not want my service! Or you can say: Evidently the Lord has got something else; I will wait for the Lord!

These men swung in another direction to see if that was the way, and a similar thing happened. It was a two-fold setback to devotion, to zeal.

While that state of negation lasts it is a perplexity. With some it lasts a long time. But they accepted it; they knew it was the Spirit of Jesus Who was at work, holding them up. They knew quite well that this was the Lord, and that the Lord would justify Himself "Wisdom is justified of her children," and these are the children. Even these negations are the children of a Divine wisdom, and they will justify the source. And so they held on in the perplexity, but they accepted the situation as of God; and they did not reason and give it up; but they maintained a positive attitude of faith. The Lord had something else, and while they held on definitely the Lord was not setting them aside, He was only turning them in more fruitful directions.

They held on in faith. They opened the way for the positive side.

Then a vision appeared unto Paul, and he saw a man of Macedonia, and he heard that man say: "Come over into Macedonia and help us." It had seemed that Asia was saying: Come over into Asia and help us! It seemed that Bithynia had been crying in the same way, but it proved not to be so. That was their own conclusion about the situation. But here a man of Macedonia cried, and so they took their course in the direction of Macedonia *assuredly* gathering that God had called them to preach the Word *there*. Then the course of the journey is given to us.

Universal Forces in Motion.

Now you see the forces at work. You have the forces which could be conflicting forces, even in the consecrated natural man, and the government of the Holy Spirit. But here, in the first place, you have the absolute Sovereignty of the Spirit of Jesus. And then another force, a vision appeared unto Paul. Heaven is coming in through the Sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in life. How true to principle this is in the Word of God. Jesus coming up out of the water and praying, the heavens, were opened to Him, the Spirit lighted upon Him, the heavenly voice was heard. The heavens come in through the Spirit into a life which is *utterly* under the heavenly government. The vision—that is heaven! But you never get a situation like that for long before hell makes itself manifest. Just as in the case of the Lord Jesus, the Spirit of heaven coming in the wilderness and the devil soon following, so here Satan comes into view next, and we have various forms in which he works. We simply mention them and pass on.

There is this poor girl, this slave of the temple, possessed by an evil spirit, under the domination of the devil; and a very subtle move of the devil, patronising the servants of God. We can always afford to be suspicious when the devil patronises the servants of God, and the Gospel, and allies himself to the things of the Lord. She cried: "These men are the servants of the Most High God, which proclaim unto you the way of salvation." This she did for many days. Then there is the action of the Apostle, touching the most sensitive point in civilisation, a man's pocket, and the uprising of the powers that be on this

earth. You see the different instrumentalities and methods of the enemy. The end of that phase was that Paul and Silas were in the dungeon, in the prison.

Mark the movement. The human spirit subjected to the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit taking charge on that ground, bringing into what is positive of the Lord's will, a heavenly vision; the forces of evil and darkness rising up to counter that, using all means available, men and women governed by the enemy as instruments of his; then in the inner prison. The next thing you know of is an earthquake. Oh! how many forces there are at work! It seems that the very universe is in a state of activity; heaven, earth and hell are bound up with this issue; God, men and devils.

It is always like that when God has a great door in view. Heaven is taking a lively interest in the whole thing. The necessity, when great Divine issues are at stake, is for man to be absolutely under the government of the Holy Spirit, and not following his own mind, even though that mind be for the Lord. The enemy rises up from beneath, and earth becomes involved. All the forces of the universe are found active when a door like this is the issue.

The Significance of Prayer.

What is the point that we are seeking to reach at this moment? The point is this, that there is seen to be here something which is God's way of realising His end, and which touches all these factors and features of the situation. It touches heaven; it changes man; it upheaves the situation as it is; and it provokes hell. What is it? If you look closely you will see that it is prayer. Three times in Chapter xvi. you have a reference to their praying. They arrive in Philippi, and they are wondering why the Lord has so strangely brought them there, and you are told that the very first activity is that they went out on the Sabbath day by the river, supposing that there was a place for prayer. They have a purpose in mind, and that purpose is prayer, and they are seeking to put that purpose into operation, to find a place for *prayer*. Prayer is their objective. You may say that prayer is the basis of everything here. So prayer comes in as the first thing in their activity in relation to this great, strategic door, and they go down by the river, which was a mile away from the city, to get to prayer.

Others evidently resorted thither on the Sabbath day, for certain women were found there, and these servants of the Lord spoke unto them the Word of the Lord. It seems, from the language, that they all spoke the Word of the Lord, but Paul was the chief speaker; and the Lord opened their hearts to give heed unto the things which were spoken by the Apostle. We are not following up the course of things into the house of Lydia, and so on, but what we note is that the first movement was through prayer. Prayer was opening a door into a Continent through human hearts. Their hearts were opened, and Lydia welcomed them to her house. They received the Word, and she and they of her house were baptised. The Testimony has started.

The man of Macedonia turned out to be a woman.

The next thing you read is that *as they were going to prayer* this young woman with the spirit of Python followed them. The enemy knows when you are going to prayer. He always knows when you are going to prayer, and if he can he will divert you. Do you see now the subtilty of the enemy's work to patronise them, to popularise their ministry? To make prayer unnecessary! Get your ministry popularised, and prayer loses its necessity, its power, its force. When you are getting on, when there is success, what a peril that is to prayer. You never lay hold of God so desperately when things are going with a swing. So the enemy would come along through this woman, and it seems that this is wonderful. If the natural judgment takes it on, why, it looks as though this very person is an asset to the Gospel. It almost appears that God has sent along this person, who has a great influence in this city amongst people, to pave the way for the Gospel. Might not that have turned them away from prayer? That was a subtle move, and very clever; just like the devil. "As they were going to the place of prayer"! He knew what that prayer meant, and he would by this clever move try and draw them off. Prayer is governing this whole situation, and it is good that they were not turned aside from prayer, because undoubtedly it was their close walk with the Lord in prayer which disclosed the real nature of this thing, that it was not of God, though it looked like it. This was not some Divine facilitating of the progress of the Gospel. This was a Satanic subtilty deeply laid in terms which looked

like being an ally to the Gospel. Prayer is getting underneath the enemy's deep subtleties. Prayer initiated this matter in Philippi, and prayer is continuing it.

We know what happened over the girl, and the demon, and the uproar, and the prison, the stripes, the chains, the dungeon. Then at midnight they *prayed* and sang praises. Prayer is going on to consummate this thing, as it has initiated and continued it; and prayer does consummate it, because it was in that final praying and praising that the issue was settled. Suddenly heaven came in again, and there was an earthquake. The rest of the story is familiar, the jailor and his, believed and were baptised. The Testimony is established, the history of the Philippian Church is commenced.

Now we have said two things. Firstly, if the Philippians represent something very precious to the Lord, and if Paul's attitude toward them is a reflection of the Lord's attitude of great joy over them, this spiritual condition has as its foundation this prayer life by which all the forces of the universe are brought into operation, but which brings a mighty issue. Secondly, what tremendous things hang upon prayer. What a vital place prayer has. Therefore, will not the enemy utilise every means and opportunity of frustrating prayer? I do not think we are far from the truth if we say that one thing that the Lord's people are finding in these days more than ever is the battle for prayer. It is becoming more difficult every day to get that prayer life maintained clear and strong. By preoccupations and diversions, by breaking in to scatter the thoughts and divide the mind, by pressure, deadness, weariness; oh by anything the enemy will seek to weaken and destroy the prayer life. This mighty uprising in Philippi on the part of the enemy is strangely and significantly related to their prayer purpose in life.

The Holy Spirit makes no mistake. When He speaks of their prayer life three times in one chapter you may be sure that that stands for something, that explains a great deal, and it was as they went to prayer that hell rose up and sought to destroy them, to put them completely out of action, to put them into a place where they would never be heard again, right out of the way in that dungeon. And have we not found that the enemy has tried to put us into a dungeon like that when we have purposed to pray. Is it not in relation to our

prayer life that the enemy seeks to force us into some dark, dead place? Yes, it is! We know a lot about that; but let us remember that it is upon this matter that the great strategic opportunities and purposes of God hang.

Here is a Continent touched by this prayer life in Acts xvi. The opening of the door into a new world with the Gospel is bound up with this praying, this purpose of prayer, and it is always like that. You have to battle through into every new sphere, into every new bit of territory, by mighty prayer; and if the enemy can thwart, baffle and cripple that prayer, he has got that door closed, or maintained closed.

We have to face this thing in a new way. Many of us are conscious of the truth of that which we have been saying, and that there are big issues for the Lord yet in His interests in this world hanging upon the prayer life of His people, and the enemy is out against that prayer life, because of those issues. Oh, that the Lord would lay it upon our hearts that not only (and by this we do not belittle the matter) in getting an entrance for the Gospel, but in bringing a people to the fulness of Christ, the reaching of that excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, there will be a mighty withstanding, and there will be a call for tremendous purpose and persistence in prayer. There may be a point reached where it seems that the enemy has scored and we are in the dungeon, but we shall have to refuse defeat, and even though we feel that the enemy has, for the time being, shut us up and cut us off, faith there must lay hold of the Lord and stand for the final accomplishment of that which is in His heart.

The Battle over Saints.

I am persuaded that in our day there is just as big a battle being fought by the enemy against the saints coming to the full knowledge of Christ as ever there was against people coming to any knowledge of Christ at all. If there have been battles, and the enemy has put forth his power to hinder the Gospel reaching certain territory, he is doing the same with intense activity against those who have received the Gospel coming into the fulness of the Gospel. It seems that he has a great deal in his hands too in this realm, and that he uses it well; and he will use good against the best. "Oh, we are saved, we have the Lord, we know that our sins are forgiven, we know that our standing with God is all right, what more

need we? Let us get on with the work of leading others to know Christ in the same way!" And that is only a quiet way of brushing aside the great realms of that fulness of Christ of which the Apostle speaks here.

Here is a man at least sixty years of age, after thirty years of the most intense quest for Christ, saying that more than ever in his history it was his passion to know Christ, the excellencies, the super-eminence of Christ Jesus, his Lord. Paul would not have agreed with people who said, It is good enough to be saved; do not let us worry about anything else, but get to business to see others saved! There is infinitely more beyond being saved in that initial sense, and it seems that the enemy does use the *good* (it is good to be saved) against the best. And so the Apostle is saying: That you may be able to discriminate between the things that differ. It may be an excellent thing to be saved, and it is; but there is a super-eminence, and the enemy is against that super-eminence of Christ, that excellency, that which really excels all the excellencies. He is against that, and there is a great battle, and those of us to whom the Lord would commit the ministry of leading, not only souls to the knowledge of salvation, but His own saved ones into the fulnesses of Christ, will find that the devil fights that with terrific force, and the only way through is prayer, and more prayer, and still more prayer; and it will be the very prayer life itself which is the object of the enemy's antagonism and activity.

As we say these things to one another, oh, we know them very well, but we shall have to see to it that everything is founded upon that. Where did it all begin? Well, of course, it began in the eternal councils of God, in the sovereign acts of God, *but* there is the other side. Even the eternal councils and the sovereign acts of God are dependent upon our prayer life. If you were an Apostle Paul, elected, chosen for your work, you could not automatically and mechanically fulfil your life purpose ignoring prayer. And even a Christ of God finds the accomplishments of His great redemptive purpose requiring nights of prayer. And how much more is it necessary for us.

The emphasis, then, is the cosmic impact of prayer, the universal power of prayer, the strategic value of prayer. Remember that tremendous issues hang upon faithfulness in prayer.

T. A. S.

The Eyes of His Glory

(Continued.)

READINGS : Ezekiel i. 25-28.
Numbers xiii. 26-33 ; xiv. 1-24
II Corinthians iv. 16-18.
Matthew xi. 12.

It has been remarked earlier that God's quest is for a people in fellowship with His glory, through whom the essential character of that glory is revealed. The vision of Ezekiel gives us the components of the glory, and Moses and Aaron constitute, generally speaking, typical witnesses fulfilling God's purpose in relation to it. The appearance of the glory of the Lord—"The eyes of His glory"—again and again to the children of Israel was God's attestation of His witnesses.

In the incident recorded in the portion of the book of Numbers now before us we have a further instance of this. At the crisis of the experience, when things were apparently reaching an impasse, and were upon the point, humanly speaking, of revolution, when something terrible must happen, then those holy eyes made themselves evident, as if God were saying: Here are you down here debating this matter, but remember I am an Auditor of your words and a Spectator of what is going on, and I am stepping into this scene to rule it. And so in the tenth verse we read:

"But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the Lord appeared in the tent of meeting unto all the children of Israel."

Fear, the Child of Unbelief

Here we have the people of God missing the way of the Lord through fear. Had there been nothing to be afraid of they would have gone cheerfully on, as they had been doing for some months, but here fear enters upon the scene to rob them of their inheritance. But that fear has a background. It did not possess every man. It did not possess Caleb and Joshua, nor Moses and Aaron. It sprang from a cause, and so it is not merely with the fact of the fear that we need to be occupied, but with the cause from which that fear sprang.

We could have sympathy with men who were lacking in natural courage, but if we analyse the reason for that lack and find that it was in effect rank unbelief in God, then we lose our sympathy with them. God has left Himself not without witness, and if fear springs from unbelief, then that fear is culpable and must not be condoned, however much our natural mind might desire to be sympathetic.

From what did their fear spring? It sprang first of all from the fact of their noting the natural elements present; from looking only at the things seen, and from leaving out of account altogether the things not seen. Then, as a part of that, it sprang from the fact of their measuring the things seen by the standard of what they themselves were. It is quite clear. If they had found the occupants of the land were little dwarfs, without any strength, they would have said: We can deal with them. They themselves were the standard of their natural judgments.

All inclusively, of course, the ground of their fear was that they left the Lord entirely out of account. That embraces everything. Using New Testament language, we may say that they ignored the victory of Calvary. If they had stood in the value and spiritual meaning of that victory they would have known no fear, they would have gone through. And that is precisely what the other men did. Joshua and Caleb, Moses and Aaron, did stand by faith in the fact of the ascendancy of the Lord over all the power of the enemy, and that was the reason why they were men without fear.

Here you get to the heart of the story. Four men, against a multitude, stand in the spiritual meaning of the victory of Calvary, and those eyes of glory makes themselves immediately visible, as if to say: I am bearing witness to the position of these four men.

We do not need to go any further by way of reaching our conclusion, and can say that, as illustrated in this case, a feature of the glory of the Lord revealed in His people is that that people stand in the value of the victory of Calvary.

Marks of Glory

(1) Faith in the Man on the Throne

That at once brings us to Ezekiel's vision—a Throne in heaven, and a Man upon it. Is not that the victory of Calvary? Our Lord Jesus Christ has gone up on high, having stripped off principalities and powers, and is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. You come very near to the heart of the glory here. Four men on earth stand for the meaning of that victory, and the eyes of the glory shine out before the congregation and say: I am with these men; I identify Myself with men who stand in this position.

There are other elements in the story which are worth noting, but that is the central thing. It carries with it at once this implication—that for the experiencing of the victory of Calvary it is imperative that we do not take account of the things that are seen, as constituting the final ground of judgment. It is while we look at the things not seen that there works the eternal weight of glory. The victory of Calvary only becomes spiritually operative as we have utterly set aside any thought that what we are is the standard of measurement. It involves this, that all that we are has been put out of the way; another standard of power and capacity has been brought in, and that standard is Christ. But unless those factors are borne in mind continually we shall never know the meaning of the victory of Calvary. The eye that is dwelling upon the things seen, and appraising the possibilities of success on that level can never know that victory. That victory demands eyes fixed upon the Person of the Man in the Throne, and if that line of vision fails at all, and we come down to look at things horizontally once again then the same fear will overcome us as overcame them. If you are to know the victory of Calvary your vision must be first upward and then downward, and the visible things that appear before the eyes must of necessity be discounted.

That sometimes demands a very real measure of faith, a very great experience in the heart of the fact that the Lord is on the Throne. The very exhibition in practice of that faith, the faith that upon the Throne is One greater than all the power of the Enemy, and because of that victory to abide in rest and in assurance, is to reveal the glory of the Lord.

Do we pray that the Lord may be glorified

in us? The answer to that prayer may be to find ourselves set down very quickly in the midst of forces which are overwhelmingly too great for us to face; or to be set in a line of advance and told by the Lord: Now that is your course, go ahead. And you find giants, and lions, and every kind of wild thing in the way. To pray that the Lord may be glorified in us may be the short cut to finding ourselves in embarrassing circumstances. But it is the Lord's occasion now to glorify Himself by us, and He says: Now in the presence of your enemies count on the fact of Myself as Victor in the Throne, your union with Me. the operation of those heavenly forces and resources which are Mine on your behalf and in quietness and confidence go forward.

It is not a light thing to pray that the Lord may be glorified through us. Oh! how it is to His glory when He finds a man or a woman or a people whom He dares to put in the presence of impossible circumstances, and to have confidence that, by reason of their union with Him and the knowledge of the victory of His Cross, they will go steadily on without being held up by fear. If the Lord sets us in a pathway which has giants and lions and other mighty obstacles in it, it is not His purpose that we should be defeated by them, but that we should overcome them.

(2) Zeal to Gain Christ

Here the whole of Israel except four men took a lower level, and you see what the consequence was. They lost the inheritance. So there is brought into view in this incident very prominently the inheritance, that into which God is seeking to bring us. The book of Numbers is full of the inheritance. The daughters of Zelophehad reveal the principle when they come to Moses and say: "Our father died in the wilderness . . . and he had no son . . . Give unto us a possession among the brethren of our father." The Lord was well pleased, and gave them their request. There was a zeal for the inheritance, which in their hearts they desired to possess. Zeal for the inheritance, which is Christ, is something that the Lord looks upon with great favour, and delights tremendously in. And so here, amongst other things, you have the question of the inheritance, of entering in. It seems that there is terrible condemnation against these people when they use the language that they do.

These people that are called to possess a land into which twelve of them have moved for forty days—the Biblical period of full testing—so that they know its treasures as well as its difficulties, and as to the prosperity of which they have just borne their testimony, say in the next breath: “Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.” Do you not think it betrays an utter absence of any real passion to possess that good thing that the Lord has set before them? Do you see the suggestion? There is One on the Throne ruling from heaven and they say: “Let us make a captain” Ignore the Heavenly One in the Throne, dispense with the inheritance, and go back to the place from whence we came! Oh! the utter failure to see the value of the inheritance into which they are called! No wonder the Lord’s words are hot against them. He says: “How long will this people despise me?” The word “despise” was used of another man who did not care for what God put in his way—“So Esau despised his birthright.” There is a failure to have the heart set upon possessing that good land into which the Lord is bringing them, “a land which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year” (Deuteronomy ix. 12). There are the eyes of glory dwelling upon the land from the beginning of the year to the end of it, with all that that glory represents, and here is a people who, in the presence of such, say: “Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.” No wonder the Lord says that as they so little value the inheritance they shall not enter into it.

It brings us to Paul and the Philippian letter: “.....that I may know him.....” On what terms? “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” Paul’s quest was to inherit the land. The cost of that inheritance was the abandonment of everything that was his by nature, however good and fair it was—his natural abilities and accomplishments, the result of his natural endowments, and the result of his hard work by which the natural endowments had been enlarged. He says: All that I count as refuse that I may inherit the Land—gain Christ!

Do we see one of the things that constitutes glory for the Lord in us? It is that there is found in us that which yearns to possess Christ in His fulness, and that says: In order to do

that, let everything else be counted as refuse, but, oh! I must know Christ! There is glory for the Lord in this. That does not necessarily need to be thought of in very high terms of spiritual endeavour. If in the heart of the least child of God there is the cry: Oh! that I may know *Him*! and the whole life is directed by that purpose; if that is the end toward which everything in life is set, and in the pursuit of which there is a shedding of everything else, herein is glory. The world looking on may despise us for our folly, as in the case of the woman who brought her alabaster box of ointment and brake it at the Lord’s feet; but when He has become the possession, the goal, the inheritance, the very breaking of the alabaster box glorifies Him. That woman’s purpose was to reach out to Him and show her love for Him. It is a question more of the heart and life than it is of that kind of faith that is spoken of in 1 Corinthians xiii. 2. There may be little glory for the Lord in that kind of faith. The faith that glorifies Him is that which springs out of, and leads into, the knowing of Him, honouring of Him, possessing Him; when the heart is occupied with that kind of faith which worketh by love then the Lord is glorified. The thing that we should seek at the hand of the Lord, the gift of His grace, is not so much faith as faith, but faith as the expression of a deeper devotion to Him and knowledge of Him. That glorifies Him. The faith that is the mere exhibition of power, the removing of mountains, at least comparatively speaking does not glorify Him like that other. So here we see this point amongst others, that a zeal for the inheritance, to possess Christ, glorifies Him.

(3) Desire for the fulness of Christ in all His Members

But here a point must be observed, which also is beautifully illustrated by Moses in the story before us, and to which the eyes of the glory may surely be said to have given their attestation. The Lord said to Moses: “I will smite this people with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a nation greater and mightier than they.” But Moses was not concerned merely for his own personal enjoyment of the inheritance—his concern was that all the Lord’s people might enter in, and so he sweeps aside the offer of personal advancement and intercedes for the people. There is especial glory for the Lord in this. His purpose is to bring many sons to glory

with Himself, and a true passion for Him in our hearts must inevitably mean fellowship with Him in His purpose for the whole company of His people, and thus express itself in a longing that all His own might know Him in His fulness. And so we find the man who wrote: "That I may know Him," also writing: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church... that we may present every man perfect in Christ; whereunto I labour..." Beloved, when your heart is crying out to God in intercession that His people may be brought into the fulness of their inheritance in Christ the glory of the Lord is being revealed, for is not this on your part the giving expression to the very longing in the heart of God Himself?

Listen again to Moses: "...would God that all the Lord's people were prophets..." Here is a man who longs that all that God has for any might be enjoyed by all. It is that kind of passion for the inheritance that supremely glorifies Him. And the individual will not be overlooked by the Lord in the more general company. For after dealing with the principle of all inheriting, then the Lord says: "...my servant Caleb...him will I bring into the land..." (Numbers xiv. 24). The Lord puts first the greater thing, the principle of a desire for all His people to come to the fulness of Christ, and then He says: Here is one man who was faithful; he shall arrive at that fulness.

Possession of Christ Realised through Conflict

In the foregoing, we have dwelt upon two principal elements—first, the testimony to Calvary's victory, and secondly, the zeal for the fulness of Christ. These two are brought together in a phrase in Matthew xi. 12: "...men of violence..." Here is an emphasis which has to be renewed for us again and again—that though our hearts may be, by His grace, set passionately upon possessing Him, we are not going to arrive at that simply by a process of sighing and yearning and hoping and wishing. The Lord wants His people to know in experimental reality the meaning of the victory of Calvary over the powers that hold the land. Therefore, the zeal for the inheritance must be accompanied by a spirit that wars a triumphant warfare over the power of the enemy. It was just there that the children of

Israel broke down. They saw the people who held the land and shrank back in terror. They were not sufficiently set on the end to be attained, and the Lord says of them: "How long will they not believe in me for all the signs which I have wrought among them?" God holds people responsible for the light He has given them. He requires an account of our actions in the light of what He has revealed to us. These people had been living in daily experience of divine miracles, so that they ought to have come by this time to see that nothing is too hard for the Lord, but here in the presence of a different kind of difficulty the Lord meant nothing to them—they had learned nothing.

It is just as the Lord said to His disciples: "Do ye not yet understand?" These people had not learned their lesson. God has indicated to us the fact that by His Cross He stripped off principalities and powers, making a show of them openly. He has caused us to know that upon the Throne sits a Man Who has overcome. Let us emphasise the fact that it is not God as God upon the Throne in Ezekiel's vision; it is a Man. That fact for us guarantees the possibility of our arriving there too. If it were God there as God, what guarantee for us? But it is our Representative there, and that shows the place God has in His thought for us. God holds us chargeable for that truth, and requires that our possession now of the fulness of Christ, our coming into the good of things, shall be by the exercise of that truth in our experience. Hence what the Lord is saying is this, that if we would possess the inheritance we have to fight a holy warfare.

What glorifies the Lord in a people? The Lord is glorified in a people here on earth when they, in their spiritual warfare against principalities and powers, take the kingdom by force. When they meet, in His triumphant Name, the powers that are in the way of their progress, when they dare to stand in the Name of Christ Who is on the Throne, and claim the victory through His Name. In order that we may be exercised in the matter, the Lord sets us in places where there are enemies, and allows us to meet principalities and powers. He shows us something of them in advance, and lets us see that along such a way there is going to be battle. What is our reaction? Shall we turn back and seek an easier path? No other pathway will lead to the fulness of Christ.

You who are called to the foreign field of service, do not expect to get through without

conflict. You know that out there, as well as for those who stay at home, there are going to be increasingly spiritual forces of enmity ranged against us, and we have to take the Kingdom by force. We shall never get it in any other way. It is the Lord's good pleasure to give us the Kingdom, but this is the practical word for us: ". . . men of violence take it by force." God is going to require of us a faithful discharge of the truth that we have received. He will call us into the warfare, and give us the privilege of triumphing in His victory.

Now for us to say we are having a peculiarly difficult time, our way seems to be peculiarly hedged about with spiritual antagonism, must not introduce in us the thought that we are a martyr people. That is the way the Lord is going to bring us into fulness. The very conflict is causing us to inherit Christ, is causing us to possess the Land. Every new phase of victory that we experience is a new possessing of the Lord, and it is that that is glorifying Him. So that we shall not be surprised if the fiery trials overtake us. Peter urges that we are to "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial . . . which cometh . . . to prove . . ." That brings us to Paul again: "That I may know him . . . and the fellowship of his sufferings . . ." It is going to lead ultimately to the glory, and there will be a present manifestation of the glory also. It is all in line with the word that is said concerning Moses, he accounted the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. He had that inheritance all the time before his eyes, and, in order to its possession, every lesser thing was allowed to fade out of the picture. Nothing counted with him by comparison with it. The Lord is glorified in a people whose heart is set at any cost, by any road, upon the goal which is God Himself.

"My goal is God Himself, not joy, nor peace,
Nor even blessing, but Himself, my God;
Tis His to lead me there, not mine but His—
At any cost, dear Lord, by any road!"

When that is uttered out of the heart, when the Lord finds a man whose true testimony that is, then in him God is being glorified.

That is the seed bed of faith. A man who is thus minded says: By any road! Here is a very difficult road, a road beset by enemies, but the passionate desire for the goal will hold him steadfast in the way. It is the man who lacks the yearning to know Him that will easily

be turned aside. Along that road the Man Christ Jesus has already gone before, and at every point has overcome for us. We have not to climb up; we are to be brought through in the train of His triumph. Every enemy has been met; every foe has been overcome; there remains nothing that has not been put potentially beneath His feet, and there remains nothing in this universe that is able to overcome the least child of God who has taken the hand of the Lord and said: Lord, bring me through to the place where Thou art, in virtue of the Blood which Thou hast already taken through in victory. There is great glory to the Lord in a quiet, confident walk in a day of adversity, a day of dread, when things about us are shaking and trembling.

The Church's Ministry—to Witness to the Enthroned Christ

There is a little touch in John's Gospel that is a reflection upon this:

John vi. 25-26.

"And when they found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when earnest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves and were filled."

What was the Lord's disappointment with those people? They had something that had filled them, and they wanted more. It was not that they had seen through to some conception of His true nature and personality, and had come after *Him*. No! they had eaten of the loaves and were filled, and thought they would go and get some more of that which would give them some present satisfaction. It was some *thing* they wanted, not Himself. And so He goes on to say:

"Work not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him the Father, even God, hath sealed."

And then there is this interesting word in verses 28-29:

"They said therefore unto him, What must we do that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them: This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

Strange words! They are utterly incomprehensible to the one who is not initiated into the secret of them. "This is the work of God!" What is? To believe! To believe on Christ,

the Sent One of God. But let us remark that to believe on Him as and where He is ; not to believe on Him merely as a Man Who walked the earth, but as the Man in the midst of the Throne. As the heart, in that kind of believing which has love as its basis, reaches out to Him, to apprehend Him, to hold Him, the value of His Throne finds expression. That is the work of God. That is the work you and I are called to do. We are called to work for the Lord. Well, the nature of our work is to believe on Him in the Throne, so that there may be down here, just in the realm where we are, the expression of His enthronement. Our work is not to go out and get very busy doing things. Our work is to believe on the triumphant Lord in the Throne in all circumstances, despite every seeming contradiction. That requires faith, real spiritual energy, and something of violence in denying the conditions which are adverse. But that is doing the work of God, and we all know a little in experience that as we thus hold on, as we thus refuse to deny the fact that He is the Lord, He works on the ground

of that testimony and there is a manifesting of His glory which others may see and which is assuredly for the discomfiture of the power of the Enemy. Conditions may not immediately change, but as faith remains steadfast in its testimony to Christ's victory in spite of all appearances the way to manifested triumph is being made, and in His time emergence comes. But the very exercise of heart thus made necessary is all the time bringing into a fuller knowing of the Lord. The grief of the Lord in the narrative before us is: I have dealt with these people all this time, *and yet they do not know Me.*

We are called to testify livingly to Christ enthroned, and that necessitates adverse conditions, against which and over which the enthroned Lord must be manifested. Hence, we are called to a pathway of conflict, of difficulty, of trial, of pressure—but, praise God, of victory. May we so know the Man in the Throne, in the power of His resurrection, that we shall abide always in the strong consciousness that if He is with us, who can be against us ?
G. P.

The Battle for the Throne

(Continued.)

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

THE effects of the fall are in two realms :

1. Inward, spiritually and morally. Our thought is particularly in connection with government. While we speak about the prophet and the priest, it is the king, the governmental side of things, which is mainly in view, and here the fall has brought about this inward loss spiritually and morally in the realm of government, authority, dominion.

2. Then outward. Of course, that is obvious, that man has lost the dominion which God gave to him and entitled him to have over the world in every kingdom.

Man has all these centuries been seeking to recover that mastery, and inasmuch as the government of this world is purely upon what is spiritual and moral, when man has attained his greatest success outwardly he finds himself a defeated man, and still incapable of governing the world. Is it not a remarkable thing that in this day when outward mastery has attained

such a considerable point of advancement, the moral government of this world is so very backward ? The real government and dominion is a spiritual and a moral thing before it can be wholly and fully according to God's mind.

Let us note the course of things. Man created and constituted for dominion, but conditioned. The condition, even when he is constituted for dominion, is absolute obedience and allegiance to God. Then that dominion lost in the fall, and the consequences of that.

Now we come to two other things which are fresh points from now onward.

Recovery in Christ.

All that was lost in the fall in man's constitution and in man's appointment or calling or vocation, has been recovered in the Lord Jesus Christ. I want you to get behind that, because here we touch the magnificence of this whole matter. I said at the commencement that in the eternal intention of God the whole issue of

universal dominion was centered in His Son, the Lord Jesus. It was not first of all centered in Adam. If it had been, when Adam surrendered it, it would have gone for ever, there would have been no recovery at all, but it was centered in Christ. Therefore, although the means brought in for its expression may fail, its source will remain. The Head in which it is gathered up abides, it is not lost. God's security against the total loss by the fall is His Son, and Christ is eternally God's security and ours. It was preserved in Him. These elements are eternal elements; that is why I have been so careful to stress that these are not mere phases, and these are not merely temporary or periodic things. They are eternal, they came out of the very nature of God when He said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," and proceeded to do so. He 'made' with these constituents: prophet, priest and king. That is what God is—a spiritual mind, a righteous heart, a spiritual government; and He constituted man upon that basis, according to those principles in His own Eternal Being. Man may fail, but God never fails, and so these things, being eternal, are indestructible, and they are secured for expression in the Lord Jesus, as above time and above history. Do you not see what a great revelation it was that was given to the apostle Paul about the eternity of Christ, and the eternity of God's purpose. That revelation was lifted clean out of history, clean out of the course of this world, and put back into eternity. That revelation points to and links two eternities. The first chapter of the letter to the Colossians is matchless, putting the Son right back in eternity, and showing everything as related to Him, not as incarnate but as eternal. Man was brought in as a means to be used for this expression. What a calling! What an honour! What a glory, that man should be chosen in relation to that eternal thing which was in the very being of God, to express it and to be constituted for that by God. But man fell, and that race lost it all in Adam. But it was not lost. It was still secured in that Eternal Head; it was still preserved as indestructible in God's Son. These things were not first in man, but in God. Man is but the means for expressing them.

Then Christ came, because God had not abandoned and was not going to abandon His intention as to the method of universally expressing that. He could have chosen angels

to universally express these things. He could have made some special order other than man, but he had decided that it should be man. The Psalms and the Apostle use strange and wonderful words: "When I consider the heavens, the works of thy hands, the moon and the stars which thou hast made, what is man—that thou makest mention of him, or the son of man that thou puttest him in charge" (that is the literal translation). That is God's eternal thought, intention, and even though Adam may fail, God does not abandon that thought, and so it must be recovered for man and it will be recovered for man by Man, but what a Man! The Lord Jesus came to recover—not for God, not in the Being of God, not something that God had lost out of His Being by Satan's interference—but to recover for man that which God purposed for him. Here is grace. Here is the wonder of salvation. I think, beloved, if only we had a fuller presentation of the positive side of salvation it would not be necessary to preach hell fire to frighten people into salvation. Of course, the New Testament puts a very strong emphasis upon that, but, oh! to see what we are called to, what God has chosen us unto! Is not that an adequate motive for us to appreciate the grace of God in salvation. "So great salvation!" That is the word. It is the loss of that, which can make hell for us; and to *wake up* to what we have lost. Christ's work on the Cross was vicarious in this three-fold realm of prophet, priest and king. It was not only dealing with sin. It was that, but it was the recovery of the lost function of man. And when the Lord Jesus has accomplished His work in the Cross, and is raised by the Father from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He is there as the Representative, Prophet, Priest, and King. And then the saints through being raised together with Him, are brought into fellowship with Him in that ministry.

The Cross—the Way to the Throne.

Let us take that a bit at a time. THE issue, the final issue of Christ's work on the Cross is not only that our sins have been dealt with and put away. It is ultimately and pre-eminently and all-inclusively that it is made possible for us to come back to the Throne, to come back to all that the Throne means; to be kings and priests unto God, to be restored to spiritual dominion in this universe. And when any child of God through resurrection union with the

Lord Jesus is linked with Him as there at God's right hand, and comes under the government of the Holy Spirit, their education begins in the school of how to reign, how to gain spiritual dominion. That is the whole explanation of our remaining here. It explains everything that the Lord allows to come into our lives, The Lord is perfectly able to keep every bit of trouble out of our lives, every bit of opposition, persecution, suffering, trial, to keep it all out. Have you been asking Him to do it? You are asking Him to take your crown away if you do. By it He is teaching you to reign, He is developing in you and in me spiritual and moral government. Why has He left the devil about, and his whole hosts? To teach us how to reign! Are you sitting down under him, accepting him? God's thought for you is that you should have power, authority over all the power of the enemy. That is our calling, our vocation, and our function in union with the risen and ascended and enthroned Christ. That is the top stone of the testimony of Jesus. It is to that everything else points and leads in our relation to Him. What the Lord is seeking is to possess a people who, in relation with Him as enthroned, govern spiritually now. They will govern manifestly in the universe later. Christ's work on the Cross was primarily in relation to man's fall and lost dominion, in order to recover it, He fought a battle in the Cross. It was not just meeting wrong, it was not only dealing with the fact of sin. This was not an abstract thing, to set up a standard of morality, an ideal for life. It was meeting hell; it was a conflict with the whole range of those principalities and powers, those spiritual intelligent forces which had wrested the dominion from man, and that dominion had to be restored. It was done in the Cross of the Lord Jesus, and it is in the hands of Christ, now risen and ascended: "All authority has been given unto me in heaven and in earth."

Fallen Man Cannot Reign.

Now we must go back a bit. The fallen—now known as the natural—man can never occupy the Throne nor have dominion. He, as such, is fully and finally set aside. He has sought to exercise kingship. The devil has tried to make him a king: "All these will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." While that was said to Christ, it represents a principle of Satanic effort from the beginning. The devil has always followed that line in

trying to make men kings without God, and the full expression of that effort of his will be Anti-Christ. Super-man; man representing universal government, control, authority, apart from God. But, as history has proved, and will prove right to the end, even Anti-Christ, that fallen or natural man, even Satanically energised, cannot have dominion according to God's thought. God has taken pains to make that clear. His inability to have dominion has all the way through been exhibited by God. His unfitness has been displayed. Oh! how God has, as it seems, gone out of His way to show man's inability in himself to reach any Divine standard.

We must keep to this one point of dominion, but look at the long dispensation of law. Did not God know right at the beginning when He gave the law what the end would be? Being God, He knew that the end of the dispensation of the law would be utter failure, because He knew man, and yet He gave the law. He gave the law deliberately, knowing full well what the end of it would be. Then, you say, if God knew that the end would be failure, why did God do it? God did it in order that man might come to know himself, his inability. It has taken centuries of history in man's experience to bring him to the place where he knows that this thing is not in him. And so God paves the way for His Son. Somehow or other the Lord has to bring that home to us, with a period of experience, before we fully accept it. We might take it mentally, and say we agreed with it, but then God puts us into the place for a few months where we are tested out, and the end of that severe test is, Lord, if you do not do this thing it will never be done! Put me up against the devil and see how much good I am! Put me up against the law and see if I can keep it! No! it is not in man. That is the verdict. God has demonstrated that through long periods of practical history, based upon that very fact. And we have outstanding illustrations of it.

An Historic Example.

We might take one example in the particular realm in which we are moving, as to dominion. Look at Saul, the king. He is a good illustration. Saul humanly and naturally is a very fine specimen. When they looked at Saul they saw that he was head and shoulders above any other man in Israel, and the naturally minded acclaimed Saul a magnificent specimen of what

a king ought to be, and they shouted, "God save the king." Well, that is man at his best. Now he has come to the throne. How will it work out? I know that there is a problem as to the anointing of Saul, that God anointed him to be king, and I want you to recognise a difference. There is always a big difference between God's sovereignty and God's grace, or between common grace and saving grace. God acted in sovereignty over Saul, in what we call "common grace." God is Sovereign of this universe, and He can do as He likes, and within the compass, the range or realm of His sovereignty He operates in common grace, that is, what He does in sovereignty is to work in a general way toward His ultimate end, in order to bring in what is according to His mind. That is common grace. Christ is governing this whole thing, and His government is in common grace. The end will be to the glory of God, the end will be that Christ comes back into His own. That is common grace. Saving grace is quite another thing. It is in the universe at large that sovereignty operates and common grace is at work, but it is only amongst the saints that saving grace is at work. I am touching Saul; the problem of his anointing. In the sovereignty of God and in the common grace of God he was anointed at the command of God. How will this common grace in sovereignty turn out? It will prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the natural man at his best cannot govern, and when you have come to that conclusion you have opened the way for saving grace. Do you see that? That is, you have cleared the way for God's king when you have got man's king out of the way, but you will never have a way for God's king until man has tried and failed. That is the nature of things, that you are never prepared to have God's thought until your own thought has broken down. That is how this world is in the fall. God will never get a chance until all other chances have been tried out by man, but that is the common grace of God. He lets them try it out, with a view to establishing His own thought eventually. There is no question about it when you get there. You will say, with a good deal of experience, I have come to the place where I have tried everything else and it has failed, but this is it. If this had come first I might have had something in the background, something up my sleeve. And so God, in common grace and sovereignty allows Saul to be anointed as a very bright

specimen of men. And it is not very long before this natural man at his best is shown to be quite incapable of ruling. He represents the trial of the natural man in relation to government, his unfitness to rule is very soon manifested. He is given a few tests, and what comes out? The word of the Lord through Samuel is: "I remember that which Amalek did to Israel." "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy . . ." He is put to the test, as to whether he will govern, whether he is fit to govern. Spiritual government is conditioned by absolute obedience and allegiance to God. That is the principle of spiritual government. Now he is being tried on that principle. You know the result. He did not utterly destroy Amalek, he spared the best of the flock and the herd. He excused himself by saying that he spared the best of the flock and the herd for sacrifice, but Samuel said: ". . . to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." And Saul lost his office before God because he had proved that spiritually he was unfit to hold it, that is, he could not keep the kingship because he was not constituted for it.

The Kind to Reign.

Who is the man that will reign? It is significant to notice that it was for forty years that Saul kept the name of king. Spiritually he had never held the position, but even under God's recognition in that realm he had only held it for three years, and then thirty-seven years he was spiritually and morally out of that realm altogether. But he kept the official title for another thirty-seven years, making forty years in all. Forty is always a time of probation, and here is the natural man at his best, proving his unfitness to reign throughout a perfect period of testing. That is an illustration, a type. Now the man who will reign, who is he? I will not take a type at this point, but will take the principles. He is the one who is joined to the Lord inwardly. There is the Lord Jesus exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on High, a Prince and a Saviour. Who will reign? Who will come to spiritual dominion? Those who are joined to Him inwardly. Cover the whole range again—the prophet, the priest and the king. We have said that these all go together, and form a whole, and the two lead to the other, the third—the throne.

The Prophet.

The Prophet leading to the throne. What is that spiritually in the New Testament? It is simply this, "We have the mind of Christ." The prophetic function is the spiritual mind. The spiritual mind is related to the throne, it leads on to the Throne, and that is what Paul meant when he said, "We have the mind of Christ." "To be spiritually minded is life . . ." Now, go back to your New Testament with the spiritual mind in your thought, and you will see that it is a feature of the Throne, it brings you to a place of spiritual ascendancy. Let us put that quite simply. Who are the people who will really be in the place of advantage, of spiritual power, who will be looked up to? Amongst men they may be the weakest, the most foolish, nothing to look at; everything that man would set aside and ignore, and yet something about them that demands attention, something about them that cannot be ignored, something to be reckoned with. You have to say, there is something about them, and when they speak there is something in what they say, and it comes to pass, it is true, you cannot get away from it, you cannot close your eyes to it. What is it? They know the Lord. They have a spiritual knowledge of the Lord. Despise them if you will amongst men, but that thing is something dominant spiritually, and you have to bow to it. There is the prophet, the spiritual mind. The spiritual mind represents something of the Throne, it relates to the Throne.

The Priest.

It is a matter of the heart, righteousness, or that abandoning of the heart to what God desires. It is a quality, but it is a mighty quality. Righteousness is a strong thing, it is always represented as a strong thing in the Word of God. It is the brass, and brass is a very powerful thing. You cannot resist brass, the fire cannot overcome the brass, the altar of whole burnt offering is of brass, and the fire is kept burning perpetually. It is righteousness, and there is something about real righteousness of the heart which speaks of the Throne. It is a governing thing.

Now you see that these two things represent spiritual links with the Lord Jesus inwardly.

The King.

He is King there, because He was so utterly abandoned to God's will. Who are those who

reign? Those who are one with Him in the will of God, who have the Spirit of Christ in them, consuming them unto the will of God! Find the men and the women who are wholly, utterly in the will of God, and you cannot do anything with those men and those women. On the plain of nature they may be nothing, but they are a dominating factor in the spiritual realm, and you know quite well that you cannot turn those lives round as you like, they are in the will of God and they govern spiritually, morally. It is the Lord Jesus in what He is as Prophet, Priest and King, exercising Himself, expressing Himself in and through the saints spiritually.

Spiritual Dominion is Universal.

It is not merely in this world of flesh and blood. What can the devil do with a man or woman who knows the Lord? What can the powers of darkness do with a man or woman who has the righteousness of Christ as a breastplate over the heart? What can the adversary do with a man or woman who is utterly bound by the will of God? What can he do with the Lord Jesus? When we come into that position, we reign in the spiritual realm. If you are going to try and find some defence against the enemy as the Accuser in yourself, as to your goodness, well, the Lord has taken a big lump of history to prove that that cannot be done and in the end man is hopeless. Are you still trying to find some good with which to beat the devil? You had better give it all up. Do not go on for he will worst you, he will pulverise you, in the end you will be good for nothing. The sooner you stand with both feet on what Christ is there for you, the sooner you are coming into spiritual dominion over the devil. Then you will be in the place of, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper—even the Accuser—and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." That is an impregnable position against the devil. It is the way of the Throne, it is dominion!

Reigning by Christ.

Now, this man, to reign, is reconstituted by Christ. That is, that constitution for government in the new creation is the Holy Spirit making Christ over to the believer. We are reconstituted, created anew, and we are

created anew for this ultimate purpose—dominion. It is not going to be office. Do not get an external mentality about reigning on thrones later on. This thing is intensely real as a spiritual thing. The throne, the crown, the dominion, is fundamentally and pre-eminently spiritual, and we are to be constituted for it, not appointed to it, and we are constituted for it by Christ. You see what I said at the beginning, that out from what God was, there came into man that which constituted him for dominion. Now in the new creation, out from what Christ is as in the Throne there is brought by the Holy Spirit the constituents for dominion. “Strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inward man.” That is a constituent of Christ to make us govern. The Holy Spirit taking of His things and revealing them unto us. That is spiritual revelation, to bring us into a governing position spiritually, the Holy Spirit making good for us, to us, His righteousness, the righteousness which is of God by faith. That brings you to the throne, dominion over the power of the enemy. It is a very real thing, it is not just a picture. That is what is going on in us. It is simply that we are being constituted according to Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. Those things which are in Christ there, are being imparted to us, and developed in us, and what we have to do day by day and hour by hour is to draw upon Christ, in order to maintain our position of spiritual ascendancy.

Am I weak? That is not the criterion. He is strong, and by faith I reach out to make His strength perfect in my weakness. Am I foolish? Am I in a quandary? That is not the thing. He is perfect wisdom, made unto us from God, wisdom; and therefore I take from Him the wisdom that He is, to bring

me up out of this position. It is what Christ is made over to us, constituting us to govern, and it will all be a matter of the measure of Christ as to how much we reign. The rank that we are going to hold in the coming universal reign of the Lord Jesus will just be the measure of Christ that we have. Let the Lord have a large place, live on Him, live out from Him, draw upon Him, make Him your everything. Learn day by day how to appropriate Christ by faith, how to repudiate what you are in yourself, and make what He is everything to you. That is the way of victory. Circling around yourself, looking into yourself, trying to find something; all that is simply grieving God, it is saying, in effect, to the Lord, Your Christ is not what you have said He is! We must not malign God by bringing up our own natural state, continually holding it in view and hoping for something from it. We have got to learn to live on Him, the Christ of God. *There is no other way* of deliverance. *Christ is the way*, not has just made the way. *He is the way*, and as we apprehend Christ we shall move on in triumph, in victory.

He is the King. We have to live by His Kingliness, in dominion over every kind of force that would tyrannise here on this earth. The Lord give us to believe that the natural man has been set aside, and not to bother too much about him, not to take him so much into account in trying to find, hoping to find, something good in him. He is set aside and God has demonstrated that he is worthless through long generations, he cannot reign. But there is One Who can reign, and because of Him we can reign in life by that One Man, Christ Jesus.

T. A.-S.

(To be continued.)

CONFERENCES

HONOR OAK MARCH 30-31

“ „ APRIL 19-22 (EASTER)

The Fulness of Christ

(Continued).

THE letters to the Ephesians and Colossians have clearly in view the fulness of Christ and the inheritance of the saints. In both letters a very definite and positive place is given to the fact that the reaching of the inheritance, and the coming to the fulness, is only upon the basis of that which corresponds to Jordan having been definitely recognised and accepted. That is, the Cross of the Lord Jesus as bringing to a judicial end all that is of man himself; Christ's death being our death; not only the removal of our sin, but the removal of ourselves as related to Adam, in order that there might be another relationship brought about to the last Adam.

The Meaning of Our "Judicial" Death

We have used the word "judicial," and that may stumble some; but it is very simply explained. There is all the difference between a judicial death and actual death. We are not, even when we have most thoroughly and utterly accepted our death union with the Lord Jesus by faith—according to His own word and requirement—in a position to say that we, so far as the Adam life is concerned, are utterly dead and non-existent, because there is still much of the old Adam associated with us. But that does not alter the fact that a judicial death has taken place. A judicial death is simply the fact that a sentence has been passed, and in the eyes of the one who has passed the sentence, the death is taken for granted, as though it has already happened. God has passed the sentence of death upon the whole race in Adam. That sentence was carried out in a Representative, and that One Who represented the race voluntarily—the Lord Jesus—accepted the sentence voluntarily.

The sentence being carried out in the case of the Representative, means that all who were represented have died in the eyes of God. God says: That is My position with regard to you; My Son voluntarily took your place as under the sentence of death. (It could not be otherwise than voluntary, because He was not involved in our sin; He was not in any way by nature linked with our condition. He accepted

our place as one who had sinned, yet in Whom there was no sin). God says: In the moment in which I turned My face from Him on that Cross I closed for ever the door to the Adam race; I abandoned the Adam race, so far as it ever had a chance of being accepted by Me or coming into My purpose. That was an eternal moment. If ever we should know what it is to have God forsake us for an instant of time, that instant would be like an eternity if we were fully conscious of it. If we knew that God had utterly and absolutely abandoned us, with all that it meant, that moment would be the moment of an eternity; that moment would be capable of changing our hair from the blackness of the raven to the whiteness of the snow. That is God's attitude to the Adam race, as far as His purpose is concerned. All that He has to say to the Adam race is: "Ye must be born again"; there is no hope for you in your present birth.

That is the judicial death which has been carried out in relation to every one of us, and the point is that we have to recognise the fact in regarding the flesh as wholly corrupt, even at its best. We have to accept by faith the fact that the flesh can never come into the presence of God, and then that God has made a provision for our giving expression to that position spiritually. Romans and Colossians particularly speak of that. In Romans vi. it is: "We were buried with him in baptism." In Colossians it is said that baptism was appointed by God as a means of openly declaring the fact that we for ever have accepted God's attitude toward our Adam life. That makes possible everything else. The Jordan was Israel's national baptism into the death of Christ, from the standpoint of the end of the life of nature. That is an essential and indispensable thing in coming to God's end, the fulness of Christ. There can be no hope or chance whatever for the fulness of Christ until there has been an acceptance of that position.

The "Old Man" not Obliterated

Even when that position has been taken,

when we have made that declaration and been baptised as a testimony to that, the self life has not gone—it will crop up—but something else has happened. What is that? We have definitely put that thing, in an act of faith, under the hand of God. We have said, in effect, that whole realm and range of the self life, of the life of nature, of the flesh, has been put under condemnation, and judgment, and death; now I count upon God to look after that. Then what happens? Whenever that thing comes up, you find it is smitten at once. You know quite well that if you are walking in the Spirit the uprising of any bit of self meets with the impact of the Holy Spirit, and you have a wretched time until you have gone back to the Lord and said: Lord, I have been allowing something to come up that you had judged. That is the way of progress and development. But you see the necessity for the judicial recognition, as giving God something to work upon.

The New Position

In the wilderness there is not that, but in the land there is. Achan was a survival of something, and there is an instant reckoning with that by God. Everything is held up and a terrific crisis is precipitated by one thing. Before the Jordan the Lord witnessed against it, but this is a different situation. After Jordan you are in a new position, in the heavenlies, and here the thing cannot be tolerated for a moment. It is the position that makes the difference. There must be a judicial end to self; that is, an acceptance quite definitely of the end of man's own life by nature, that there may be a commencement, growth, continuation of God's life, with only God's life in the ascendent.

The Energy of the Holy Spirit

See how clear this is in the historical illustration. Joshua represents the energies of the Holy Spirit in relation to God's end; that is, the inheritance, the fulness of Christ. Do you remember where Joshua first came into view? It was at Rephidim, where the waters gushed from the rock; the type of the Holy Spirit becoming the basis of the life of the believer. In the wilderness you are getting patterns; in the land you are getting realities. The pattern is given in the wilderness. In the land there is a working out of the pattern. So that in the wilderness there is the type of the Holy Spirit being the indwelling life of the believer. That

is God's thought made known. You do not get that in its full expression as the living reality until you get over Jordan.

Joshua came in at that point, where the waters gushed from the rock. Joshua is one with the Holy Spirit as the inner life and energy of the Lord's people. The two come together at Rephidim. But immediately that happens Amalek comes out, and it is Joshua who is appointed to meet Amalek. Joshua—the energy of the Spirit—in connection with the water at Rephidim, called upon to meet the activities of the flesh, and, through Joshua, Amalek—the activities and energies of the flesh—was overcome. It is the Spirit warring against the flesh and getting the mastery. That can never be in its abiding reality, and in its full expression, until that judicial thing has been accepted, that the flesh is under a ban. God's attitude toward Amalek was one of uncompromising antagonism. "Smite Amalek (that was God's attitude) and utterly destroy." The attitude of the Spirit toward the flesh is uncompromising. That has to be made very real when we come into the realm of spiritual, heavenly life. That is the normal course of experience, when you come to the place where you have accepted the end of the self life in the death of the Lord Jesus.

On Resurrection Ground

Having recognised the necessity for this judicial end to self, the next thing that is essential, as a basis upon which God will work to His end, is a resurrection life with the Lord: "We were buried.....with him through baptism into death, *that* like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life"; "If ye then be risen with Christ....." It is the completeness in every way of our separation, detachment from the world. You cannot fail to see that in the case of the Lord Jesus. Relationships are entirely changed on resurrection ground. Mary would fain have touched Him in the garden, would have embraced Him, but He said: "Touch me not....." In effect: Things are changed; the holding of yore is no longer; a different realm has been entered, a different relationship. Yes! still your Lord, still your Saviour, still your Friend, but a difference. I am not to be held as though I belonged to this earth; I am not to be taken hold of, as though this were My place. "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father." The first thing in resurrection is the

recognition of our heavenly relationship, not our earthly relationship. All that is heavenly now makes first claim, and what is earthly, even in a religious way, has to be put back. There is a good deal of earthly religiousness, and religious earthliness. There is a good deal in religion that is earthly, of this world, earth bound, of man. Resurrection union cuts clean and clear of everything that belongs to this world, even though it may be religious. What is of God only has a *testimony* in this world, it has no other relationship. Its business here is merely to testify in the world, but to have no other kind of tie.

Resurrection represents the completeness of our separation from the world. "If then ye be raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above....." In other words, to all that is here: Touch me not; my Father has first claim. That is a most elementary thing, but it is true. It means that heaven has first and primary claim upon everything, because now all relationships are heavenly, all interests are heavenly.

That is a position *essential* to God's end. We know quite well, in the practical out-working of this truth, that in the degree in which any believer has a voluntary relationship to this world, or is held by anything of this world, that believer is stunted in his or her spiritual development. The world is an obstruction to the fulness of Christ. It is impossible to go on if there is a bit of the world holding. Putting that round the other way; it is just wonderful, amazing, and blessedly joyous to notice how those who really do go on with the Lord spontaneously drop off the world. That is the effect of spiritual growth. Habits, in which there seemed to be no harm whatever at one time, now have an element of controversy about them. Things which in earlier stages, even of the Christian life, never provoked any concern, now, because there is growth, raise the question in the heart, and the very going on with the Lord solves all the problems. You never have to say to one whose heart is wholly set upon God—You must give up this and give up that. Leave such a one with the Lord, and you will find those things go. It is a very blessed thing to see a heart set upon the Lord. You need have no worry in that direction. All the anxiety lies in the realm where the heart is not wholly for the Lord. The Apostle's two letters to the Thessalonians are full of joy. He thanked the Lord on every

remembrance of them. He could not speak too highly of them, in terms too glowing, simply because they turned from idols unto God, "to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven," and he had no anxiety about them. When you turn to the Corinthians there is a good deal of trouble. It is the wilderness situation again—a divided heart.

A resurrection basis gives God a chance; that is, right out to the Lord from the world. All that that means we have to learn. We shall come to things we never expected if we are going on with the Lord. Things on which we were so clearly settled, as being of God, and never for one moment expected to have a question about, become challenged. Not that they were not of God, but they were only of God up to a point, and now there is something more beyond them, and unless we go on to the something more the good becomes the enemy of the best. And so, because of comparative values, we have to leave what is good for the better; and then later the better for the best. It can only come about as we are really going on with the Lord, but that requires, first of all, that we have made a clean cut, and have said: I am out on resurrection ground; I am out with the Lord utterly.

The Corporate Vessel of Fulness

Another thing as basic to the Lord's purpose is the necessity for an apprehension of the inclusiveness of Christ as to the Church which is His Body. In those parts of the revelation given to us in the Word of God, such as the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, where the fulness of Christ is brought into view most definitely, the thing that is right before us is the Church, which is His Body. The ultimate thing, the great end, is the fulness of Christ, *but*, unto that, the Church, His Body is brought into view. Does Ephesians bring in the vast dimensions of Divine fulness in Christ? "Filled unto all the fulness of Christ"; "The fulness of Him that filleth all in all." What is connected with that? "The Church, which is His Body." The Church is essential for the expression of the ultimate fulness of Christ. That means that unto the fulness of Christ we must have an apprehension of the inclusiveness of Christ in His Church. That is the collective nature of the instrument, the vessel, which is to express the fulness of Christ. Over against that is the impossibility of an individual, or any

number of individuals as such, ever expressing the fulness of Christ. *The* necessity is for a life of corporate relationship unto the fulness of Christ.

We must recognise this right at the outset as a law of the book of Joshua. What is that book working toward? It is the fulness of Christ; the whole inheritance! Is the inheritance going to be given to one, two or three? No! Is it going to be given to unrelated, detached fragments? No! The inheritance is going to come to all in fellowship, in relationship, and it can only come on that basis. That is laid down as a law, and that is the explanation of what took place in the case of Achan. When Achan sinned, and took of the devoted thing, the whole nation was brought under arrest, and the Lord's uncovering of the thing was after this manner: "*Israel* hath sinned." It is a terrific enforcing of a law. It is not; One man has sinned; let him be judged and put away! No! *All Israel* must come and be exercised about this matter. All Israel is involved; and therefore all Israel must judge it. All Israel was involved in the arrest, and all Israel was involved in the necessity for judging the sin.

Fellowship and Fulness.

This is God's way of illustrating what we have in the New Testament: "The body is one." There must be an apprehension of the corporate, the collective life of the Church, the Body of Christ, before we can go on to fulness. We *demand* this fellowship for fulness; it is essential. Limitation is always brought about by separation. The defeat of God's end is always accomplished by breaking up the Lord's people into fragments. Schism is a real device of the devil to frustrate God's end concerning His Son, the Lord Jesus. He has pursued that course from the beginning. It is very impressive and very significant that when the fulness of Christ is brought into view in these letters, there is such a tremendous emphasis laid upon the relationships of the members of the Body one to another. The Lord Jesus stands to suffer loss in the expression of His fulness when the saints are out of fellowship with one another; and we can strike the greatest blows at the adversary by a solid, determined stand, when on no ground, save apostasy, will we be divided in spirit from our brethren. To strive for fellowship, to stand for fellowship, to refuse a break in fellowship, is the way of

defeating some of the forms of Satanic activity. It is quite easy to take the other line. It is the most difficult thing to refuse spiritual division, because all the power of hell is out to bring that about. It is only as we see how much is bound up with fellowship, with relationship, the fulness of Christ, shall we be able to move on toward that fulness, for the Lord counts upon it for His ends.

This is no organised one-ness. This is not the unity that is outward. This is not anything that can be brought about by agreements externally. This is not the uniting of the Churches. This is not consenting to a common agreement of credal expression; this is the unity of the Spirit. This works two ways. It is necessary for us to go on in the Spirit, in order that we may have the fullest measure of fellowship. We do not mean that fellowship is impossible between the mature and the less mature. We must be very careful that we do not allow any larger measure of light—as we may conceive it—to interfere with our fellowship with those whom we think have not so much light. There ought to be fellowship between children and adults spiritually, but any kind of refusal of light, of the revealed will of God, is bound sooner or later to limit fellowship, so that unto full fellowship there must be a walking according to the light given. The other way round operates, of course, that as we walk in the light we have fellowship one with another. Going on in the light means an increase of fellowship, and that makes the measure of Christ to increase.

The Necessity for Spiritual Illumination.

This comes up quite clearly both in Joshua and in Ephesians. "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know....." and then there is given a list of things to know, and you find that list moves out into the dimensions of the knowledge-surpassing love: "..... that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God." Spiritual illumination leads on to being filled unto all the fulness. Spiritual illumination, therefore, is a basic thing to God's end. We can never come to the fulness of Christ by the mere inquiry and investigation of our own brains into spiritual things. There must of necessity be the Holy Spirit giving revelation concerning Christ. The Testimony of Jesus

has as its essential law spiritual illumination, revelation—through the Word. The Testimony of Jesus can never be something static, something that you take up and say: This is the Testimony of Jesus; and then put it into a formula. The Testimony of Jesus is something that has been revealed. The Testimony of Jesus is: "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Stephen died for that Testimony. "At mid-day, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice....." The inner meaning of that is not something apart from the Word, but something that comes by the Holy Ghost through the Word. That is more than the letter; it is life. It is something that makes you say: I have read the Scriptures on that for a long time, but I have really never seen *that* before.

The Holy Spirit's illumination concerning the Church is a thing so difficult to explain to any who may not have experienced it, but to those who have, it needs no explanation. It makes such a difference on all these matters. You will be able to preach Ephesians, Colossians, Romans; preach all about the Church as the Body of Christ; you may read it all in books; and still there be no real expression of it. Then one day it is as though the heavens opened and the thing broke upon your spirit, and you saw it; and all kinds of adjustments become neces-

sary in life. You can say: I saw that the Church was no denominational or national thing; I believed in the oneness of all believers. Yes! all that; and yet there is something more. That something can only come by revelation. You can have the other, and it will just take you so far, but get that something more, and it will take you a long way ahead. It brings you into the realm of the conflict and cost, but you are out in an altogether new realm. It is necessary to God's end.

It is one thing to say these things, point them out, emphasise them. You say: How do you get it? We see what you mean, it is all quite clear, but we have not got it! Well, if you really are of the undivided heart, if your heart is wholly set upon the Lord and you see, as far as you can see, these things, and have very definite dealings with the Lord about it; it may not be in a day, it may be slowly, steadily, quietly, you begin to move into a new realm of understanding, and you find that your point of view changes, your standard of values changes, your insight changes. It may take months, but at the end of the time you say: I am changed; something has happened to me; I can no longer accept what I used to accept! It may be like that, or it may come in a flash. How it comes does not matter very much, the fact is the thing—spiritual illumination. The Apostle prayed that those to whom he wrote might have it. Let us pray that we might have it, and that all the Lord's people might come into that.

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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No. 2.

The Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus

(Continued.) No. 2

READING : Philippians iii. 8.

Philippians i. 21.

“The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus . . .” Clearly that means that the knowledge of Christ in the case of the Apostle Paul far transcended all other knowledge. For him it was a knowledge which outstripped in its value all other knowledge which he had had or conceived himself capable of having. He sets the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord over against every other thing, and just as the candle light pales when the sun shines, so for him the most powerful light and glory which man is capable of having faded in the presence of Christ Jesus his Lord. Such words were not just words in the case of Paul. This was not some fine flourish of language. Coming from such as he was they carried tremendous weight, not because of who he was but because of the life out of which the words sprang.

The Life-History behind the Words

To really get something of the power and the strength, the depth, the fulness, the wonder of this phrase, this language, it is necessary to turn and contemplate this man's life for a few minutes, and see the background of his words. Words are of value in proportion to the reality of a man's history, the history which lies behind his words and relates to his words. We may say things, and those things may be worthless, because there is nothing behind them in ourselves. We may say things and those things may carry with them some tremendous weight of meaning and value, because of what lies behind them in the person of the speaker. We must remember then that when Paul said these words he was practically at the end of his earthly course, and that a whole life crammed with spiritual history lay behind every syllable. But what a life! Everything culminated and was gathered up into these final utterances.

Look at him personally....Here is a man worn and feeble, upon whom there has broken,

and upon whom there has rolled, waves, mighty and continuous waves of every kind of suffering that you could think of if you sat down to try and catalogue the sufferings of man. A victim of gross perjury, the prey of many contending enmities, a broken and enfeebled physical frame, in circumstances of deep affliction, vexed with hundreds, possibly, thousands of opponents, having now remaining very few real friends. He has placed on record some of his experiences of adversity. They run like this: In afflictions, in necessities, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings, chastened, sorrowful, poor, having nothing, in prisons, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft, “five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep (think of that! That does not mean in a boat in the deep, that means in the deep overboard, in the sea before picked up); in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labour and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches.”

There are many other touches as to the experiences of this man of God. He lightly refers to them and passes on. “I who am rude of speech” (that is what some had said about him) “I who am despicable in presence” (that is what some had said about him). The yea and the nay man, that is, the man who vacillates, at one time says yea, and at another time nay. Sending requests to a beloved yokefellow he says: “Bring the cloak which I left at Troas,” clearly showing that he was knowing coldness.

This letter to the Philippians arose out of

the deep appreciation of his heart in prison because the Philippians had remembered his need; and there is something invidious, because there were believers in Rome, many of them, and here is the man in need, in cold and in hunger, in prison in Rome, and the Philippians seven hundred miles away have heard, and they have sent by the hand of Epaphroditus gifts to meet his daily necessities. It has touched his heart, and he is so appreciative that this letter sprang out of it, and in the course of his letter he said: "I have no man likeminded . . . for they all seek their own." That is a reflection of the state of the believers in Rome around him. They were seeking their own, and just the Philippians far away remembering him. If you look amongst his writings and in his history you accumulate a tremendous amount which points to his history of suffering, of trial, of adversity. In the end he says: "All they in Asia have turned away from me"; "Only Luke is with me."

The Great Exchange

Then see what he had given up for that; see that for which this is the exchange from the human side. Look again at "Philippians." He tells us in the third chapter of what his natural advantages were; how that he had a reason and occasion to boast more than any other: "If any man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more (more than any man): Circumcised the eighth day (That is, he was born a Jew, he was not a proselyte), of the stock of Israel (not a graft, but the original stock), of the tribe of Benjamin (after the name of the tribe, the next most distinguished name is that of Saul, the first king, who was of the tribe of Benjamin. He bore that name, 'Saul of Tarsus' of Benjamin; that is royalty in his blood and in his name), a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the Church." All that represented position, advantage, influence, reputation, something in this world which provides a basis of honour and success, a name and a place amongst men. He had exchanged that for all this of which we have spoken, and much more.

How does Paul feel about it? See the extremes in this man's life; the extreme, on the one hand, of honour and earthly glory, that in which men pride themselves, that which from this world's standpoint was to his advantage. It went a long way. On the other hand,

the opposite extreme. Think of it! A man like that, with royal blood in his veins, standing out amongst men in a place of conspicuous honour, and privilege, and influence, beaten with rods, thrashed with a whip, flung into prison, stoned, and all the rest. What does he feel about the exchange? What is his attitude to the whole thing? At the end of a life like that, how does he sum it up? Oh! this is the thing that gives the letter to the Philippians its real salt. When you realise that this is one of the last things from his pen, and that through this short letter the one throbbing note is: "Rejoice in the Lord," rejoice, rejoice. You say: There is something behind these words! These are no empty words. Put a history, an experience, like that behind an utterance, and the utterance counts for something. It is amazing. If we stayed long enough to meditate upon it, it is calculated to bring us down to our knees in shame. There is no complaining, no repining here, no saying: I have given up everything (and it is a big "everything") for Christ, and look what He has brought me to; see what I have got! No! there is not a sound nor a sign of complaining about it all. If he says: "Sorrowing" (and he does) he immediately couples with it: "Yet always rejoicing." If he says: "As having nothing," immediately he says: "possessing all things." If he says: "As poor," he instantly says: "and yet making many rich." His attitude toward the whole thing is not one of complaint but rather the opposite, glorying, rejoicing and bidding others rejoice. Alone, forsaken, enemies all around, his life-work being torn to pieces by those enemies, universally suspected, all friends leaving him, alone in prison—rejoicing, glorying, exulting.

This goes a long way beyond us. But what is the explanation? Our passage is the explanation, whether we can speak out of our experience or not. Perhaps for the moment that is not the question, because we are feeling thoroughly ashamed of ourselves already; we are not standing up to this at all; the more we think about it the more we shall feel how small and contemptible we are alongside of this man. Well might we regard ourselves as grasshoppers beside this giant. But whether or not we feel that we understand something of Paul, and we can in measure stand alongside of him, we look for the explanation of that which is so much more of triumph than the

best of us know. What is it? It is the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. The knowledge of Christ; to know Christ as He may be known; to know Christ as He is open to be known; to know Christ as He desires to make Himself known; that is the explanation, and Paul had come into that in large measure. He is saying this, in other words: It is possible to know Christ in such a way that, although to begin with you may lose everything that is precious in this world in the eyes of men, you have something infinitely more; and to go on with, it is possible so to know Christ that no matter how many may be the forms of suffering, how deep the suffering may be, how inexplicable some experiences may be, how continuous, right on to the end, the adversity may be, yet that knowledge of Christ is something which keeps you above, and well above, that you are not submerged. Although these mighty seas of sorrow, and suffering, and adversity may throw their weight against you, they break; but they do not break you, they break on you. It is possible to know Christ like that. That is what he is saying, if we understand him aright.

Most of us will have to confess that too often the problem has shaken us, the suffering has brought clouds of questionings and doubts into our hearts; we have not stood up to it like this. But our object is not just to see Paul doing this thing, neither is it to measure ourselves to a disadvantage at the side of Paul, but it is to see that Paul's Christ is our Christ, and what was possible to Paul is possible to us, and Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever; He is a Christ Who is knowable in exactly the same way as Paul knew Him.

The Secret of this Knowledge

There are two or three things to be said summing that up. The first is this, and it is a very simple thing and yet, after all, the very essence of things? *It is Christ being known as a Person, and not as a doctrine, a creed, a theology.* I wonder very often if the fact that our tremendous knowledge about Christ, our tremendous doctrinal apprehension, failing to lead us into triumphant joy, failing to result in something of this contagious spirit of triumph that was about Paul, does not imply that it is something which is not Christ Personally with which we are occupied and taken up. We are getting to know Christ purely by a book knowledge, and a Conference knowledge,

an address knowledge, an historic knowledge; that really, apart from our Conferences, our books, our studies, our addresses, and all these things, in the secret place, in the secret history back of it all, we are not living on Christ Himself, and out from Christ, and knowing Christ. So much of our Christian life is a matter of teaching, of things about Him.

We recognise the simplicity of that word, but we are quite sure that you understand what we mean, because you have known a very great deal about Christ in doctrine, and then you have discovered something of the Lord Himself, and you have discovered the tremendous difference. There is nothing more uplifting than to come into a personal experience of the Lord, a knowledge of the Lord, in a living way, to have Christ ministered to your heart by the Holy Spirit. Then you discover that there is something there which is more than all your suffering, and which makes suffering worth while, and which robs suffering of its deadly sting. It is Christ. Paul lived on Christ: "For me to live is Christ." Now what might have been put afterward? For me to live is to be able to go to meetings! For me to live is to be able to have fellowship with other believers! If I am cut off from them I cannot live! If I cannot go to the meetings I cannot live! You can put in anything else: For me to live is to have encouragement in the work, to see results for my labours! You can cover a great deal of ground, if you are going to cover the ground of our demands in order to be triumphant. But Paul looked out, and he saw his work being injured, damaged, outwardly destroyed, his old friends being alienated and led to doubt and suspect him. Oh! he saw enough to take the heart out of any man at the end of such a life, but he did not say: for me to live is to see my life work standing as a monument, intact; to have all my old friends faithful and around me; to know that my message has had universal acceptance and appreciation! No! "For me to live is (when all these things, and many others, have gone) Christ"!

We are quite helpless when we try to explain that. That is just where you come to a standstill. If you are going to give an address on some phase of truth, you can get on with it, but when you come to try and explain Christ, reveal Christ, uncover Christ, impart Christ, you can only talk about Him, say things that you see. You cannot make people appreciate

it. There is something to be done in their hearts. Anybody who knows leaps to it and says: I know a little of what you are talking about! Yes, I know Christ; I know what Christ can be: I am coming more and more to know what Paul meant. If you doubt that this was the explanation of Paul's triumphant joy, read the letter to the Philippians once more, and you will have to meet the name of Christ fifteen times in the first chapter only; and predominances anywhere are always significant. They at least indicate what the thing is about. And so you find that the answer to the question as to how Paul was triumphant in the midst of such a history, you simply say, it is Christ. I cannot go beyond that. I can only say that that Christ can be the same to you and to me. There is something there of reality.

How is Christ going to become our Christ livingly? In what way shall we come to the same position as Paul, the excellency, the super-eminence of the knowledge of Christ? There are two ways. Shall we say, there are two sides to one way. There is our side, and there is the Lord's side. There are always those two ways. Those two ways held good in the case of this man, and they hold good in our case. The way to the transcendent knowledge of Christ is for us the same as it was for the Apostle Paul. Let me say, before I indicate that twofold way—or, that double-sided way—that it is not some mental vision of Christ in Person that we are talking about. It is Christ Himself becoming resident within our being.

That would take a long time to explain. A man's writings as a rule indicate a man's knowledge, and his experience, or what is most real to that man. Now if you take up the writings of Paul, these letters of his, you can see that there is a predominating note in every one of his letters, and that predominating note has to do with some feature of Christ, something which Christ is to the believer.

Life in Christ.

What is the predominant note of the Roman letter; that which Christ becomes to the believer as preeminently set forth in the letter of Paul to the Romans? It is life! That around which everything circles there is: "The wages of sin is death . . . the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ." And there are two sides to the letter. There

is the death side of the letter to the Romans: "Dead in trespasses and sins." All have sinned, and all have, therefore, died. That is the universal verdict—sin and death; one half of the letter to the Romans. The other half is life through righteousness in Christ; and Paul's note of triumph, so far as the whole of that letter is concerned, is: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death." So that it is Christ our life, because He has dealt with the sin question, and brought righteousness in for us. It is life; and Paul entered very livingly into the meaning of that. His whole history gave him a very good background for appreciating "no condemnation." If you had lived as a Jew, under the law, and been smitten every day of your life by that law, you would have rejoiced in the fact that the law was got rid of and out of the way, and that you could *live* instead of having a sword hanging over your head all the time. That is no living at all; that is merely existence. Paul sees the whole of that ground of fear done away in the Cross of the Lord Jesus, and the sword dismissed.

Love in Christ.

From the Roman letter you pass to Corinthians, and in the Corinthians you have a situation calculated to provoke—I was going to say, the greatest saint. Read the first Corinthian letter again, and see how a Saul of Tarsus would stand up to that situation. See what they say about him and against him. See how they behave after he has spent so much energy upon them. See their attitude to him and toward one another, and the terrible dishonour to the Lord by reason of what is going on there, an utter and terrible misrepresentation of Christ. Put a man in the flesh up against a situation like that, and those people will have to sit up; I do not know what might happen to them. But what is *the* triumphant, dominant note in Corinthians? Is it not love? Is not everything headed up into that matchless thirteenth chapter: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love . . ." Love, love triumphant, in the presence of the most terribly provoking contradictions, denials. What a change has taken place in Paul! What a different man, to meet a situation on that ground of love! "Love . . . taketh no

account of evil." "Love suffereth long, and is kind . . . doth not behave itself unseemly . . . Love never faileth." This is a different man from the man you met on the Damascus road! And when you know that something like that has happened in you, when you recognise that Christ has made that difference, Christ is very, very precious. Such a knowledge of Christ is worth having, and worth suffering for.

Liberty in Christ.

Pass from Corinthians to Galatians, and you know the note: "Our liberty in Christ." Christ has liberated, emancipated, set us free.

Strength in Christ.

From Galatians you pass to Ephesians. What is Ephesians? "The exceeding greatness of his power to usward." It is Christ our strength.

Joy in Christ.

From Ephesians you pass to Philippians, and there you have: "Rejoice in the Lord alway." Christ our joy.

Fulness in Christ.

From Philippians into Colossians. There it is Christ our fulness.

Hope in Christ.

Then you finish with Thessalonians. What have you here? That you sorrow not as those who have no hope, that Lord is coming. When everything of this earth is breaking up and going, that is not the end. He is coming, Christ our hope!

Christ was all that in a living way to Paul; that is, Christ was set over against the other background. It was what Christ was. Christ becoming something in the life, and becoming the very life of the life, the very love of the life. It is the imparting of Himself, so that He becomes in us what He is in Himself.

What is the way to this knowledge? On the one hand there is our side, and I think the answer is just here in Philippians i. 21: "For me to live is Christ." How will you know Christ in fulness? How will you know Christ as He can be known? Only on this basis, that for you to live is Christ. What does that mean? Paul went into Arabia for three years after he met Christ on the way to Damascus, and during those three years he had ample time in solitude to face the implica-

tions of his new relationship; and for him it became perfectly clear in the course of three solitary years that it was going to cost him everything. All these issues of Philippians iii. were faced out then. For him it became simply and ultimately a matter of life and death. It meant this: Everything that I have on this earth, in this world, has got to be held for the Lord, for Christ, and if in the course of my relationship to Him all or any of these things have got to go, then I settle that now. If it means suffering, persecution and death itself, I come there now, accept it all, so that for me to live will not be home, family, friends, reputation, acceptance, influence, but if it means none of these things at all, the loss of *all* things, then the very motive of my being in this world will be none of these things, but Christ, Christ the dynamic of life! In other words, Paul would say: For me to be on this earth simply means Christ! I will accept what He may give with gratitude! If He gives something, or allows me to retain something here, I will be grateful for it, but if all has to go then it does not make any difference, Christ is the object, the dynamic, the motive of my being on this earth, and only Christ!

When we have settled things like that, when it is really brought to that conclusiveness of issue that for us to live is Christ, then the Lord has a very open way to become everything to us. Is it not true in our case that too often our relationship to the Lord, our Christian life, being Christians, bringing us into difficulty, resulting in suffering, has led us to stand still or draw back for a minute, and say: Ah, well, I did not expect that it would mean this! I do not know that I am prepared for that! Something like that has very often happened with us, has it not? Suffering the loss of all things, is easy language, *but* really only a man who has put everything once and for all into the balances can know Christ in fulness, utter fulness, and say: I suffer the loss of all things for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ!

It just means this: the utterness of Christ to us requires our utterness for Him. If we are holding anything instead of Christ, apart from Christ, contrary to Christ, we are limiting our own knowledge of Christ.

That is one side, our side: "For me to live is Christ." We have failed, we have broken down, in this matter. And yet our hearts are bent and set upon one thing (I trust they are), that when we have passed this way, which we

pass only once, the eternal verdict will be that our having lived was Christ. It is a solemn thing to bring into view : I am passing this way ! What is going to be the effect of my having passed this way when I have passed ? Unto what have I lived ? What will the end of my life represent as the result of my years ? What will eternity show, and what will time show as to the value of my having gone this way ?

From this time may the Lord put into our hearts a deep and intense purpose that the verdict shall be : Christ ! He lived, and his living was Christ ! She lived, and her living was Christ !

When we are utter for the Lord like that it gives the Lord the opportunity of the other side. Paul spoke of it to the Ephesians. He says he prayed for them that the eyes of their heart might be enlightened that they, being rooted and grounded in love, might be strong with all saints to apprehend the breadth, and length, and height, and depth, and to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ. That is only another phrase for the super-eminence of the knowledge of Christ. "the eyes of your heart being enlightened." "That he would give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." There is the Divine side. I am sure that if the human side is right,

and there is utterness for the Lord, the Divine side will be all right ; but between the two there comes a test, there comes a point where the whole issue of life is focused upon one full-orbed decision : Am I going to be in this world with any interests of my own whatever, or is it going to be, no matter what it costs and what the way may be, Christ ? That is very often headed up in a practical test ; not a mental test, not whether the Lord asks us to say a thing, but to do it ; and everything as to our knowledge of Christ in fulness hangs upon an act, sometimes one act which commits us.

We may recognise the implications ; ostracism, persecution, defaming, misrepresentation, suspicion, loss of influence, loss of reputation, loss of place, launched out in a way in which comparatively few will go with us, in which we shall be misunderstood. That may be the way of the challenge of the Lord, and of His highest interests. The question is : Are we going to stand back and say, No, I cannot go that way ! Or is it going to be : " For me to live is Christ " ? If so, and we put that into the required act, we shall know the excellency of Christ, and have the most excellent knowledge of Christ, Christ excelling. May it be so with us all.

T. A.-S.

Conferences for this Summer

If the Lord Wills

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CENTRE

13, Honor Oak Road,

London, S.E.23.

June 8th. - 10th. (Whitsun).

August 3rd. - 5th.

Aug. 31st. - Sept. 1st.

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

CENTRE,

Kilcreggan, Helensburgh,

Dumbartonshire.

June 15th. - 21st.

July 13th. - 19th.

August 17th. - 23rd.

Sept. 14th. - 16th. (Weekend).

Sept. 21st. - 23rd. (Weekend).

The City which hath Foundations

Meditations on the Spiritual Background of Jerusalem. No. 1

READING : Hebrew xi. 10 ; Ezekiel v. 5.

OUR object is to see that because Jerusalem is so closely related to God, indeed has been brought into being by Him, her values must be preeminently spiritual and Divine. Back of her history there lie those elements which are not of this world, nor are they merely of time, but are heavenly and eternal.

The Land of Syria.

Before we can consider the city particularly we must view the land as a whole, because very largely the city is the concentration of the features of the land. We note that in Hebrews xi. the city which hath foundations is closely related to the heavenly country (verses 10, 16), so that what is true of the city is but the concentration of the country. That is an important thing to bear in mind as we go on.

We will note several of the relationships of the land.

Firstly, the relationship of the land to the rest of the world. Syria has been of greater significance to mankind, both spiritually and materially, than any other single country in the world.

We observe first its centrality. It stands between Asia and Africa, between the two primeval homes of man, the valley of the Euphrates and the Nile ; also between the two great centres of empire, Western Asia and Egypt ; one side represents the Eastern and ancient world, the other side the Mediterranean as the gateway to the Western and modern world.

Secondly, we note the connection between Syria and Arabia. Syria is at the Northern end of the Arabian world. Arabia was the cradle of the Semites. The Semites went out in four directions : (1) to Ethiopia (2) to Egypt via the isthmus of Suez (3) to Mesopotamia through the Arabian Desert (4) to Western Syria via the Jordan. More than in any other direction these Semites have gravitated toward Syria, and we know of their coming into that land in two special ways, in the case of Abraham from Mesopotamia, and Israel (the Hebrews) from Egypt.

Thirdly, the relationship of the land to Asia, Africa and Europe. We note that the oldest road in the world, from the Euphrates to the Nile, which is still used (although no longer a camel caravan, having given place to motor transport) runs through Damascus, through Galilee, the Plain of Esdraelon, down the maritime Plain of Palestine, through Gaza to Egypt.

Fourthly, the nations and peoples of the earth who have had to do with Syria. There is a tremendous catalogue of these. This land has been either the objective or the actual dwelling-place, or the battle-field, of all these nations, mostly the dwelling-place. The Hittites came South from Asia Minor, and the Ethiopians came North from the conquest of the Nile. Here is the list of nations : the Hittites, the Ethiopians, the Scythians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Moslem invasion, the Turks, the Mongols, the Greeks, the Romans, the Arabs, the Crusaders, Napoleon, and finally the Allies. All these have had special interest in this little country, so that it is quite clear that Syria has occupied a very important place in the history of this world.

Then we note one or two details as to the land itself. The length of the land is about four hundred miles in all, with a width varying from eighty to one hundred miles, bounded by the sea on the west, Mount Taurus on the north, and by the Desert on the east and south. The name "Syria" is short for "Assyria." The name was originally applied by the Greeks to the whole of the Assyrian Empire from the Caucasus to the Levant. Then that Empire shrank to this side of the Euphrates, and finally to the present limits which we have noted. Palestine is only a part of Syria, defined by the Greeks the Southern part of Syria, including Judea.

The country is broken by mountain ranges, so much so as never to have been brought together under one government. There is the triple barrier against the Desert, firstly the Jordan Valley, secondly the Western Range, and thirdly the Eastern Range ; and four lines

can be drawn down the land marking distinct features, firstly there is the sea plain, secondly the Western range, thirdly the Jordan and the Jordan Valley, fourthly the Eastern range.

We now turn to note the spiritual instruction which comes to us from the historic.

I. The Centrality of Jerusalem.

That which we have just noted shows how central that land, and very largely that city, has been geographically, historically, and—as we shall yet see more fully—spiritually, in the history of this world. If you want to be impressed with the centrality of the land and of the city geographically, all you have to do is to take a map of the world, and put your pencil upon Syria, then draw a line in every direction to the end of the world, and you will find that your lines are almost equal in length to the ends of the earth from Syria. Jerusalem is the centre, pretty well the centre of the whole world.

The centrality of this country is tremendously impressive, and when you add to the geographical centrality the historic centrality, and see how all the way through history all the nations of the world have been attracted toward that point, have been interested in that, in some way or other have been related to Syria, that again is an impressive thing. But when you add to the geographical and the historical the religious, or, better still, the spiritual, and see that in the main it is because God in some way is related to that central point, then the significance goes much further, and becomes very much more impressive. Surely this is not just a natural thing, this is not normal, there is something about this which speaks of wider issues than merely a few miles of Syrian soil, a fragment of this earth as something in itself! It is like the arena of the great amphitheatre where God has been working out in history a drama with spiritual significance, showing to the world things which are not merely of time or of the earth, but of eternity and of heaven. So that Jerusalem, in the very first place, speaks of centrality.

The Anti-Type—The New Jerusalem.

Turning from the historic Jerusalem, the type, to the anti-type, the spiritual Jerusalem of the Book of the Revelation and elsewhere, we know that that feature is revealed to be the first thing about the heavenly Jerusalem which is the Church. Take two things, for instance, which are said about the New Jerusalem.

Firstly, that the nations shall walk in the light thereof, and shall bring their glory into it (Revelation xxi. 24 and 26). If we bear in mind that the New Jerusalem is not just a geographical thing, it is the Church, then the Church is seen ultimately to be in a central place to all the rest of the world. It occupies that point with all the nations round about related thereto. Just as the historic Jerusalem occupies that central place geographically and historically, so in a spiritual way the Church ultimately will be at the centre of God's universe, and everything will be toward it and as from it. It will be central, the nations and the kings all moving to and from it, all the kingdoms of this world recognising the Church as the universal metropolis.

Secondly, it is said that the New Jerusalem has on its four sides three gates (Revelation xxi. 13), and "the city lieth foursquare" (verse 16). "Four" is the number of creation, the whole creation. The whole creation is represented by the City. On each of the four sides of the City there are three gates. That means there is equality in all directions. If the City were represented as being right to one side of the world, it would not need three gates on that back side. Its gates would be in the other three directions, but if three gates are equally on every side it surely means that what lies between those gates is equal. Everything speaks of centrality in the Church.

All that that means has yet to be seen and worked out, but we want in the first place to get the City set, we want to see what the place and position of the Church is intended to be, and when that is recognised we can understand the many-sided activity of the enemy to destroy the Church, we can understand that aspect of Jerusalem's history which is so fraught with contest, conflict, dispute, siege, assault. What a tremendous history Jerusalem has had! Well might the Psalmist urge that we should pray for the peace of Jerusalem. There has been good reason to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, for Jerusalem has known a share of tribulation more than any other spot on this earth.

That is suggestive and significant, and carries its own spiritual meaning. What a history the Church has had! What a history the true spiritual people of God have of conflict. Well might the Lord have said to His own true ones: "In the world ye shall have tribulation...." (John xvi. 33). To come really into a living

relationship with Christ as a vital part of His Church means to come into the conflict of all the ages, to the realm of ceaseless conflict. But there is a reason, and the best of all reasons, for when once Jerusalem is set, comes down from God out of heaven, and is set in its place at the centre of the universe, no other power will be able to lift itself against it. That Church is destined to occupy that place of centrality and supremacy in Christ throughout all the ages yet to be. Not least of the many-sided activities of the enemy has been his effort to set up a false Church, an imitation Church, a counterfeit Church.

More will be said about that as we go on, but we have laid down our first principle, and seen the first feature of the Jerusalem which is above as to God's thought for her.

We pass to the second feature :

II. The Heaviness of Jerusalem.

We go back to the first movements of which we know in the relationship of God to Jerusalem. These movements began with Abraham. There is a sense in which we could say that Abraham was the father of the City of God. The Word says of him that "he looked for a city." Somehow (it is not recorded how) he came to look for a city related to God. There is nothing which tells us that God spoke to him about the city, but here is the statement clearly made that "he looked for a city...whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews xi. 10). Somehow he came into the quest for a city related to God, of which God was the Architect (for that is the literal word) and Maker. That surely means that the City would take its form and character from God. If God is the Architect and Maker then the thing made, designed, would take its character from Him. Thus Abraham looked for something which was an expression of the thought and will of God, which was the result of Divine activity, a City.

What was the first step toward that City? We are told by a man who is said to have been full of the Holy Ghost, Stephen: "The God of Glory appeared unto our father Abraham" (Acts vii. 2). That was the first step in relation to the City which was to be the expression of God's thought. From that point the Divine association with Jerusalem has always been as with what is in the world, and yet outside of it. The God of glory never did attach Himself to anything of this earth wholly after the fall. He took up something,

and made it an illustration of something else which was not of this earth at all, and from the point when the God of glory appeared unto Abraham God's association with Jerusalem was always, has always been, as with that which, while being in the world is yet outside of it. We emphasise this, that God's association with it has been on that wise. We mean this, that when God associated Himself with Jerusalem He only did so when Jerusalem stood true to His thought as something in the world and yet outside of it. When Jerusalem failed to maintain that principle and became associated with the world God forsook it. God's association was only on the ground that it was outside of the world while in it. This is made very clear, both positively and negatively; positively as Jerusalem expressed the Divine thought of a Heavenly City and maintained separation from the world, God associated Himself with Jerusalem. Negatively; whenever Jerusalem failed or ceased to express that Divine thought, God withdrew. So that we have it, on the contrary, showing what God's mind was, that the dark history of Jerusalem, destruction, suffering, and being forsaken, is a very strong proof and evidence that God will not associate Himself with, to uphold, to maintain, anything which does not express His thought as being entirely heavenly although here on this earth. That is a very important thing in our consideration.

Features in the Life of Abraham.

Turning again to Abraham we shall see that Abraham was the inclusive type of the City. In order to follow that out we take this principle of heaviness and trace the heavenly features in the life of Abraham. If Abraham is being spiritually constituted according to God's thought for the City because he is the father of the City, then you expect to see the features of the City running right through Abraham's life, and this feature of heaviness is not difficult to trace in the life of Abraham. We will trace it in eight respects.

I. Heavenly Vision.

"The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham" (Acts vii. 2). That is heavenly vision. In the New Testament we should call it Divine revelation, God revealing Himself. What is the Church? It is the place in which God is revealed, the place of heavenly vision. The Church is the em-

bodiment of the revelation of God in Christ. The Church has to be the sphere in which men and women come to a knowledge of God, an ever growing knowledge of God. The Church is not just something to carry out a set order of things and go through a form. The Church is the place in which there abides the living unveiling of God, and just as soon as something claiming to be the Church ceases to be the place in which there is any living unveiling of God it ceases to be what God calls "the Church," and when it fails in these Divine features God withdraws. It may go on, but God withdraws. When Jerusalem ceased to be the place of the revelation of God to the nations then God withdrew. The purpose of the Church in God's mind is that it should be the sphere of the abiding and continuous unveiling of God, the God of glory appearing. (See the first three chapters of Revelation.)

It is a grand thing to belong to that Church, and to know that Church. Do we know what it is to be where God is showing Himself, making Himself known, where we get so constantly, again and again and again, the God of glory appearing? Are you able to say that from week to week in the Church to which you belong; the God of glory is appearing? So often our hearts have warmed in the realisation that the Lord is shewing Himself to us. That feature which was foundational to the life of Abraham is also foundational to Jerusalem, both earthly and heavenly. It is a governing law of the Church.

II. Separation from Earth.

Because of the revelation from heaven there is the consequent and essential separation from earth. "The God of glory appeared to Abraham when he was in Ur of the Chaldees." What was the result? "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred . . ." (Genesis xii. 1), and he went out. Where from? His world, his native world, his old world, all the world of nature, the world of natural birth, the world of natural relationship, the world of natural interests. He went out, and everything had to be new. It was *separation*.

That was hammered out through long centuries for Jerusalem. Go through the Word with "Jerusalem" again, and see how God continuously appeals for Jerusalem to be clean, to be separate, to be holy, to have no relationships with the countries round about,

to stand as for God in the midst of the nations, and Jerusalem's terrible tragedy—the tragedy which is told in the sobs of prophets one after another—is the tragedy of lost separation.

That is the tragedy of the Church. We see God's thought by the very tragedy of the Church's history. You cannot violate God's thoughts for His people and have anything but a tragic history. What the Church needs to realise so much is its heavenly relationship, calling for an *utter* separation from the world, in order that God may wholeheartedly associate Himself with it.

III. Heavenly Citizenship.

"For he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder (Architect) and maker is God" (Hebrews xi. 10). Where did he find it? He never found it on this earth at all! When we turn to Hebrews xi. we find that Abraham did see something a long, long way off, and hailed it. The Lord Jesus said: ". . . Abraham rejoiced to see my day. . . ." (John viii. 56). He saw by faith. "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed. . . and he went out. . ." (Hebrew xi. 8). "These all died in faith, not having received. . ." (verse 13). His citizenship was not a citizenship of this earth at all, it was a heavenly citizenship. The New Testament makes that perfectly clear. The true seed of Abraham are the believers (not the Jews) who are linked with the Jerusalem which is above, "which is the mother of us all" (Galatians iv. 26). That is how Paul puts it. So the Apostle says: "For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Saviour. . ." (Philippians iii. 20).

IV. A Pilgrim and a Stranger.

As running closely with that, and corresponding with that, we are told that Abraham in the land was as a pilgrim and a stranger, dwelling in tents, having no part in the land, being in the land a stranger. Is not that a feature of heavenliness? Pilgrims and strangers here. But where, then, do we belong? Peter in writing his letter says: "Beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims. . ." (1 Peter ii. 11), belonging to the heavenly country, with the heavenly citizenship.

V. No Earthly Patronage nor Rewards.

No patronage nor rewards from this world for Abraham. Though he may do service in the interests of certain righteous principles, and in so doing his service may be of value to

those in this world (and who shall say that the spiritual service of the Lord's people on this earth has not meant some value to this world, even to this ungodly world? The Lord only knows what the world would be without His people in it) Abraham said, No! to those of this world, of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, who had derived some benefit from its activity, when they would offer him some reward and would patronise him. Abraham still stands outside.

That has been one of those deeply laid snares of the Devil, to make something of the service of the people of God on this earth, to confer upon them recognition, titles, position, to make them something here on this earth amongst men. You will notice that so often when these preferments take place, and these gifts are made, and this recognition is granted, and these positions are given, there is a farewell to the deep spiritual note, there is an end of the real spiritual value of that life. The tragedy of many a really valuable servant of God, who was used mightily of God in a spiritual way and finished up life without that note, having lost that spiritual value, was upon this very thing, that in some way they became recognised and accepted, they received recognition, preference, awards from this world. To maintain heavenliness, separation is essential to the maintenance of spiritual value.

VI. No Natural Resources nor Energies.

Abraham had to learn that lesson in a very hard school. His life is marred by a terrible mark and scar, when he broke down and tried by natural means and methods and courses to realise Divine ends. The world today holds that scar in a most terrible way. Look at Islam, look at Ishmael, and you have the full growth of that fatal mistake of Abraham when he turned to realise a Divine purpose along natural lines. Heavenly people may not do that. A heavenly Church may not do that. The Church has tried to do that. It has tried to accomplish its Divine mission by worldly means, by natural resources and energies. Its tragedy is clear. Its weakness is manifest to all. For the heavenly thing no resources or energies of nature are permissible.

VII. No merely Earthly Fruit for God.

I am thinking of Isaac. Isaac came eventually, and came through Sarah. There is an earthly link in the case of Isaac, though by a

Divine intervention, though by a heavenly power. But God will sever that earthly link, God will cut clean in between what is of heaven and of earth, and take Isaac to death. And who can raise the dead but God? Seeing then that only God can raise the dead, what is raised from the dead is *all of God*. So God will have no link with earth, even though it may be for Him.

Very often God causes some of His heavenly purpose to be born in a human heart, a purpose of God born in the heart of a man or a woman. In the course of time that man or woman takes that heavenly vision and it in some way becomes *their* vision: for God, yes, but theirs! It is a terrible thing to interfere with somebody who has a heavenly vision which they have got from the Lord. So often they become the most spiky people that you have to deal with. Yes, they have a vision from the Lord, they have a sense of call from the Lord, and they are holding that thing for the Lord. That is quite good, but *they* are holding it, and *they* have got it, and it is *theirs*, and God often has to take that thing which had its origin in Himself clean away to death, it has to go, and it is as though they never had a vision; worse than that, they are in confusion, utterly confounded. God gave a vision, and now it has all been smashed and broken, God gave a call and a purpose, and now everything contradicts that, it has all gone. God will not have even that which is of Himself held by man, laid hold of by man.

Perhaps Abraham's peril was, even though he had got Isaac by a miracle, to make Isaac his, dear to his own heart, to make Isaac his own; and God said, in effect, No, Abraham, no earth ties, even in Divine things! This thing is utterly of Me, and nothing of you! It is so easy to bring God's great purpose within the compass of some human instrumentality, to be very concerned maybe for world evangelisation, but it must be through *our* Mission! That is taking hold of God's purposes and making them private property. God will not have that if the thing is going to realise His full end, if He is going to wholly commit Himself to it.

VIII. No Place in the Heavenly for the Hand of Man.

Nothing of man must have any place, hold or prerogative in that which is of heaven. I am thinking of the tomb at Machpelah. You remember that Sarah died, and Abraham,

who had good standing in the country, sought a place of burial for his wife, for himself and his seed, and the cave of Machpelah was proved to be the very place. He offered to buy it, but the men who owned it offered it to him free, they well nigh besought him to accept it as a present, but he would not have it cheaply, he would have the full price weighed and purchase it outright, so that no one should be able to say: You got it cheaply, you really owe us something, you really are in our debt, we really have a claim over you! No! to the last farthing he will buy it outright, no hand of man shall be able to have a claim, never shall it be possible for anybody of this world to suggest that Abraham and his descendents are under an obligation to them.

Do you see the working of the principle? No hand of man, no rights as of this world in the Church. Jerusalem which is above is free, is *free*! This world has no claims there. There is no other power which has any rights there. The Church stands free in God; but, oh, look at the complications today, look at the obligations, look how the Church has sold itself to the world, and how the world has got a grip and a hand, and it is saying, and has a perfect right to say: You are under obligations to us! That is not the Church according to His thought.

All these are aspects of the one great truth of heavenliness.

The necessity for our time is for the Lord's people to come to a spiritual understanding of what heavenliness means. Only so can the Church, the Lord's people, know power. I am *certain* that the whole question of spiritual power is bound up with heavenliness. The Lord Jesus, Who is the land and Who is to be, in all the essential elements of His being, gathered up in the Church represented by the City, said: "The prince of this world cometh,

and hath nothing in me." (John xiv. 30). What a place of power! What a place of victory! What a place of ascendancy! Imagine it! "The prince of this world"—with all that he has (and he has a tremendous amount in his hands, tremendous power),—"cometh, and hath nothing in Me." (John xiv. 30). "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out." (John xii. 31). Those two things go together, and it is because the Lord's people do not stand in that position that *they cannot* cast out the prince of this world, *they cannot* overcome him, he *has* so much power in the midst of the Lord's people because he has ground, and the ground is this world. No ground, therefore no rights. That is tremendous. Oh, that God might get a people there.

Listen to this. "The Jerusalem that is above is *free*, which is the mother of us all." (Galatians iv. 26). "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet..... and behold a great red dragon.....and the dragon stood before the woman.....to devour her child....." (Revelation xii. 1-4). Jerusalem is our mother. The Church above is our mother. But there is a man-child being born out from the Church, our from the mother, a man-child, and a great red dragon waiting to devour, and that man-child caught up to the Throne. What is that? That is something *out of* the general Church which is specific in its overcoming power. That goes to the Throne.

The Lord is seeking to have at least out from the whole Church a company of an entirely and utterly heavenly nature, to govern, to rule, so that the enemy is cast down and has no more place in heaven.

Let us ask the Lord to teach us the meaning of heavenliness. It is a tremendous thing in the realisation of His end.

T. A.-S.

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The Eyes of His Glory

(Continued.) No. 3

READINGS : Ezekiel i. 22-28.
Numbers xvi. 1-19, 30-35.
Leviticus ix. 23-24.
Luke iii. 21, 22.
1 Corinthians xii.
1 Peter v. 1-6.

CHRIST is the fulness of the glory of God, and in the measure in which Christ is found amongst the people of God anywhere, in that measure the glory of God is there manifest.

The Spirit of Glory

It is clear from Leviticus ix. that where Christ in His fulness is manifested, as He was typically in the whole range of those offerings, there the glory of the Lord rests in its fulness. So that in Leviticus ix. we have typically God attesting Christ, and saying, in effect : Here is Christ set forth in fulness ; here is My glory ! We find the glory of God making itself apparent ; if you like, the eyes of His glory suddenly becoming evident, attesting all that which He approves. So the presence of the glory of the Lord revealed is always God's way of saying : I am for this, and I am against that which is against this. So that, when we find in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ personally here on earth, heaven breaking forth in a manner discernible to the senses of men, and a voice saying : " This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," we are justified in saying that it is the attesting by the eyes of the glory that this one is utterly according to the mind of God. So Peter says that on the holy mount they were witnesses of His majesty, and there He received from the Father honour and glory. It was the glory attesting the Son of God on earth. Here on earth in a man was that which was the exact expression of God's thought.

In type, again in the Old Testament the same thing is expressed when Moses, speaking of the land to which Israel were going says : " The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it." The eyes of His glory are there all the time, as if to say : This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.

If that is true in principle, when we come to the incident of the Lord Jesus at His baptism, and we hear the voice from heaven attesting the Son, and then, as confirmation accompanying

it, the dove representing the anointing Spirit resting upon Him, we come to this conclusion that the expression of the glory of the Lord and the presence of the anointing Spirit are virtually the same thing. Peter in effect says this when he writes : " . . . the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you " (1 Peter iv. 14). The anointing Spirit is heaven's attestation that here is the glory of the Lord. So the conclusion we reach is that, when we are speaking about the glory of the Lord being revealed, we are in other words affirming the presence of the anointing of the Spirit. You can immediately gather that up and say that every expression of the Spirit of the anointing, be it in a great and mighty way or in a little and apparently insignificant way, is an expression of the glory of the Lord.

Thus we reach the story of Korah in Numbers xvi. It is worth while noticing just a point before we come to that in detail. Immediately after Leviticus ix., in which we have the narrative of the glory being seen, where Christ is typically set forth and the fire falls from heaven, we find two servants of God, Nadab and Abihu, functioning in their proper realm, but in the course of their functioning offering false fire before the Lord, and the fire of God came out and consumed them. This is a solemn thing for the children of God. Nadab and Abihu, though they were in their proper realm, had not true respect to the demands of the holiness to which they had drawn nigh. Here are servants of God who touch holiness, and that holiness consumes them because they are not in accordance with the demands that it makes upon them.

Disputing the Sovereignty

The particular point in the case of Korah is that he and his company challenged the anointing which rested upon Moses and Aaron. If you like to put it the other way, you can say that they touched the glory of God, which was identified with Moses and Aaron, and their error was a two-fold one. In the first instance, they challenged the anointing upon those who were truly anointed ; and in the second instance, they assumed for themselves an anointing which God never gave, and entered into the realm

of the operation of the anointing without having its reality.

The principles are the same. We may touch that glory as upon another, or else get into the range of that glory not in the bidding of God. The effect is the same, you touch the anointing outside the will of God, and the inevitable consequences follow.

Notice what Korah said when making his protest to Moses. He said, in effect, this: "You are taking too much upon yourselves; you are assuming a position which virtually makes you set yourselves up as better than the rest; but all the Lord's people are holy, therefore they are all entitled to what you are and what you have got! Korah was right in making the declaration that a certain state was necessary in a people, a state of holiness, if that people were to enter into the realm of divine service. The Spirit of the anointing is not something official that people take up and lay down at their will. Men are not made anointed servants of God because they decide to go that way. A certain state of heart is necessary in anybody who is going to touch the anointing in any way, or to know its power. Hence the necessity for us, as a first thing, if we would enter at all into the realm of divine service, that our walk should be holy. "Be ye holy, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord," is a declaration of the Word. Without that there is no anointing, and if that state fail after the anointing has been received, that anointing ceases.

You find exactly that in Ezekiel. There at the beginning is the vision of the glory, and then the whole story of Ezekiel's vision is of that glory removing stage by stage from the place of its first residence, Jerusalem. You are given to see the filthy state of things in Jerusalem, and the glory withdrawing right away. And then the end of Ezekiel is the glory coming back taking up its dwelling place again, but this time in a model House of God, speaking of Christ in every part. That is Ezekiel's whole story, that the glory of the Lord is seeking a dwelling place but can dwell only in a place suitable to its own character. And the Spirit of the anointing demands a state of Christlikeness, in accord with its own nature, in order that it may rest anywhere. And since there is nothing outside of Christ Himself that can satisfy this condition the only ground in us for the anointing is on the principle of "Christ in me the hope of glory." That is the basic

condition of all anointing. Let us say again that service under the anointing does not depend upon our decision to take up this piece of work, or our preference for this line of things, and our decision to go in for it. That is an entirely false—but unhappily very prevalent—conception of Christian activity. But it is not on that basis that the anointing operates.

The all important point is that the anointing of the Spirit is entirely within the control of the Sovereign Lord Himself. Just as at His baptism the Lord was attested from heaven by the Spirit, and the coming of that Spirit was within the sovereign control of God the Father, so now today wherever the Spirit of the anointing will rest upon any man or company, He will so rest because the Lord, the Man in the Throne, is the One Who controls and to Whom that under-company is subject. "He hath poured forth this" (Acts ii. 33).

Thus we come immediately to 1 Corinthians xii.: "...dividing to each one severally even as he will." Everything is related to the government of the One in the Throne. Christ is the Head of the Church, the Holy Ghost is the Expressor of that Headship, and the anointed service of any man or woman will have its measure and its value just in proportion as He Who is Sovereign Head chooses to give the anointing, and energy by the anointing, to that one.

So we reach the point where we have established that it is the Lord, that Man in the Throne of blazing holiness (though it be of grace), Who sovereignly is anointing a Moses and an Aaron, a Korah, a Dathan, and an Abiram to their respective ministries. And if you asked Moses: Why are you what you are? he would say: I am what I am by the will of Him Who appointed me. If you asked the Lord Jesus: Why are You what You are? He would say: "I came...not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." If you say: How do You do Your work? He will answer: "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing." If you ask any servant of God who is truly related to his Lord: Why are you what you are? Why did you choose this particular phase of Christian activity? If he is wise and understanding he will say: I did not choose it! I did not choose the Lord but He chose me and appointed me. Every time we shall be brought back to this fact: "No man taketh the honour upon himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron."

The Hebrew letter attests Aaron as a called one of God. It is the Man in the Throne and the servant as beneath the Throne and subject to its government, that is brought into view, and that brings us to a number of points that we want to stress.

Recognising the Divine Order

We could, of course, at this point be led into a diversion of considerable dimensions, if we were to stay to deal with what is the order which that One in the Throne determines should operate amongst His people. That would bring in the whole question of the order of the Church, as appointed by the Throne, not as ordered by man. There is in Christendom a Church order as commonly understood, but does it bear any vital relationship to the order of Him Who is in the Throne? All true ordering amongst the people of God is an order by the will of Him Who anoints, and Who appoints. That is where Korah, of course, made his great mistake. Korah comes to Moses and says: You take too much upon yourselves, Moses and Aaron! Did Moses and Aaron take it upon themselves to be what they were? "No man taketh this honour upon him, but he that is called of God as was Aaron."

The first blunder Korah made was that he assumed that somebody else was what they were by self-appointment; that they were what they were by the mere setting up of themselves to be it. He challenged the basis upon which another man functioned in the service of God.

This brings us to a point of great solemnity. In challenging the anointing under which that man served, Korah and his company were challenging the glory of God. In daring to put their hand upon that man in His service they were putting their hand out and touching that Throne of terrible glory. The consequence of their act was that virtually fire came out from the Throne and consumed them. How desperately solemn this is. We need not think only of a Moses and Aaron who were fulfilling a supremely important spiritual ministry. You may think in similar terms of somebody in the humblest rank. Anointed service is not only that of a preacher on a platform. It may also be of a maid in a kitchen, or a bricklayer building a wall, or a dustman removing the rubbish. That one is what he is—if he is in the will of God—by the appointment and anointing of the One in the Throne. Challenge, therefore, the spiritual anointing on the least child of God

who is truly and humbly walking with the Lord, and the effect is the hand put out against the Throne in the glory.

When Korah did this the glory of the Lord appeared to all the congregation. Those eyes of glory have come on the scene again, and they have said: You are not touching a man; you are touching Me and My glory, and the Throne of holiness. This should seal our lips against speaking evil of one another within the family of God's people. Our lips should be mute so far as speaking ill of one another is concerned. But take that out into so large a realm as this in which Korah brought it, the challenge of the anointing resting upon a servant of God; the only thing God can do is sooner or later to answer by fire unless there comes in repentance and recourse to the Blood of Jesus. That is firstly, a terrible warning, and secondly, a tremendous encouragement. It brings us, of course, to this conclusion, that by the grace of God we will never touch another in the realm of the anointing, even by a word. But, blessed be God, if another should dare to touch us in that realm, we can remember that they have not touched us, they have touched the eyes of His glory, for He said: "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye." That is for our consolation. What, then, is to be our attitude in the day when another does touch us, either by evil speaking concerning us, or by opposing himself to us? Shall we match his methods with similar ones? Remember that the eyes in the glory have taken all into account, have regarded it, and One Whose eyes are as a flame of fire has said: "Vengeance is mine: I will repay." There is consolation as well as solemn warning in a thought like that.

The Essential Anointing

If the anointing from the Head is essential to service, and brings in the glory of God, then any service which is not thus anointed cannot be to His glory. That is another mistake that Korah and his friends made. They assumed that they could come into a realm of service other than that to which they had been called of God, and discharge it quite happily and successfully. If there is no anointing from the Head there is no accompanying glory. It is easy for you and me to enter into a self-appointed service, but in such a case there can never be the least hint of the glory of the Lord appearing. That glory is bound up with

the anointing of the Spirit. To those who are facing the question of ministry we earnestly say, for God's sake be sure that there is no self-appointing if you want your life to be to the praise of His glory. Though in His great mercy He might be with you as His child, and cherish you, and up to a point save you from disaster, only such a condition could never satisfy Him or you. It must be God utterly with us, as we with Him. There can be nothing else. Watch against a self-appointed ministry. It can never bring glory to God.

But there is something much more terrible than merely that we may not really effect much. Korah and the rest were Levites. The Levite had nothing to do with the blood of the offering; that was the priest's business. They had many proper duties necessary to be fulfilled, and in the measure that they did them faithfully they were essential to the economy of the whole; but these men dared to step out of the realm where they were properly called, into the realm where the vital element in ministry was the precious blood. In effect, without fear or question, they simply stepped brazenly into the realm where the infinite preciousness of the Blood of Christ was in view. Oh! there are some who do untold harm to themselves and other people by lightly coming into the realm of these holy mysteries, and without due reverence speaking of the Word of God, the Blood, the Cross, the glory of God, as if these were common things. These are awful in their solemnity. God save us from speaking of them except in the fear of the Lord and in the power of the Holy Ghost, and in a true Godly sincerity of heart. Here is a realm where by a self-appointed ministry you may find yourself landed in the place where these awful burnings of holy things are, and you may touch the burnings like Korah and his company. You may take the censer and march alongside of an Aaron into the place where Aaron might go, and you were never called. For God's sake be sure of your guidance! For God's sake be sure you are called of God as was Aaron! Unless you are sure that God has called you to what is generally understood by the term "a spiritual ministry"—or indeed to anything else—do not enter into it. Every man must be called of God with a specific call, as every man must be anointed of God with a specific anointing of the Holy Ghost, and to walk into a realm of spiritual ministry without the anointing is to come

perilously near touching the glory without the precious Blood.

That may work out in varying degrees, from the degree of simply no glory attending your ministry, to the awful horror of Korah's doom.

Let us carefully note, for our admonition, that this story of Korah is within the company of the servants of God, not of unbelievers. These are Levites. The Levites had no inheritance, the Lord was their portion; men separated unto God in a most definite way. These are the men who touched the glory of God apart from the precious Blood, and they met judgment—not in the sense of eternal damnation but in that sense of which Peter speaks when he says: "Judgment must begin at the house of God."

A Warning against Place-Seeking in God's Service

Korah shows us the awful peril of place-seeking in the service of God. Korah and his company wanted a more honourable service than they had, as they esteemed honour. Why should we be only Levites and you priests? We will be priests too! God smite any spirit like that that might be amongst us. It is easy to be dissatisfied with your particular call, it seems such an uninteresting one. It is up in a corner, and you have such a tiny world in which to move! You are called just to serve the Lord in the home, and there is someone else of your time who used to be just as you were, and they have gone out into a much more interesting realm! Beloved, it is not a question of seeking something more interesting, seeking something which you think will be more profitable to the Lord. The question is: What has the Lord appointed you to? Where do you find the anointing? If you were to go out into the large public realm outside your little narrow sphere—you who have envied the platform—and find yourself before a company of the Lord's people and God standing back from you, leaving you there, you would cry to go back into the little corner. To get out into the realm of Christian service without the anointing is *awful*. God knows there are times when it is bad enough to be there even with the anointing so far as your feelings go. You may be under the anointing and feel as if you would run miles to get away from the task before you; but to face it without the anointing, even though you be a servant of God, a child of God, may

mean that you will be put to shame, and if it does not do that, you will have such a bad time that you will wish you had never ventured out. Place-seeking is getting out from under the cover of the anointing in the realm of holy things. It is touching the glory of God in a wrong way, and God Himself is against you.

Do you see that, however humble your service, if it is under the anointing your tiny world is the place for the out-shining of the glory of God, simply because it is the place of the anointing? How it would transform many a vision if only we saw that the place of the Divine anointing was the place, and the only place, where we could glorify God.

There are people who are serving the Lord in humble spheres, and are all the time fretting in discontent and lusting for the day when they will be released out into the big thing. This represents a fundamental error and results in incalculable loss. If they are in the will of God now, the anointing is for them just where they are, and their calling is to glorify God there. There is no other spot on the whole earth's surface where they could glorify Him so, because nowhere in the whole world is the anointing for them as there. God requires faithfulness in the present stewardship before entrusting to us a greater one, and promotion comes always along the line of redeeming to the full, present opportunities, rather than restlessly straining after something else. The parable of the talents in Matthew xxv. settles this matter once for all.

Divinely chosen Leaders, and Divinely chosen Co-operators

There is a necessity for us to recognise that there are some who are set by the anointing in a superior place to others. Their responsibility in the realm of spiritual things is greater. And there are some who, by the anointing, are set in a place where their responsibility is less. God requires that these related positions should be recognised by both parties, and sometimes it is as needful for the one to be reminded of this as the other. It may sometimes need special divine enablement to take the place of subjection, but there are equally times when it needs a special energising of God to cause you to take your position in an authoritative realm; you would very much rather sit right at the back of the hall than stand up and speak; everything in you says No! But the anointing Spirit says: You speak! We have to recognise the

anointing, and those who are set in a position of lesser responsibility in the House of God have to recognise the anointing gives to certain others a superior place—superior, that is, in spiritual authority. And it is a grievous day when those who are set beneath ignore the anointing of those who are set above.

Younger brethren and sisters, be careful how you ignore the counsel of your elder brethren in the Lord. Remember what we read in Peter: "Likewise, ye younger, be subject unto the elder." Peter has said just before this, concerning the elder ones, that they are to exercise the oversight, that is, to take their superior position, not of constraint but willingly according to God—that is, because God has anointed them to do so and also in accordance with the manner of the Spirit of God. But then: "Neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock." Those who are in a superior position are not given it in order to lord it over all the rest. It is said that Moses was the meekest man on the face of the earth, though set in a position of authority above every other man in Israel. Those with spiritual authority under the anointing are not called to be little lords; but those who are set in lesser positions under the anointing must beware how they ignore those who are set over them.

There are not lacking in the course of history illustrations of the peril where a younger brother chose to ignore the counsel of his elder brethren, decided he was going off on his own in a certain way in spite of their warnings; and for a year or two everything went well. He found himself in a large realm, a new release in ministry, doors widely open to him, and he felt: I have escaped from the limitations of being subject to my elders. But do you see what he has done? He has denied the anointing; he has come, therefore, not into conflict with men but with the glory; the eyes of the glory have noted. The final account will not be between him and the men he has ignored, but between himself and the Lord and His glory. That may take years to work out, though it may take only a very brief time. Ignore the anointing; treat it as something that you can sweep aside, although you know it is the Lord's appointing: your final reckoning is not with the individual who was thus anointed, but with the glory of God.

Again remember we are in the realm, not

of the unsaved meeting a righteous God, but of servants of God, saved, Blood-washed, but who in this matter rejected the counsel of God. The end is that they touched the glory of the Lord, and to touch that glory is, in greater or lesser measure, inevitably to be touched with fire, and the dreadful example before us, of Nadab and Abihu, and Korah and his company show us what may be in the ultimate the result of being involved in such things as this.

The Lord our Vindicator

All this is true, and of such solemn import, but we may take this consolation for our own selves. If we are faithful in our stewardship there is no need for self-vindication when others despise us or put us to shame. The eyes of the glory have remarked everything that has happened. The Lord will repay. There is in the Church the judicial ministry of the Holy Ghost, and He will exercise it very faithfully even though at times in mercy He may delay to act. We may therefore encourage ourselves in the Lord if we are really waiting for Him: "They shall not be ashamed that wait for me." "God worketh for him that waiteth for him." The anointing will be made manifest finally.

What is the qualification, then, for the service of God under the anointing? To go about priding ourselves on what we are? No!

Peter tells us the way: "All of you, gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another: for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

To recognise what the glory of God really is, is to be brought still lower down at His feet; and the more you humble yourself at His feet, the more true will be the exalting in due time. And for you, in your lowly-heartedness, *for you*, is all the blazing glory of God, to be your rearward, to be your guide, as the ark went before the people to find a resting place, to be your shade on the right hand and on the left. The eyes of the glory are noting everything, and storing it all up, and all that you might, after man's thought, have taken on to do for yourself you may safely leave it all to Him. And so, as we are brought lower by the Cross, are we brought into deeper, mightier fellowship with the glory of the Lord, in that expression is being given to what Ezekiel saw—a company subject to the government of the Man in the Throne: members of His Body owing utter allegiance to Christ as Head.

Let us humble ourselves beneath the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt us in due time.

G. P.

The Battle for the Throne

(Continued.)

READINGS: Leviticus xxvii.

II., Kings ix. 1-7, 16-20, x. 11, 30.

THE matter with which the Lord has been and is engaging us is that of the battle for the Throne, as being the fundamental and the final issue of the history of this world. All the Lord's people are bound up with that issue, and it relates to them immediately. While, as we shall see, it is all in Christ, yet it is a matter for the saints in Christ, the dominion of this universe as God's intention from the beginning.

Utterness for the Lord

Within that compass there is a specific word which is in a measure detached from the sequence of our meditations, but occupies a

place perhaps of particular emphasis. It has come to me with very considerable force that the Lord would have a word said on utterness for the Lord. And in that connection the two passages of scripture—Leviticus xxvii and II Kings ix and x—are given. Reverting to the former (Leviticus xxvii) without staying for a detailed analysis or exposition, I will remind you of the three things contained therein. These three things represent three aspects of consecration. There is that aspect of consecration which has to do with the firstborn and the tithes. You will notice that certain quite definite and particular things were said in connection with the firstborn and the tithes, and that they stood in a sphere by themselves. The firstborn and tithes were the Lord's by right. They were a token and a testimony of

and to the rights of God to have the first place in the life of His people, so that the firstborn was the Lord's, and the tithe, which was the first fruit, a tenth of all, and the first tenth, spoke of God having first place as His right in the life of His people. That is established, and nothing can touch that or interfere with it. There is no option about that. It is not optional whether the Lord has first place in your life and mine; He demands it, it is His right.

The second aspect was that of devoted things. The devoted things were those things which were set apart as being entirely beyond man's option or question or judgment, as settled by God, wholly and utterly for Himself, sometimes to be accepted by Him and sometimes to be completely destroyed out of His sight. All the cities of Canaan were devoted to the Lord, and had to be utterly destroyed. Achan took of the devoted thing and died. Now that law is written in this chapter in Leviticus. If a man interferes with the devoted thing the penalty is death. So that the devoted things were the Lord's by demand, and the firstborn and the tithes were the Lord's by *right*.

The Special Vow

The third thing in this chapter, and that with which the chapter commences and is mainly occupied, is special vows. It is that to which we are giving attention. There is no suggestion of right, and no suggestion of demand. Here, while the first and the second (the firstborn and tithes, and the devoted things) were legal, a matter of law, this question of special vows was voluntary. No order is made, it is simply "When a man makes a special vow . . ." Then certain provisions are made in connection with this special vow. Now I want it to be very clearly understood that this is dealing with the Lord's people *as* the Lord's people. This represents something within the company of the people of God. This has nothing whatever to do with salvation. Salvation is dealt with on an entirely different basis. In the matter of atonement every man had to bring his half shekel of silver, and the rich were not allowed to bring more and the poor were not allowed to bring less. Rich and poor were reduced to one level. There are no discriminations or distinctions or respectings of persons in the matter of atonement, we are all on a common level. Not one is better nor worse than the other, and the half shekel represents

the common level of all men in sin, needing salvation through the precious Blood. That is one thing. This is quite another. This has to do with what goes on in the midst of the redeemed people of God.

Now we come to this special vow, and ask what it represents. It represents a peculiar and particular movement of the heart toward God. It speaks of a specific devotion to the Lord. No demand, no command, the law does not touch it, not even the law of being saved, but it is altogether a voluntary thing of spontaneous heart movement toward the Lord. It does not affect the matter of grace at all. It is not something which puts grace on one side and introduces merit. Nothing of merit is mentioned in the connection, so that it is not something in order to get some special favour, it is just a pure, an altogether pure, crystal clear outgoing of heart to the Lord, without any ulterior motive, and without any special demand as such from God's side. A special vow!

But it does have an effect, and the effect which it has is to bring the Lord into the life in a larger measure. Take the simple illustration of the chapter. A man is moved in love and devotion toward the Lord, and to put that inward heart movement into some tangible form of expression he will bring a field and dedicate that field to the Lord, and so now that field is the Lord's in a special way; that field belongs to the Lord, and everything that that field produces is for the Lord. Or it may be from his cattle. It might be one of the other things mentioned. But inasmuch as that has not been demanded, and inasmuch as he is not seeking something by way of reward from the Lord, do you not think that the Lord comes into the sphere of that man's life and interests in a new way; and the Lord, as it were, encamps upon that field, so that the opening of the heart is really opening the door for the Lord to have a larger place in the life? How can the Lord have a larger place in our lives? Along the line of what is signified by the special vow. We shall see as we go on what that means. The Lord comes in larger measure into the life in this way.

It has this effect. It brings life over on to the positive side. He is the Lord's, he belongs to the Lord, he is redeemed by precious Blood, he is serving the Lord. But this brings his whole life into the positive realm with the Lord, in a peculiar way. A man like this

does not ask, how much must I do? Is that really necessary? Am I under an obligation to do that? Must I do that? While that may not be actually expressed in words, it is the state of the heart or mind of many of the Lord's children. They will argue, they will reason, Is that really necessary? Are we really expected to do that? Must we take such and such a course? Can we not be the Lord's and enjoy the Lord and do the Lord's work and be used of the Lord without that? That is the negative line! You may be the Lord's, there may be no question as to your belonging to the Lord and yet you are in that state of mind where you have got to have a real battle on this question and that question and some other question in order to get through to the will of God. That is all on the negative side. This special vow represents the positive side, where it is not, How much **MUST** we do? Can we serve the Lord and still do so-and-so, be in this and in that, and go here and go there? The question for the man whose heart is after this kind is: Cannot the Lord have very much more if we take this course and leave that and that, and count that out and forsake that and abandon that? If so, that is the course for me. It is positive all the time. That is the special vow. What is the motiving object? The Lord! You see, it is not special favour, blessing, what we can get in return for special devotion; and, on the other hand, it is not because it is demanded. It is just the Lord. There is no merit. It does not represent virtue, it is simply the Lord. Because the man's heart is going out wholly to the Lord he does not say, Just how far **MUST** I go? He says, just how far **CAN** I go? You see the difference. It makes a lot of difference, and you can always tell the difference between lives which are on the different sides of that line. On the one side it is urge, exhortation, admonition, nursing, encouraging, always having to watch susceptibilities. On the other hand they are going on, the Lord is their objective, and the heart is set upon Him, and they never raise the question as to whether it is a command. They see the Lord in their own hearts; He is the objective and they are running after Him.

Utterance, a Factor in Reigning

Now, coming to the thing that is being brought before us, let us notice that this is a principle which relates to the Throne. We

are seeing that the goal which God has fixed for His people is the Throne. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne." That always was the goal for the Lord's people in His will. There will be multitudes of His own people who will not reach it, but will be distanced from the Throne; saved, but not with Him in the Throne. It is conditional, but to reign with Him for ever and ever is our high calling, the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus. It is the Throne that is in view, and this principle of the special vow is the principle by which we shall come to the Throne. It relates to the Throne.

Hurriedly pass your eye over the history of Israel in relation to the Throne of Israel, and see how true in type and illustration this is. David stands almost in solitary isolation as Israel's king. Solomon ran a second, but did not finish the course. David did. He stumbled at times, but he finished the course. David therefore, stands alone as **THE** expression of God's thought as far as it can be found in sinful man—and we are only dealing with types, which altogether fall short of the Anti-type. As far as it is possible in that realm, on that level, David represents God's thought of government, of kingship. It was not merit. In the great day of David's height of power and success the Lord came through the prophet and said to him: "I took thee from the sheep-fold, from following the sheep, that thou shouldest be prince over my people, over Israel." Reminded him of his humble origin and told him it was no merit, nothing to do with him, it was with God. But what did the Lord say, not to David but to someone else about him? "I have found me David, a man after my own heart, who shall do all my *pleasure*." You will see the difference. The firstborn and the tithes are God's rights, the devoted things are God's demands, the special vow is God's delight, God's pleasure. Go through David's life as we have it in his Psalms, and what is the note that is constantly running throughout? It is the note of David's delight in the Lord. How he delights in his God! It is not the note of compulsion, and it is not the note of reward. It is the note of spontaneous outgoing of heart in worship to the Lord for His own sake. The Lord had captured the heart of David. That is why the Lord stood by David, even through his mistakes and his faults. "The Lord looketh on the heart." That was the word said to

Samuel when selection was made amongst the sons of Jesse. What the Lord had seen as He looked into the heart of David was his delight in the Lord, and He chose him. A heart matter. David would not do because the Lord demanded, and David would not do because the Lord bribed him. David would do because he loved the Lord, and David's cry is: "Love the Lord all his people." But over against David the majority of the nineteen kings of Israel, and then the nineteen kings of Judah, and what have you in contrast?

Take Saul. The heart of Saul found its final uncovering and was shown, displayed, disclosed in I. Samuel, xv, in the case of Amalek. "Go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy," said the Lord. "I have marked that which Amalek did to Israel . . . now go . . . and utterly destroy." You know what Saul did. He compromised, spared the best of the flocks and the herds, and when Samuel came Saul tried as we would say, to bluff Samuel: "Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord." "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears?" Betrayed, he must find some other way out. "The people spared the best of the sheep." Blaming it on to someone else. A guilty conscience must always find a scapegoat. Yes, but he lost his throne. Samuel said to him, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than you." You see, the throne, for its maintenance, demands a heart that is utter for God without compromise, without reservation, without excuse, without hedging, without trying to deceive God or man; a heart that is utter for God. We may deceive one another, we may tell one another that we belong to the Lord, and we are out for the Lord, and the Lord's best; but God knows our heart. God knows, and it is Him with whom we have to do. When we want to get certain things, realise certain desires of ours, we can make professions, and in so doing we may deceive men, but God knows.

Our calling, our high calling—not our salvation—our high calling for its realisation, attainment, demands the principle of the special vow; that is, a heart that delights in the Lord. In our passage in II. Kings ix we read about Jehu. Why did we read about

Jehu? Not because Jehu is a perfect example, but he does introduce the principle. Where was Ahab before the Lord? What a poor specimen of a king; and because of the compromise of Ahab through his wife, Jezebel, by whom he was linked with the world (Jezebel, like all women in the Bible, represents a principle—and Jezebel represents the principle of a spiritual link with a world which is outside of God's covenant), Ahab had brought this awful state into Israel, and God's king was not possible of realisation. The throne was shaken, the government of God as expressed amongst His people was destroyed in its purity, its holiness, its completeness. How did the Lord react to the consequences of Ahab's compromising rule? Through an Elisha and a Jehu. While we grieve to note a breakdown at a point in Jehu's life, that he was one of those who did not follow through, we cannot read about Jehu without feeling that this man did things thoroughly. There is no compromise, at any rate, about Jehu. Jehu said, "Ahab served Baal a little; but Jehu shall serve him much," and do you know how he did it? He had all the prophets of Baal together in Baal's temple, and then shut the door, and that was the end of Baal's prophets. But you notice it is related to the throne, and the point is this, *utterness for God is a law and principle of reigning with God*. Jehu, at that time at least, represents an utterness of heart for the Lord. He was raised up and anointed in order to wipe out the stain and avenge the sins of Ahab, a very thorough work.

We could go over many of the other kings. Some of them reached a point of devotion to the Lord which was very excellent—Hezekiah and others. They did great things for the Lord, they brought back the Lord in a very large measure to His rightful place, they re-established the order of the Lord, and up to that point they represent the coming back of the government of God in a larger measure of purity and power, and that part of their lives was marked by Divine approval, but none of them went right through. Even those who went so far had this said of them: ". . . but he removed not the high places." There is just a stopping short, and there they broke down and so the full expression of Divine kingship was not given. If only they had gone all the way! But they did not go all the way, and therefore there was a limit put to the expression of Divine government.

I think I have said enough to at least illustrate the point. The Throne is in view; we are called to that; to reign with Him. The realisation of that is by the principle of the special vow, a heart wholly and utterly for the Lord. It is marvellous what you can do when your heart is in a thing. If your heart is not there you will have to be reasoned with, argued with, and you will have all sorts of problems and always be tied up in your problems; but once you get your heart over and say, it does not matter, be the mountains as high as heaven, I am going through with God; it is marvellous how you can solve your problems and get over your difficulties.

Now Paul was one of those we have had in the back of our minds. Look at Philippians iii. 10.: "That I may know him . . ." "I count all things but loss, as refuse, that I may be found in him." "I press toward the mark of the prize of the upward calling . . ." "If by any means I may attain unto the out-resurrection." What is this but a heart in the spirit of the special vow, a devotion to the Lord. "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings." Is there any ulterior motive? ". . . the fellowship of his sufferings, being made comformable unto his death." No, this is pure devotion to the Lord. It is true that the Throne is the goal and the prize, but it is the heart set upon the Lord. It is the overcomer. Now look at Leviticus xxvii. Is there any suggestion of merit there? Is there any suggestion of reward? What is it then? It is sheer delight in the Lord. Who is the overcomer in the book of the Revelation? He is the one who wipes out a "but," that is all. "I know thy works . . . thy labour and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men . . ." Yes, that is all right, "but" you have got a reservation, and all that is good does not make it possible for Me to pass over that "but," and when you have pointed out all that is right, ". . . I have this against thee . . ." The overcomer says that "but" must go. He wipes out the "but." "To him that overcometh . . ." What? The

"but"! The man whose heart is set for God's fullest satisfaction, who delights himself in the Lord. There is no question of merit, it is all grace, it is the Blood of Christ. We are not striving to get some special favour from God, we are pressing on because the grace of God is such a wonderful thing to us. It is all of grace, and no one knows better than the overcomers how much they are dependent upon the grace of God.

We must close by pointing out again the only thing that justifies all this. It is Christ. Leviticus xxvii is simply a typical unveiling of the Lord Jesus. All those aspects are Christ. If it is the firstborn, it is Christ: "the Firstborn among many brethren." God's by right. If it is the firstfruits, it is Christ. Is it the devoted thing? Then, being made sin for us, He Who knew no sin must be destroyed from the presence of God. Is it a holy thing unto the Lord, then He will offer Himself without spot unto God, the whole burnt offering. Is it the special vow? "I delight always to do thy will, O God." That is going the second mile. Not the necessity merely of atonement, not the obligation to die: "I lay it down of myself." It is Christ, giving voluntarily to the will of God. How far we go with the Lord will declare how much of Christ we have in our hearts, how much the spirit of Christ is in us, which says "I delight."

May the Lord find us a people of the special ~~vow~~. We may be challenged on this. Thank God that there are so many whose delight is in the Lord, and I do not want to be found driving you, but I do feel that we need just to have these matters brought to us, and to be shown the way by which the Lord is going to realise His fullest objective in the saints, to bring them to the Throne, that there may be found in their hearts the spirit of His Son in fulness, which says: "I delight," that makes a special vow, voluntarily; not by demand or command, or because God has the right to it, but because the heart is wholly set upon the Lord's pleasure. May that be the governing law of our lives.

T. A-S.

The Essential Newness of the New Creation

(A Brief Message as Spoken)

RAEDINGS : Isaiah xlviii. 6-7.
II Corinthians v. 17.
Matthew ix. 16-17.

FAMILIARITY with words and ideas very often takes something from their value. Few passages in the New Testament are more familiar to us than II Corinthians v. 17: "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, there is a new creation" (R.V.M.), but the full force of the one governing word there has, I am quite sure, not fallen upon our hearts, and we have still very much to learn as to that essential newness of the new creation in Christ. Indeed, we may say that many of our troubles, our difficulties, our weaknesses, our failures, our problems, our perplexities are the result of our having failed to sufficiently grasp the import of that one word "new." We have, very largely, proceeded with a good deal that is old into the new creation, or we have tried to do so, and we have discovered sooner or later that that cannot be done, that we are attempting an impossibility. So that it may be quite profitable for us to dwell for a little while upon this essential newness.

We begin by reminding ourselves, or acquainting ourselves with the fact that there are two sides to the new creation. There is the vessel, and there is that which is put into the vessel. It takes both of these to constitute what is called the "new creation," the human side, and the Divine side; but while newness applies to both sides, the newness is not the same newness. There are two main words which are translated into our English word "new." We are perhaps familiar with the difference. One implies something which is fresh, not necessarily just originated, but bearing the mark of freshness. The other word implies more strictly something which is quite recent, which was not necessarily there before; it is new in the sense that it has just come in, not something revived but something new. It is interesting to notice that the Holy Spirit uses the two words in connection with the two sides of the new creation.

In this vessel in Matthew ix. you have both

words used. As to the wine-skins (translated in the Authorised Version, "bottles") the word used is that which implies freshness. When the Lord Jesus speaks of new wine He uses the other word, that is, something which is quite new, quite recent. When you pass to the passage in II Corinthians v. and it is stated that: ".....if any man is in Christ there is a new creation; the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new," there twice the word is used which means freshness. That is strictly consistent with the truth as to the real nature of the new creation.

You are dealing, first of all, with the vessel. Now as vessels in the new creation we are not something which never was before, something quite recent. The vessel of the new creation is our old spirit brought back into life. Our human spirit fell out of fellowship with God, and that meant spiritual death. The new creation activity is to bring back the human spirit from spiritual death into life, and it is the same spirit, raised in union with Christ, becoming the vessel of the new creation.

That is, however, only half of the process. Something which was never in that spirit before is deposited in it, a life which is not fresh but new, recent, absolutely new, which was never in the human spirit before is now put into that vessel, and that which is so completely new, says the Word, is never put into an old wine-skin. That vessel has to be made fresh, brought into a state of life, in order to be the receptacle of this utterly new life of the Spirit of God.

These are the two sides of the new creation. The point is that, first of all, something has to be done in the vessel, as well as something having to be put into the vessel.

That is a principle, to which God has bound Himself, and which governs Him in all His activities. It applies in every direction where Divine work is in view. God never builds His new thing upon an old foundation. God never uses the old thing as the material for His new

work. That has to be completely renewed. That He does not put *His* life, His new wine, into old skins is a truth which relates not only to regeneration, to our salvation, to the new creation man, but it also applies to every work of God. Whenever God does a thing the characteristic is newness. Although there may be an old vessel, that vessel has got to be made fresh in order to effect God's end.

That applies to truth as much as to anything else. It may be Divine Doctrine, God given revelation, that which at one time by the Holy Spirit was living truth ; but that can never be taken up at any subsequent date or period of time and used again without it becoming fresh in the experience and life of those who come into it. It is just there that a very great many of the mistakes have been made ; that what in the way of revelation was a living revelation so long ago has been adopted by subsequent generations as truth, without that subsequent generation, or those subsequent generations, coming into the living reality thereof. That is vital.

It applies to the new creation man. You cannot bring the old creation man over into the new creation without his becoming fresh in a living way. That applies to truth, revelation, doctrine. You cannot carry it on only as it is perennially fresh. Ezekiel's vision of the river, and the trees on either side, very many trees whose leaves never fade and whose fruit is continuous, is simply a revelation or a vision of the Testimony being maintained by the principle of life in freshness right down the whole course of the ages. Truth has to be like those leaves, which never fade. Truth has to be like that fruit, which is always there, luscious fruit. All doctrine is not like that. Unless it is like that its essential element has gone. It is the essential newness of what is of God.

Every fresh step of God is marked by this freshness, this newness. God may have done that same thing again and again, in the course of history, but the next time He does it it is as though it had never been done before in the case of the people in whom He does it. That is the glory of things.

We have seen this work in simple ways. Some of us have been so familiar with certain things, and we have said those things again and again. To us they were living realities, and we

have known of certain people who have heard them, who have listened to them, who have been under the ministry by which those things have been declared again and again, over a course of, perhaps, years, and then suddenly, as by a touch of the Spirit, they have seen it, they have caught the inner sound, it has broken upon them, and has become living to them. The result was that they commenced to talk about those things as though no one in all the world had ever heard them before, and as though the very person who had been talking about them for years did not know anything about it ! It is just like that. That is the living Testimony. It is the freshness of things. Things must be like that to be of God, for what is really of God is like that. It is not that we hold the truth. It is that we have the life of the truth.

What is true in the case of the new creation man, and in connection with truth or doctrine, revelation or light, is also true in the direction of the work of God, what we call Christian work. For every one who enters into the Divine vocation, the calling to service, it ought to be, for that one, as though there had never been any Christian work before. It ought to be as though they were the first ever commissioned. In their spirit, in their outlook, in their passion, it should be as though they were right at the beginning of things, as though the Christian activity, the Christian Gospel, was only just starting on its way. That should be the consciousness which they should have. It is just the opposite of entering into a long-standing, accepted, crystallised system of Christian work, becoming a part of a great existing machine. The freshness about things should be of this character, that in our service we are conscious that the hand of God has come upon us as though it had never come upon any other person, as though no one else had been called but ourselves. I do not mean that to be taken in a wrong way, that we are the only ones, but that here this thing is such a living, tremendous reality to us that we feel as though nothing had ever been done for the Lord before.

Do you understand what we mean by that ? Christian work has become an order, as we have called it, a crystallised system of Christian enterprise, activity, organised work, and people are called upon today to enter into it, to take it up, and they do so and become a part of a great Christian machine for accomplishing a certain purpose, and they go into some kind of

a factory to be turned out a Christian worker. You are not surprised that these factory-turned-out workers have not got that thing by which men and women today are fed and brought into the full glory, beauty, grandeur, magnificence of Christ. No! The work of the Lord is something which, to the one who is apprehended of Christ Jesus, is as though there had never been any Christian work before. There is the freshness of life about it.

This applies to the thing which God does, not only to those who are used to do it. When God does a thing there is that about that thing which is fresh. There is the sense that here is something which, as an element, makes this work of God a new work.

God must have newness in His vessels of every kind. If the vessel, or the vehicle, is a man; if the vessel or the vehicle is a revelation; if it is a collective instrumentality, or some piece of work which God is doing in the world, when it is of Him it bears that hallmark of freshness. There is no staleness about it. There is no death about it. It throbs with vitality.

I believe the Lord has a very definite object in our being led to this thought at this time. Undoubtedly, the need today everywhere is just this sense of God in a new way. There is plenty of work, plenty of doctrine, and there are many Christians; but, oh, for this sense of God, this sense of keenness, freshness, vitality, and knowledge of God in all! *That is the need.* Without that things will go on as they are, and they are very dead, and tragically weak and ineffective.

The measure, then, of the newness of the vessel will be the measure of the newness of what God puts into it. God demands the newness of the vessel in order to commit Himself to it.

Look at that passage from Isaiah xlviii.: "I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, which thou hast not known. They are created now, and not from of old; and before this day thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them." Is not that the attitude today toward a great deal? Oh, yes, I know it all! I know, there is nothing new about that! The doctrine and everything else, I know it! We have heard

that before! We know it! There is nothing new about that! Beloved, if you have caught the inner significance of this you are not mentally talking like that, you are seeing, and as you see you are feeling intensely that there is this need today everywhere. You have the intelligence of a living insight, and you know quite well that there is no hope whatever in simply propagating doctrine and truth, and trying to do the old work in the old way. The need is not more work, more doctrine, truth and light, so much as more of this living element in all.

There are two sides. There is the vessel, and there is that which is in the vessel. The vessel may be quite a good vessel doctrinally, and in other ways, but there needs to be also the deposit in the vessel, the new wine. So the Word says here quite clearly that there is a hopelessness about the old, and all the hope lies in the direction of renewal and freshness on the one hand, and God's living, new deposit on the other hand.

What is the ultimate conclusion about this? It is the conclusion to which II Corinthians v. 18 comes: "But all things are of God....." That follows the statement: ".....we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him....." That is the one side; everything having died as to its own self-productiveness. It cannot produce this Divine end, this Divine result. It has died to its own productiveness, and now it is unto Him, and when it is all unto Him then all things are out from God. When all things are of God, all things carry this vital element, this essential freshness of a new creation.

You and I should have heart exercise about everything that the Lord has brought to us. Do we really do that? Do we go back over what has been said and say, Now the Lord said such, and such, and this and that comes out of it. What are we going to do about it?

Do we know that in a living way? Does that really represent the Lord's mind for me, and His People? Is that something that the Lord desires for all His own? If so, on any one of these matters I must get before the Lord and definitely be exercised in heart about it. There piled up, mountains high, words, lan-

guage, teaching, truth, light, and the percentage of living, effective value in it all is all too small. If there is one thing about which we should lay hold of the Lord it is this, Lord keep this Testimony a living thing! Do not let it become mere doctrine, mere truth, something to be passed on, which shall be taken up by others and talked about, and the phrases and terminology used! God forbid that that should be.

The essential newness of all that is out from God is the point. The essential newness of that which proceeds from the Lord, which is really related to the Lord. Freshness on the part of those who are concerned, and newness on the part of that which is coming out from God Himself. Let us pray very much about that, because that

is the very essence of our ministry, not only of our life and what we call our Testimony. Bread must have vitamins in it; and in the spiritual food it is the same thing, there must be a living attribute. The essential newness, not old things dead, but (it may be old things) living. "Therefore every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old" (Matthew xiii. 52). But if he brings old things out there is a newness about them that conveys the impression that they never were before, something at any rate which is altogether fresh. The Lord maintain us, and all with which we have to do, in that essential freshness and newness which is the hallmark of Himself.

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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.

JUNE 1935.

Vol. 13.

No. 3.

The Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus

(Continued.) No. 3

Christ the Dynamic of Fellowship and Service.

READINGS : Phil ii. ; iii. 8.

IN the second chapter of the letter to the Philippians we have Christ set forth especially as the dynamic of fellowship and service ; that which motives fellowship, that which lies behind service ; Christ as expressed in certain ways.

It is always good to sit quietly with a letter, such as this one, and to allow its spirit to come upon your own spirit, to open up your own heart and allow the general atmosphere and temper of the letter to spread itself over you, and in that way register the background of the words which are being employed. I think you will agree with me that the simplest form of expression which this letter takes, as we so open our hearts to it, is along the line of the wonderful mutuality between the Apostle and these believers, and between these believers and the Apostle. What he says to them, as from himself, expresses a deep and intense affection, concern, and what he says about them, as representing their attitude to him, indicates a similar spirit and feeling. He yearns over them, and shows that they also are yearning over him. He is anxious for them, and it is clear that they are anxious for him. And when we read more fully into the history of things we have that borne out very clearly. They knew that the Apostle had been apprehended, and taken off to Rome. At least they knew that he had gone Rome-ward, and it seems that for a long time they had heard nothing of him, and were greatly concerned as to why there was no news. In their concern doubtless they were praying for him, and on reaching Rome he was moved, in his concern for them, to send a messenger to tell of what had happened. Learning of his imprisonment, they had immediately sent a messenger to him with some gifts for his temporary good. This letter refers to that solicitude for his comfort.

Epaphroditus had been despatched with

the gift. It was the time of autumn, the malarial season in those parts, and on the way Epaphroditus had become terribly sick, Paul says : " Nigh unto death." In an exhausted and brokendown state, he just managed to reach the Apostle, had delivered the gift and told of the anxiety for him of the Philippian saints. Paul, in his turn, had immediately despatched a messenger to them with the news of the arrival of Epaphroditus, and of his sickness, but that he was now better. The letter tells how glad they were to hear the news—for they were greatly concerned—and eventually Paul sends back Epaphroditus himself with this letter in his hand, which tells the whole story.

All that indicates a great mutual concern, and love, and affection, and interest ; and looking more closely at it, it is not something commonplace. No doubt these Philippian believers (we do not know how many of them there were) were people with the usual concerns of life. They had their businesses to attend to ; they had their domestic duties ; they had their various occupations from day to day ; *but* what is made so clear here is this, that, although having to go about their business every day, to attend to their affairs, and be occupied with duties of this life, over and above all that, their chief concern was for the interests of Christ as represented in this vessel of Testimony. It is a great thing to see that people who, having their ordinary daily duties and affairs to attend to, which probably occupied much of their time and attention, were so tremendously and intensely concerned over the Gospel as bound up with its messengers.

I am not sure that does not come to our hearts with some word from the Lord, perhaps of rebuke, at any rate as a word of interrogation. It might say to us something like this : Now we are people who have our businesses to attend to, and our homes, and many

duties, but really how much time do we give, how often are we, as the ordinary rank and file of the Christian community, found definitely upon our knees concerning the spread of the Gospel, and concerning the ministry to the saints through the Lord's servants, the Lord's vessels of Testimony? To what degree are we definitely found stretched out in this matter, in a real anxious concern about the Testimony of the Lord in a practical way? That is a very simple word, and a simple question; but very often, I fear, the burden is left with those who are detached enough from the affairs of this life to be able to take it up, and the general company of the Lord's people are not bearing it. I wonder if I may presume to ask about your own position in this matter. You rise in the morning, perhaps hurriedly, and get away to your business, spend your whole day at it, come home in the evening tired, when perhaps you relax a bit before going to bed: and that is your programme week in, week out, year in and year out, and your practical relationship to the interests of the Lord, near and far, perhaps is bound up with gatherings on one day in the week. Or perhaps you go beyond that with a few other gatherings during the week. But the point is, What about bearing this concern continually in prayer before the Lord? What about that which corresponds to the atmosphere of this Philippian letter?

Here is a company of believers, we know not how large, concerning whom it is made very clear, that they bear on their hearts a great burden about the spiritual interests of the Lord as bound up with the lives of His servants as they moved out. It was not just local; for Rome was 700 miles from Philippi; but here they are, reaching out over these 700 miles, with this great concern for the Lord's interests.

I think it is a factor in this whole question of Christ occupying a large place in our hearts. Here is one of those sidelights which show just how much Christ and His interests occupy of the space in our hearts. It shows very clearly that these people, whatever else their lives held, had a large place for the Lord, a larger place than for anything else.

Three Features of Fellowship and Service.

There are three things which are shown by this second chapter to be the features of fellowship and service when Christ is occupying a large place—love, humility, and obedience.

I. Love.

You cannot read this second chapter thoughtfully without recognising that love is one of the outstanding features. The chapter, with one or two other fragments in the letter, has to do with fellowship in the first place. There is a great appeal in relation to the fellowship of the Lord's people. There is fellowship there at Philippi; there is no doubt about that! Paul opens the letter with a very clear indication of that. When he prays his prayer, of which he tells them, he thanks the Lord on *all* remembrance of them. He does not say on *every* remembrance. That is a wrong translation. It is not that Paul is going over so many things in memory, and thanking the Lord for those things. If he were to do that, probably he would be leaving a lot of things out; but it is on all remembrance, whenever they come to mind—and they are always in his mind. Whenever they are uppermost in his mind he thanks the Lord for them. There is fellowship.

But, as in every place, so at Philippi, there is that effort of the adversary to insinuate something by which the fellowship will be destroyed. Paul detects that even there the enemy is at work. In certain directions, the great spiritual value of this company is threatened along the line of destroyed or disturbed fellowship, and the peril, which has perhaps already commenced to work in their midst, of not being of the same mind. So you see how he opens this letter:

"If there is therefore any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind....." There are two things there:

Union with Christ. The little phrase "in Christ"—everything is in Christ. Union with Christ is basic to it all. That is the basis of the appeal. He says, in effect, Now we are in Christ! But then he insists there is to be a spiritual result, an active outworking of that. If being in Christ means so-and-so, then you see to it that what being in Christ means obtains in your case!

Communion of Saints. Being in Christ there is comfort, consolation. That word "consolation" really means encouragement. In Christ there ought to be mutual encouragement. It is all very well to speak about being in Christ, but being in Christ means that in Christ there

is encouragement. It is the practical value of being in Christ that Paul is stressing. Here I am, he is saying in effect, alone here in Rome; here in this prison with a great deal to discourage! Were I to take the situation as the final thing, I could be greatly discouraged, cast down and disconcerted; all they in Asia turning away, this one and that one leaving me, and the work seeming to break down! Now, brethren in Christ, I need encouragement! The practical value of your being in Christ means that there must be some encouragement, and I need encouragement from you at this time! "If there is therefore any comfort in Christ.....," encouragement, consolation.

".....comfort of love....." That means that deep, thankful sense of comfort in His love. Do you know what the comfort of His love is? If you reflect upon the love of Christ; if only you allow yourself to believe in His love; if you will but turn away from all your sour feelings and doubting thoughts, and believe that He loves you, and allow that fact to spread itself over you, it will be a deep comfort, a deep thankfulness.

"—fellowship of the Spirit....." The "communion of the Holy Ghost" is the expression used in the second letter to the Corinthians. What is that? You see from this passage what the communion of the Holy Ghost is. It is the fellowship of the saints. "If there is.....any..... fellowship of the Spirit," any communion of the Spirit.

".....if any tender mercies and compassions....." These are strong words in the Greek: If any strong affection which is toward the suffering. Strong affection, directed toward those who are in suffering.

If there are these things in Christ among you; if being in Christ really means that these things are true of you; if these are the real spiritual values in Christ, then "fulfil ye my joy" by showing them. That is what he says. "Fulfil ye my joy," make my joy full, fill my cup to overflowing at this time; I need it, and if you really want to serve me, to show your solicitude for me; if you really want to be a help to me in this day of need, give a practical expression of what being in Christ means! Let these things obtain between you in Philippi; "be of the same mind."

".....having the same love....." That means, not some doing all the loving, and the others doing all the receiving of the love, but love being the same, all loving. It is very

nice to be loved, but be sure you do your bit. Let love be evenly distributed amongst you, ".....of the same mind.....the same love"—mind and heart, you see.

".....being of one accord....." Literally that means: Let there be a true union of soul! What is an "accord"? It is an absolute blending. We speak of a "chord" in music, and we mean that everything is harmonised and flowing, is without a jar, without an irritation, together. "One accord" in the Greek literally means this: Living in one another. That is what it means to be in Christ.

".....doing nothing through strife....." or faction. That is, with personal ends and interests in view.

".....or through vainglory....." That is set over against each one seeking his own. No! not for any personal ends, and not for any personal glory. Let nothing be done as motivated by such things, that individuals might have individual influence, and place, and glory.

".....each esteem other better than himself" "Esteem" here means simply to give honour to the other before oneself.

".....Look not every man on his own things, but.....on the things of others." Here again, getting behind the actual translation, it simply means that there must be an insight into the things of others, the thoughts of others. It means that you must seek to understand what they are thinking. "The things of others," the ideas, the feelings, the interests of others; looking into them and trying to appreciate them.

All that leads up to that great passage about Christ coming from glory and descending to the deepest depths.

Now you can see what the basis of fellowship is. That is the nature of fellowship. If these things obtain then fellowship is secured. But Paul illustrates, and he says, in effect, that the three great governing laws of fellowship after this kind are:

Love! That sets things in motion.

Self-Abnegation! That is what governs the thing as it moves.

Obedience! That is the object which is in view.

Christ—the Pattern.

Then the Apostle illustrates this from the life of the Lord Jesus. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal

with God," did not vaingloriously snatch at that equality, did not lay hold of the position as something for Himself, to be held for Himself and not let go, but, motivated by a great love, with the dynamic of a mighty, Divine love in His heart, emptied Himself, "made himself of no reputation." If those things are objectives in view, then fellowship will not last very long. So step by step He is seen as coming down, ever downward, until He has reached the very bottom. And it is love which has led to that, and the mind in Christ is seen to be the mind that comes down. At Philippi, and in every other place where fellowship is threatened, you will always find it is the other way; some people trying to get up. Somehow it is a matter of personal exaltation, standing, will, of having position, having influence, having reputation, having interests of their own. The Lord Jesus is shown here as One Who, because governed by this great dynamic of Divine love, takes the way of self-abasement.

The Lord had illustrated this with His disciples in the Upper Room. How often they had said: Who shall be greatest in the Kingdom? They so often quarrelled about position; there were rivalries in their midst, and factions. "Grant that these.....may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left....." The desire was for reputation, position, influence, standing, personal fulness. And He, in the presence of all that, laid aside His garment, and took a towel, and girded Himself, and poured water into a basin, and came to wash their feet. It is the downward way of the true Priest, the true Levite.

Here, then, is fellowship and service, which is constituted by love first of all, which does not mind how low it stoops or how much it loses of its own. It is true. We know so well, that when a matter of broken or strained fellowship, has to be dealt with, it can only be by someone putting something personal out of the way. You will always find it to be a case of letting go somewhere. Is it not? You never get far until the last bit of personal claim has been let go, be it only the sense of a just demand for an apology. You very often have to let go even that. It is coming down. This does not imply you may be in the wrong. It may be quite clear that the other person is in the wrong, but you are wanting and demanding that that one should apologise to you, and are not prepared to have things put right until it is done. It may be that

you will have to let go even the demand for an apology, and come right down to be almost, if not altogether, put in the place of the wrong, to give the Lord an open way. Fellowship is based upon this spirit of self-emptying.

It is difficult to safeguard that, but we see the peril. There is a difference between self, and righteousness. The Lord does not want us to sweep away any consideration of righteousness. If the Lord's interests are struck at, you cannot put that aside, and make nothing of that. That is where repentance is necessary. But repentance is not to us, beloved, repentance is to the Lord. There is all the difference between what is personal, and what is a matter of some great Divine interest.

H. Self-Abnegation.

Having said that to safeguard against a weakness which might be thought to be love, we can quite safely go on, and point out that here the basis of fellowship is self-emptying. That is where the magnificance, and the enormous power of humility is seen. "He humbled himself." It is that which is set over against pride, vainglory, and all those things which are parts of pride. What a tremendous power there is in humility! What a terrible curse pride is! and it is more a curse to the possessor of it than it is to anybody else! People have had their lives made the most miserable thing possible, because of their own pride. Pride, in any heart, is calculated to make a hell in that individual. Their pride will not let them do some things, the doing of which would simply clear away all the difficulties, and make life a very much happier thing. Humility is a great thing, a mighty thing in the Lord's interests, and it is certainly basic to fellowship.

III. Obedience.

He became obedient unto death. The Apostle immediately fastens upon that, and says: "Wherefore.....as ye have always obeyed not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence....." Not obedience to the Apostle as the Apostle, but obedience to the vital things which the Apostle is constantly showing as essential to the glory of the Lord. Here you see the exhortation is: "Be of the same mind." Well, be obedient in that matter. "Having the same love." Be obedient in that matter. In all these things it is a matter of obedience. It means, Give yourself definitely

to this business of showing what it means to be in Christ.

That is all very simple. It may sound very elementary, but it is tremendously important. Now a situation may arise, a strain between you and some other believer. This whole thing, with all these many elements in it, will come up. What are you going to do about it? It all resolves itself into a question of obedience; obedience to such entreaty as we find in the first two verses of the second chapter of the letter to the Philippians. If you will only be obedient in that, the whole thing is settled. While the thing drags on it shows that somewhere there is disobedience; perhaps because of pride and lack of humility. Why pride and lack of humility? Because of the absence of an adequate love. This love begins with love for the Lord, Divine love in our hearts; leading to humility, which is always prepared to take the downward course, and puts into our hearts a spirit of obedience, that, instead of standing up for our rights, we shall make it out business to show compassion, tender mercy, encouragement, applying ourselves to all these things. Love, humility and obedience are the great laws of fellowship and of service.

Christ is seen here in the service of the Father, and in that service He is governed by these three things, this great love, this deep humility, this utter obedience even unto death, the death of the Cross. He is the true Levite. The spirit of the Levite represented a great concern for the Lord's interests in the Lord's people, and their service was a continuous course. They served in the court of the Lord's House in the interests of the Lord's people, and of the Lord in His people, and it meant that theirs was to be the spirit of obedient, selfless service all the time. Christ was the true Levite, and you have a reflection

of Christ in the three men especially mentioned in this letter to the Philippians.

Paul! Was he a true Levite? Had he concern for the Lord's people? Did they lie heavily upon his heart? Did he bear them day and night as a real spiritual burden? Surely he did.

Timothy! Read what Paul says about Timothy in this letter. Timothy is a true Levite here.

Epaphroditus! He, says Paul, gambled with his life, hazarded his life in these Divine interests of the Lord's people. A true Levite! And we are all called into Levitical ministry.

One of the vessels of priestly ministry was the altar of incense. That altar of incense was a meeting place between God and His people in Levitical ministry; that is, the priest at the altar of incense brought God and His people together. You will remember that altar of incense was a square, one cubit; and "one" is the number of unity; and inasmuch as it was a cubit, with four equal sides, it speaks of all-embracingness. Take the number "four," and you find you have the creation, universality, and the great city at the end lying four-square, and the gates at every side. It speaks of the all-embracingness of Christ. This unity in the one cubit, and the all-embracingness, are found in an altar, the place where God and man meet. Priestly ministry has to do with that; the one-ness of the Lord's people, and the all-embracingness of Christ.

The Lord write in our hearts His own mind very deeply, and show us that this is Christ, the dynamic, the motive of fellowship, and of our service. In this way you and I, like the Philippians, and like Paul, will come into the knowledge of that super-eminence of Christ.

T. A.-S.

THREE DAYS' SPECIAL GATHERINGS AT HONOR OAK

AUGUST 3RD TO 5TH, 1935

The City which hath Foundations

No. 2

Heavenly Features in the Heavenly Jerusalem, the Church

Rev. xxi. 9-11. In this passage we see the Apostle was carried away in the Spirit into a mountain great and high, and shown the New Jerusalem "*coming down out of heaven.....*"

Rev. iii. 12. "I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem, which *cometh down out of heaven from my God.....*"

Heb. xi. 16. ".....he hath prepared for them a city."

You will recognise the tense and the position of that last statement. While it is referring to those martyrs of the faith of the old dispensation of Old Testament times, the word here "*he hath prepared for them a city*"—not, He prepared for them a city, as though they inherited it in Jerusalem on this earth, but He *hath prepared for them a city*—shows that they have not yet entered into it. It awaits their entrance. I believe that the city there, referring as it does to the Church, would be very closely touched upon by that inclusive declaration of the Apostle in that same chapter, that "These all died in faith, not having received the promises,God having provided some better thing concerning *us*, that apart from us they should not be made perfect (Heb. xi. 13, 39, 40). So that the words: "*hath prepared for them a city*" really mean that they are coming into this heavenly Jerusalem, the Church.

In chapter xii. of the Hebrew letter, verse 22, there is this word: ".....ye are come.....unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem....." In chapter xiii. verse 14 there is this word: ".....we seek after the city *which is to come.*" Then back in the letter to the Galatians, chapter iv. verses 25 and 26, we have these words: "the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother." The letter to the Galatians stands over against the Jewish order of things, was intended so to do, and Jerusalem was always regarded by Israel as their mother. She was looked upon as the mother of all the Israelites. Now over against

the earthly Jerusalem, and that earthly conception of Jerusalem, the Apostle here says: "the Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother": and in Philippians iii. 20 we find these words: "our *citizenship* is in heaven."

You can see from these various passages that the thought of heavenliness is very strongly related to the Church, which is the heavenly Jerusalem, of which God is the Builder and Maker. God is building His heavenly Jerusalem now, and He is building it with heavenly material, that is, the constitution and the construction of the Church must all be heavenly, and that which is employed (or, to put it another way, the saints) must partake of a heavenly nature, in order to become the heavenly City. The Great Architect and Builder is, therefore, engaged with the saints in seeking to make them heavenly in their whole constitution.

We have to see a little further what heavenliness means, and we can do this by way of illustration from the Old Testament again, by turning to Psalm lxxxvii. The first thing which comes out in that Psalm is the jealousy of God over Jerusalem. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." "Zion" is a word which came to embrace the whole city. It was not always so, but it came in the course of time to represent Jerusalem, and is very often, in the prophecies especially, synonymous with Jerusalem. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." There is a partiality of God, a jealousy of God for Jerusalem. When you ask why the Lord is jealous in this way, as to what is behind this Divine partiality, the answer can be given in the word which we are using, "heavenliness." The Divine thought about Jerusalem concerns her heavenliness, and that feature comes out, as you notice, with the very first sentence: "His foundation is in the holy mountains." Mountains are always features or types of spiritual elevation, and if you want that borne out, you can turn to another Psalm and read this literal translation: "Great

is the Lord and greatly to be praised, in the City of our God, in his holy mountain. Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion" (Psalms xlvi. 1). Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth. You see this is a matter of elevation. It is a matter of a high up position, a conspicuous place. It is heavenliness, spiritual ascendancy.

We will speak about that more from the spiritual standpoint presently, but we will just go through this Psalm lxxxvii. step by step to see that there is bound up with that initial statement about the Lord's jealousy and partiality, a contrast between Zion and other cities, and the contrast is based upon the spiritual features which they represent.

The Contrast between Zion and Egypt.

First of all you have Egypt. "Rahab" is the word used here, but you may know that "Rahab" refers to Egypt. We remember that when Abraham, the father of the city, entered into the land of Canaan, the land of promise, his faith was instantly met with a very severe test, for he found the whole country given up to idolatry. He also found a state of severe famine in the land, His faith wavered, and some kind of question evidently crept into his heart, which led him eventually to conclude either that he had made a mistake, had been misled, or else he was altogether out of his time. So turning from the land he went down to Egypt, and Egypt, therefore, became spiritually the place just the opposite of faith. What is the opposite of faith? If God, and God alone, is the object of faith, then if faith breaks down it means that God is set aside, and you look for something else to take the place of God. So that Egypt is clearly seen to represent resources of the earth, natural resources, to which men turn when they lose faith in God. We know what happened to Abraham, that his lapse of faith and his turning to Egypt led to disaster, brought him into compromise, into entanglement, into shame; and that is ever the result of turning from God, as your one and only resource, to other resources which are of men. Very early, you see, in the history of the Church you have those elements which have repeatedly all the way through been its danger, and too often those to which it has succumbed. The history of the Church is one sad story of repeated lapses from God to human resources, natural means, natural methods, the

results of which have always been the same—compromise, entanglement, shame.

What Abraham did as the father of the race, Israel also did in the days of spiritual declension; for when Israel's spiritual life waned, and God therefore became distant and remote to faith, Israel turned to Egypt for help in the day of trouble. Egypt, therefore, always stands to represent those resources which men employ when God appears distant from them owing to the weakness of their own faith. You can see how clearly this is a coming down to earth, and therein is the contrast: "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion," "His foundation is in the holy mountains" (Psa. lxxxvii.) "the city of our God," "in his holy mountain," "beautiful in elevation," "the joy of the whole earth....." (Psa. xlvi. 1). There is a great contrast to Egypt. Egypt is down below, Zion up above, which is why the Lord loves Zion. The Lord has a special partiality for heavenliness about His people.

The Contrast between Zion and Babylon.

Passing that point of contrast, we come to Babylon. We know what Babylon represents. Babylon was the product of human effort and human glory. The city was built not far from the Tower of Babel, and the Tower of Babel was built with the object of making a name for man. It was human effort for human glory. That Tower for ever speaks of the super-man, the glory of fallen man, and the Devil's object has always been to try to get fallen man to reach unto heaven. Just as they sought to make that Tower to reach unto heaven, so Satan has always sought to make man a super-man by his own effort, and in his own glory. Babylon always speaks of that, "Let us build us a city, and a tower.....and let us make us a name....." (Gen. xi. 4). Many years afterward the great king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, uttered these words: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have builded....." (Dan. iv. 30.).

How clearly, then, Babylon speaks of man's power, man's effort, man's glory, seeking to reach unto the very clouds. Babylon stands for the glory of human power, but, of course, in a religious way; for Babylon was very religious, strongly religious. The idea here is something glorious in this world, with man's name upon it. When we recognise that, how impressive are the words: "I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God——" (Rev. iii. 12). Man's design is to have something

glorious in the way of a city with his own name upon it. God's thought is to have a glorious thing of a heavenly order, with *His* Name upon it, and this He will have. The Church has God's Name on it, because it will be an expression of God's glory and God's power and God's effort, and it will be glorious indeed. But here is the difference between Zion, spiritual elevation in heavenliness, and Babylon, that which stands in the glory of man. No wonder God is jealous over Zion.

The Contrast between Zion and Philistia.

Next we come to the contrast between Zion and Philistia. Philistia, we are well aware, speaks of the natural mind intruding into Divine things. We know the Philistines were always impinging upon Divine things. Closely associated all the time geographically with Israel, they were a most persistent foe, yet repeatedly seen as peering into the things of God, as, for example, into the Ark. Here, then, is uncircumcised, or, if you like, uncrucified flesh taking hold of Divine things, and manipulating them. It is, in a sense, the rationalistic line of things, which does not recognise that the things of the Spirit of God are only known by the spiritual, and will seek by purely human means, of intellect, and reason, to arrive at Divine ends. That cannot be done. Philistia represents that. Babylon is natural effort, Philistia is natural reason, and all is down there on the earth still, standing in contrast to Zion, because Zion is the expression not of any kind of human effort of mind or body, but of the revelation of the Spirit of God.

The Contrast between Zion and Tyre.

Tyre stands for the business or commercial world. There were tremendous activities in Tyre as a sea port. The one thing which Tyre represented, and which the whole atmosphere of Tyre expressed, was commerce, expansion, business, the affairs of this world. We hardly need dwell upon that as over against Zion. We know this, at any rate, that the enemy is all too eager to get people so tied up in business affairs as to have no time or strength for contemplating heavenly things. Any business man will tell you that, and I suppose anybody, except those people who really have nothing whatever to do in business of any kind, will tell you that responsibilities are so pressed home, that it is a matter of supreme effort to get time for heavenly things. Tyre is always a

challenge to Zion. In spiritual principle we are up against Tyre every day. Oh, how the enemy through this world's affairs seeks to make inroads upon our time for the things of the Lord. The Lord is very jealous for the heavenly side of things, and His partiality is to the detriment of Tyre.

The Contrast between Zion and Ethiopia.

Finally, Ethiopia. Let us recall the incident in chapter viii. of the book of the Acts, of an Ethiopian who had been up to Jerusalem at the time of the Feast, and was evidently deeply exercised about spiritual matters, being in a state of inquiry, yet not having found an answer to his question, and his heart need. He was still in the shadows, still in the dark, and the Lord recognised that need, that search, not satisfied in the place where it ought to have been satisfied, the official headquarters, and sent Philip from Samaria to join his chariot in the wilderness, to open his eyes to lead him out of his darkness. So that Ethiopia becomes there, and elsewhere in the Scriptures, a type of the darkened understanding, the understanding needing enlightenment, natural darkness; a type also of that which is true of us all. The word of Philip to the eunuch was "Understandest thou?" and his answer: "How can I....." How true that is of all men by nature.

The Ethiopian here in Psalm lxxxvii. is taken as an expression of the state of all men by nature, having the understanding darkened, and needing someone to teach. Over against that, Zion speaks of the eyes of the heart being enlightened, that Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. It says the citizens of Zion are those who have had their eyes opened, and the Lord loves that which expresses His mighty eye-opening work, His work of illumination, of enlightenment, of quickened understanding. The Lord delights in the light, and in that which walks in the light, while He does not delight in darkness.

So we see in this five-fold contrast Zion is seen supreme, because of this main feature of heavenliness. Jerusalem is the concentration of the features of the whole land of Syria. In the same way the Church is the concentration of the features of Christ. Christ is our land of promise. The Church is a concentrated expression of Christ, or is intended to be, and it is not difficult to see that this feature of Christ—heavenliness—is a very marked one. You touch it wherever you touch the Lord Jesus.

How constantly He speaks of Himself as having come out from heaven, of being in heaven, and of everything in His life being heavenly. The great governing feature of Christ is heavenliness, and you see from the Revelation that the New Jerusalem, the Church which is the concentrated expression of Christ, can be seen only from the vantage ground of elevation: "And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem....." (Rev. xxi. 10). If you look into the context you will see that Babylon was also shown, but no mountain was needed to view Babylon; Babylon could be seen in the plain. If you are going to see heavenly things you need to be in the heavenlies. "He carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem....." To see Christ, and to express Christ, necessitates a heavenly union with Christ in the Spirit.

The Constituents of Heavenliness.

We will break up this feature into its constituents. What are the constituents of heavenliness?

I. Spirituality.

The first is spirituality. You cannot understand or enjoy heavenly things unless you are a spiritual man or a spiritual woman. A spiritual state is necessary for comprehending spiritual things. Paul declared that when he said: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit....." (1 Cor. ii. 9). The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, he cannot know them, the spiritual judge all things. A spiritual state, of course, in the first instance by new birth; born of the Spirit; and then a progressive spiritual life. Spiritual growth, is the only way, but it is the sure way of grasping, knowing, understanding, comprehending heavenly things. John's Gospel is the Gospel of spirituality, and everything in "John" is heavenly. You find it full of people in difficulties. Nicodemus is in difficulty, he cannot understand spiritual things at all and there is one great question mark which holds him in complete bondage: *How?* The Lord makes perfectly clear to him that he has to become a spiritual man, to be spiritually born, before he can understand spiritual things. The woman of Sychar is in just the same case, in

as big a fog as was Nicodemus. The Lord makes it clear to her that what she needs is the Spirit dwelling within when she will understand the meaning of life. And so you go through that Gospel, finding a large number of people in the dark, and the Lord in relation to every one of them touches upon the one principle. What is necessary is spiritual illumination? The man born blind needs the Lord to open his eyes, and on their being opened, he sees better than all the religious authorities around him, who are then quite manifestly in the dark. It is the Gospel of spirituality, which means to comprehend heavenly things you must be spiritual in your essential being, born of the Spirit, indwelt and governed by the Spirit.

II. Elevation.

Or spiritual ascendancy. Anyone who really does seek to walk with the Lord, to have their life maintained in the Spirit, understands quite well, apart from the technical words used, what spiritual elevation or ascendancy means. Let me put it to you in this way. Do you know what it is to have to battle constantly to maintain your position spiritually above? Do you know what it is to have almost everything brought upon you to press you down and to get you under? anything to get your spirit under! Once your spirit is under, and you have gone under to circumstances, to feelings, to appearances, to sensations, or to anything else, you are beaten, you are broken, you are useless, your testimony has gone. Now the Church is called to be in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus; is only another way of saying that this life must be in spiritual elevation, spiritual ascendancy, whilst the Lord, the Architect, is seeking to teach us every day how to take and maintain ascendancy, and many opportunities occur each day of learning that lesson. A hundred times in a day you and I could go under to something if we liked to let go, to take things on, if we said: Oh, well, there is this thing that is wrong! or Look at that! and left it there. It is very easy to drop down, but the Lord calls upon us day by day, again and again in the course of every day to refuse to go under. He urges us to take a strong hold upon Him, upon His Spirit, to be strengthened with might into the inward man, that we may not go under, but maintain our spiritual ascendancy. That is the elevation of Zion, that is the elevation of the Church in all its members.

III. Faith.

That is made very clear by the father of the city, Abraham. If that city was eventually to be reached, then Abraham must, as its father (so to speak), be essentially a man of faith, and we know that to be the particular factor for which Abraham has stood all through history. "By faith Abraham....." And when all has been said about faith that can be said, it comes at last to this, believing in God's faithfulness. It is standing solidly with God on His faithfulness. Sometimes you can do no more than that. All the other aspects of faith, or faith's expression, may be impossible, and you simply have to stand back on that one final thing, Well, God is faithful! Eventually it will be proved! Get through the present perplexity, problem, and we shall find that God is faithful! It may look now as though He has let us go, as though He has failed us, as though He has not answered, as though our expectation is disappointed; but when we get through we shall find that God had not forsaken, God had not abandoned us, and God had not contradicted, but has been faithful. You and I will steadily learn that. We do not learn that lesson all at once. We are not incapable of asking questions of the Lord, and we sometimes have to put up a fight against the suggestion of a doubt as to the Lord's faithfulness, and to go back to our trust; but God is faithful. That is the final refuge of faith: but it is a mighty thing to stand there, it is a tremendous thing to stand there, and Abraham came to that position.

Heavenliness is a tremendous factor in the life of the Lord's people. Heavenliness, which is spirituality, which is ascendancy, or elevation, and which is faith, is a tremendous factor. All that is gathered up in Jerusalem. It means being on other ground than on the ground of this world, the ground of man. Oh, that the Church had maintained that position all the way through! What terrible tragedies have resulted from coming down to lower ground!

We said that we would give an illustration of the tragedy of coming down from a heavenly position on the part of the Church. I found this, written by Sir George Adam Smith. Speaking of the Moslem invasion of Syria, so that Syria became swept and dominated by Islam, he writes—

"The Christianity of Syria fell before Islam because it was corrupt, and it deserved to fall."

And again :

"In attempting by purely human means to regain her birthplace, the Church was beaten back by Islam because she was selfish and worldly."

"In neither of these cases was it a true Christianity that was overthrown, though the true Christianity bears to this day the reproach, and the burden of the results. The irony of the Divine judgment is clearly seen in this, that it was on the very land where a spiritual monotheism first appeared that the Church was first punished for idolatry and materialism; that it was in sight of the scenes where Christ taught and healed, and went about doing good with His band of pure devoted disciples, that the envious, treacherous, truculent hosts of the Cross were put to sword and fire. They who in His Name sought a kingdom of this world by worldly means could not hope to succeed on the very fields where He had put such a temptation from Him. The victory of Islam over Christianity is no more a problem than the victory of Babylon over Israel."

That is a tremendous statement. What history there is in a statement like that! Perhaps the greatest problem today of Christianity, of the mission field, is Islam. I do not think there is a greater problem than Islam for the Church. Why? Well, Sir George Adam Smith puts his finger right on the cause when he says the power of Islam is due to the corruption of the Church at a given point in history, divided, selfish, and worldly. Islam gained the mastery because of that.

How, then, would Islam be overthrown? How would the mischief be undone? Surely by a *heavenly* Church, by that which has been wholly separated from this world in all means, and methods, and united in one spirit as a great spiritual force, under the government of the Holy Spirit. That, and that alone, will overthrow the forces which have gained their position by reason of the unspirituality and unheavenliness of the Church.

If that applies to the whole, it applies to us individually, that spiritual power over any ground of the enemy demands detachment spiritually from the world, a close walk with God, and a heavenly life, a life which is above with Christ. The Lord lay upon our hearts the tremendous importance of this heavenly fellowship with Him from day to day, for the sake of spiritual power and His glory.

T. A.-S.

The Eyes of His Glory

(Continued.) No. 4

READINGS : Numbers xvi. 41-48.
John xiii. 1-5, 21-27, 30-35.
Rev. xxi. 9-11, 23.
Phil. ii. 5-11.

Ezekiel i. 29 : "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about."

THE writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls it, therefore, a Throne of Grace.

In stating that fact we do not take away a single iota from the holiness of that Throne. It is impossible to overstate the holiness of the Throne of God. It is perfect—the holiness of God Himself—and no words, speaking of grace, or the word "love," as commonly understood, must be thought to take away anything of the holiness and the awfulness of the Throne of Grace.

Glory and Judgment.

Let us consider the incident in Numbers xvi. which follows on the destruction of Korah. It is something very true to experience, and something which may be a comfort to the heart where this is needed. God had judged Korah and his company. Moses did nothing. How could a man cause the earth to open and swallow up the company, or cause fire to come forth to consume the two hundred and fifty that offered the incense? And yet: ".....on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord."

The servants of God are very often charged with responsibility for that which God Himself has done. In the presence of such a situation, the glory of the Lord appeared to all the congregation. The point that we want to take up (there are other points) is this: The glory of the Lord appeared, and we must take that as being God's attesting of His two servants, not only in regard to what had happened up to that moment, but in the light of what was going to follow, inasmuch as the Lord knows the end from the beginning. He is saying, in effect: "Watch these two servants of Mine; this is the exhibition of My glory." They are two

men who are charged with that which is no proper charge against them at all—the terrible charge of destroying the people of God. This is gross injustice.

Had we no rainbow round the Throne we should say: Well, now we know what will happen; that Throne stands for utter holiness; and here an unholy charge is made against these two men; then the blazing glory of God will burst forth and smite these sinners who accuse them:—but the Throne of Glory is the Throne of Grace. What also is the action of Moses and Aaron here? To stand up to justify themselves? To say virtually: God will give you what you deserve in this matter? The attitude of Moses and Aaron in the face of the unjust accusation was to fall upon their faces before the Lord; and then, carrying that which spoke of the fragrance of Christ, to run in and bear this among the sinners, so that the plague was stayed. Though so grievously sinned against, their action was that of intercession in behalf of the transgressors. That at once reminds us of the familiar word in Isaiah liii. 12.

Glory and Intercession.

You see immediately what is here. In the presence of holiness violated we have intercession, and because of the pleading of the Intercessor, the operation of the plague, and the outbreak of that holy fire against these sinners, is stayed. You have the Cross of the Lord Jesus, the work of our blessed Intercessor in the Throne, converting the Throne from that of unmixed holiness into a Throne of Grace, in virtue of His Own Presence before the Father, pleading a righteousness which answers for the unrighteousness against which that holiness is burning. You see the type of the Lord Jesus, and it is in the presence of this that the glory of the Lord appeared to all the congregation.

We stay to ask ourselves: What constitutes the manifesting of the glory of the Lord? In our previous studies we have noted the following statements as answers to that inquiry: A life of faith, depending utterly upon God; a life of Victory, standing in all the victory of Calvary over all the power of the Enemy; a life of per-

fect subjection to the will of God, having everything ordered according to Him Who is in the Throne. These things are all true; *but* that which transcends them all, that which gathers them all up, and converts them all from being, shall we say, the terror of sheer holiness or strength, is this spirit of Him Who, when He was wronged, made intercession for them that wronged Him. It is the love of God that turns away the fierce burning of the rays and tempers them—just as the blaze of the sun, which cannot be nakedly seen in all its full glory by the naked eye, can yet be viewed in its essential beauty when the full brightness is broken up into the colours of the rainbow.

Glory and Salvation.

Thus the Throne of Holiness need not be a terror to us, but through the operation of divine grace we may gaze upon it, and have fellowship with it, in its rainbow glory.

Now let us briefly follow in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the principle illustrated by the attitude of Moses and Aaron in the incident before us.

In Isaiah xl. 5, we get this word:

“And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

In Luke iii. 6, we get that same word quoted, with an alteration:

“And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

So that, instead of the Glory of the Lord, we have the salvation of God. If we want to know what is the salvation of God, let us look back to the second chapter and verse thirty where we see that Simeon said:

“For mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”

Then the salvation of God is the glory of the Lord; and the salvation of God was the little Babe that Simeon held in his arms. That which Ezekiel saw, that awful glory of the Lord, is here in the Person of the little Babe of Bethlehem. Veiled! Yes, that is the whole point! The blaze of that glory has now been broken up into its colours, that it can be seen: “We beheld his glory,” “that which our eyes have seen, and our hands have handled . . .” The glory of that Throne became manifest in the earth in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We know that in all His ways, works, and words on earth, without any variation at all, He manifested the glory of God. In

all things He glorified His Father, doing His will, and revealing in everything His character. That is the glory of God—revealing what God is; revealing His utter holiness; revealing His utter hatred of sin; letting it be very manifest that where any tinge of unholiness was concerned, He was utterly against it. But that was not all—and here is the comfort. While He was utterly apart from sin, utterly against sin as such, His Presence in this world was not in itself merely to destroy sin, and all that was encompassed with sin. His purpose, first, was to deliver out from sin, to save from sin such as could be saved; and in the one process of His Cross, we know that He both made a way of saving out from sin, and at the same time administered the death blow to sin. It was in His Cross that all this was wrought out, His purpose being to deliver from the power of sin. This is the glory of God walking the earth. This is the glory of God acting, suffering contradiction of sinners against Himself, as Moses and Aaron did. And even to the man who, more than any other amongst sinners, acted basely toward Him—he was one of the innermost company, and yet betrayed Him—He handed a sop as a token of the greatest honour; knowing that the hour was come, He loved even unto the end. This, please remark, is the glory of God in operation.

Glory and Humiliation.

Note the operation of the glory of God again. We have been speaking of the eyes of His glory. Note the eyes of His glory at work in Luke xxii. 61:

“And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord how that he said unto him, Before the cock crow this day, thou shalt deny me thrice.”

There are the eyes of the glory looking upon a man. What happened to the man? Was he shrivelled up by the awful terror of it? No! “Peter remembered the word of the Lord . . .” and repentance and forgiveness were the outcome; and we know what kind of man Peter became later on. You see the operation of the eyes of the glory here. They are operating in grace. They could look clean into the heart of a sinner, and break that heart unto repentance. It is the operation of the glory of God. He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

Then what is the objective of the glory of

God? It is not to destroy but to save. The activity of the glory of God is the activity of holy love, not terrible and fierce wrath. And if in the end, or at any point on the way to the end, the glory of God acts destructively, let it be understood what that is; it is not merely terrible wrath venting itself, it is violated love in operation.

Then how may I have fellowship with that Throne? By responding to the Love that comes from the heart of God. Must I not be afraid of it? No! For the Word says: "Perfect love casteth out fear, for fear hath torment." It is that very thing that John says in 1 John iv. 17:

"Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, even so are we in this world."

What is the day of judgment? The day of the unveiling of the glory.

Let us, if necessary, correct our ideas of the glory of God. If they have been up till now ideas of terror and dread, something of which to be afraid of, let us put a rainbow round it all, and write over it: "God is love." The Gospels show us the character of that love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends; ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." "As the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you.....This is my commandment, that ye love one another....." How shall we reveal the glory of God? All-inclusively, by laying down our lives for one another in terms of the love of God. This is the consummate expression of divine glory; and the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Are we afraid of those eyes of glory? We are told in Hebrews iv., that all things are naked and open before the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do. Those are the eyes of glory. But they are the eyes of Him Who manifested that glory in grace. Do we fear to have our hearts searched by the glory of God? We need not fear; though, in any case, those eyes are seeing; there is nothing hid from them. If they were only eyes of blazing holiness, they would destroy every unholy thing they touched, and we might well run in terror from the wrath of the Lamb; but, praise God, in this day we may dare to come boldly to the Throne of Grace, with hearts widely open, daring to lay every part bare for Him to search with those eyes of flame; because they are eyes of flaming love as well as of holiness.

What the Lord is seeking, when seeking a people in whom He is glorified, is a people who are full of the love of God, and between whom and Himself there exists, not the relationship of an awful Potentate up there and of slaves down here, but as He Himself said: "I have called you friends." Do allow the Lord to scatter to the winds every grain of shrinking from the glory of God, every sense of: I dare not come into this! From one angle, that is a right fear. From another angle, how utterly it contradicts the character of the divine glory, which is Love in its essence. And now the word is: As He loved us so ought we to love one another.

That brings us to the spirit of the Lamb (Rev. v. 6):

"And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth."

These, again, are the eyes of glory. The seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. Do we not read elsewhere, that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth? The eyes of glory are here identified with a Lamb as it had been newly slain. Away go the terrors of those piercing eyes if they are the eyes of the Lamb newly slain! Yet only in the next chapter (v. 16) we read this:

"And they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."

The day will come when the Lamb will be terrible to those who have refused Him, but let us remark again, it will be the terror of rejected and outraged Love, the terror inspired in the heart by the realisation that there was Love of that character offered, but persistently scorned and rejected. The wrath of the Lamb will create terror in the hearts of those who realise they have outraged infinite Love, and that there is now no opportunity of reconciliation with it, or of reaping the benefit that it offers. Hell will not be the terrible blazing out of God in dreadful punishment so much as the state brought about by a consciousness of a repudiation of Divine Love.

Rev. xxi. 10: "And he showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God."

Here is the end: the Holy City, the

New Jerusalem, having the glory of God. Here is the glory of God again, coming down out of Heaven. The eyes of the glory, then, must be associated with the City. What are the eyes? We are told the light of the body is the eye; that which lightens the whole body is the eye. What lightens the City? "The Lamb is the light thereof" (v. 23). It is the eye of the City which gives it its light, and its light is the glory. The light of the City is the Lamb.

The Glory of the Lamb.

This is finality so far as we are concerned in the narrative, but you see what it implies. That which is the very essence of glory, and which glory will shed its light abroad in the whole realm in which it operates, is the Lamb, the One slain; the crucified Lord; the One Who loved to the uttermost; the One Who laid down His life for His friends; the One Who took up His Cross in your behalf and mine, and suffered contradiction of sinners, against Himself, and bled and died for our redemption; the One Who loved us even unto the end. It is the Lamb. The essence of the glory of God, the supreme feature of those eyes of glory, that which will be the final light of all things, will be the Spirit of Calvary, the Spirit of the Lamb. We need not be afraid of that. On the contrary the whole exhortation of the Word of God is that the Spirit should be welcomed in our hearts. So that we can say finally that the consummate manifestation of the glory of God is the showing forth of the Spirit of Christ as the crucified Lord. We reach high water mark there. What greater glory can you and I manifest than the glory of the Christ Who gave Himself for us?

This is what Moses and Aaron in spirit displayed. They suffered contradiction of sinners, and their attitude was to plead for the pardon of those sinners, and to secure the staying of the plague. He lives today, that crucified One, making intercession for us; and in respect of every breach that we have committed against His holiness, every fault, every failing, every sin, every grieving of His Spirit, of which we repent

in our hearts, His intercessions are effectual. Into that ministry they who share the glory are bound to enter.

Do we see our calling? It is to be in the world where we may suffer much contradiction of sinners against ourselves, and yet to make intercession for the transgressors, to be before God in behalf of the rest that the plague of death may be stayed, and that they may be saved and themselves brought into the fulness of the glory. We, in the mercy of God, may be as Moses and Aaron were. They were just two, out of a larger company, who represented God's thought. The larger company were missing God's thought for them, and yet were intended by Him to come into it. There are multitudes of the Lord's people out for the good of the fulness of Christ, and there is death working among them. One plague that is working was revealed in this incident, the lack of discernment as to what was of God, and what was not. These people said to Moses: You have done this! But it was God Who had done it. Paul says in Philippians i. 9: "This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment, so that ye may approve the things that differ."

Then perhaps one ministry for us is that of being exercised in the love of God, the love abounding more and more that, in this evil day, we may discern the things that are of God, and the things that are not of God and by our discernment be enabled to save many from death, from being swept away in deception. Is that not a need today? It surely is.

We come to the last word. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus....." Then the story goes down, down to the death: "Wherefore God highly exalted him.....and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." The end is the glory of God the Father, and if we hear Him bidding us to take up our Cross and follow Him, the end of the way is the glory of God, the Father. May He grant us to enter into that.

G. P.

The Spiritual Background of the Word of God

(Continued.)

Life Overcoming Death

READING : Numbers xvii. 1-13.

WE have been saying that the Scriptures throughout reveal an abiding and deep seated antagonism between God and this world, and that that antagonism passes into every instrument brought into living fellowship with God, and becomes the expression of God's antagonism, as also the means by which the antagonism in the world is dragged out into the light. So that, all who are in spiritual fellowship with God, know that from God's side there can be no reconciliation with the world in that spiritual sense of the word in which we are using it, and they also know that there is toward them, as toward God, this strong, deep, relentless spiritual antagonism on the part of the world.

We have further seen, that in the true nature of fallen man there is that element which has an affinity with the world, and which causes man spontaneously to gravitate world-ward.

Then we have seen that the Word of God reveals the existence of a great system of spiritual intelligence, which has as its business the maintaining and stimulating of that antagonism, and that all its might is bent upon keeping that affinity between fallen man and this world. So that that whole system of spiritual intelligences is all the time seeking to keep man world-bound spiritually, and to bring about some kind of involving again, even of the Lord's people and the Church, in this world, spiritually. The whole history of the Church's gravitation world-ward in numerous ways is just the history of the success of those spiritual intelligences, to again entangle the people of God in the toils of the world spiritually.

Now we have to some extent dealt with those matters; and we come, therefore, to the next thing which was mentioned in our original outlining of this whole matter; that spiritual death is the law which governs that relationship of man with the world. Spiritual death is the many-sided master-hold of those spiritual forces. In our second analysis, you will remember, it was pointed out, that the very essence of the working

of the Lord Jesus by His Cross, was to destroy that affinity, to break the power of that law of death, and to introduce, on the ground of separation from the world, the law of life; a counter law to the law of gravitation toward the world, the realm of spiritual death. So for a brief time we shall be occupied with the law of life in Christ, that which comes by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. How to lift out just enough for a little while is my problem. The Lord will no doubt help.

We may find our helpfulness by reverting to the portion of the Word from which we were reading in the Book of Numbers. We read the 17th chapter, the account of the taking of the twelve rods of the twelve tribes of Israel, and of the sequel in the budding of Aaron's rod. You will notice, if you have the Word open, that this 17th chapter has its setting in a scene of death. The chapter before gives the account of the rebellion of Korah and his company, the disputing of the leadership of Moses and Aaron, and the calling into question of God's appointment. You must ever remember that Moses and Aaron are one, that in principle they are not two men, they represent the two sides of one. Moses is that side which represents government, administration; Aaron is that side which represents priesthood, mediation. Two sides of one ministry, which are clearly seen in the Anti-type of Moses and Aaron, the Lord Jesus Himself; King and Priest, Ruler and Priest, Administrator and Mediator. Korah with his company rose up and questioned the divine appointment and its absoluteness. You know the issue. The Lord took up that matter. Moses did not take up that matter; Moses did not turn a hand for his own vindication; he fell on his face before the Lord, and his meekness is brought out at that point as never before. But the Lord stepped in and called for Korah and his company to be brought to the door of the tent of the congregation. The issue was that the earth opened, and swallowed up the company of Korah, which, if you look, you will see to have been a very large company. Death en-

gulfed all who were touched and tainted with that thing. Chapter xvii. is set in that background of death, terrible death. Korah and his company have touched something which was death, and which worked out in death. There had been a contact in spirit between them and that realm which is death, and spiritual death always precedes the literal carrying out of it, just as spiritual life in resurrection precedes the resurrection literally. There will be no resurrection unto life for anyone who has not already been resurrected spiritually. And when eventually the judgment of death has its literal consummation, it will simply be the fulfilment of what has already been taking place in spiritual death; and in principle Korah had already touched a realm which implied and involved death, and the literal judgment was but the consummation of that.

A Realm of Spiritual Death.

Now we pass into this part of the story where the big question for the Lord's people is the fact of there being a realm of death, and of our seeing how possible it is for us to become involved in that, to touch that, and the awful consequences,—how can we live? who can live? You see that is what comes up at the end of chapter xvii., but is the issue of chapter xvi. At the end of chapter xvii. you read: "And the children of Israel spake unto Moses, saying, Behold, we perish, we are undone, we are all undone. Every one that cometh near, that cometh near unto the tabernacle of the Lord, dieth: shall we perish all of us?" Question followed question. Death is working: Death, a realm which can be touched spiritually. How can we live? Can we live at all? The content of chapter xvii. is the answer; 'Aaron's rod that budded. I think it well nigh impossible to fail to see in that rod the type of the Lord Jesus. All those rods, even Aaron's rod, when brought to the tabernacle, were dead. Aaron's rod was among the rest, apparently like them, in death. Judgment has taken place, sin has been judged and dealt with, and death through sin reigns universally. That is sin, as you have it at the end of "Good Friday," as we call it. Even the Lord Jesus, who has voluntarily entered into the universal judgment of sin, taken His place amongst sinful men, and has received the judgment of God upon the sin of the world, looks, at the end of that day, as though He is like all the rest—dead; laid up through the night, the dark night. But then we hear Paul's

ringing shout: "God raised Him from the dead," and what we call "Easter Day" is Aaron's rod that budded, is Christ in resurrection. These rods, or at least Aaron's rod, was an almond rod, the stick of an almond tree. In Hebrews the word "almond" simply means "awakening," and it is given that name because it is the first of the trees of spring to break the slumber of winter. The first blossoms of spring are the blossoms of the almond tree, and the almond gets its name in Hebrew simply from the fact that it breaks the slumber of winter first. It is the first to show the new life. A very simple type of Christ, the Firstfruits of them that are asleep, awakened, breaking the slumber of death.

The Fulness of Christ's Victory

There is something more than that. The marvel, the miracle of this particular rod was that simultaneously it had buds, blossoms and fruit, ripe fruit. You have never found that on an almond tree in spring. You have seen the bud, and then later the flower, and later the fruit, but here are all at once. Christ in resurrection is initially the break with death, and at the same time the full fruit of resurrection, and there is present all the beauty of that in the flower. It is a matchless picture of resurrection. Christ does not rise progressively in bud, and later on in flower, and later still in fruit, all is there in a moment; and that is why we can live; for in Him is the fulness of resurrection life. Do they ask, How can we live? Who can live? The answer is here—Christ lives, all is possible. Even in the presence of death and judgment, in a world where death rages, to touch which spiritually, means death, it is possible to live in the triumph of His resurrection. I take the simple and the surface lesson of this almond rod and of the resurrection.

Much more there is, but we will ravish our hearts with the first beauty of this thing. You and I know quite well that death is all around us in this world—spiritually, I mean. We know by painful experience that it is all too possible, and all too easy for us spiritually to touch that realm, and to have the touch of it upon us, to feel that cold touch of spiritual death upon our hearts by reason of, in some way out of a thousand ways, just getting a contact. It may be conversation. It is so easy to touch death through not watching your conversation. How often, after a holy time with the Lord, frivolity has come in in your

conversation, and you know in your spirit that you have come into a realm of death, it may be by something said about a child of God; you have come down to earth levels in your relationships, your criticisms. I could never, if I tried, touch all the ways in which it happens, but I mention these simply to give point to the truth. There are innumerable ways in which the spirit of one who has been touched by the Lord with His life, can just be involved in that spiritual realm of death. It is a reality to us—we know it. That new law which He has put within us, which gravitates toward the Lord, makes us revolt and recoil from even compulsory dealings with many things in this world. We have to go back, because of the conventions of this world, because of certain duties which have to be performed; we have to go back into the world sometimes to ungodly relatives or associations, but we want to get away as soon as we can, we recoil. That to us is death spiritually. We do not, of course, imply here any lack of love or desire for the salvation of such as are unsaved.

Now we live in that realm, in that world. How can we live triumphantly in a world where death is, and not perish in it? More than that! How can you and I, as the Lord's people, seeking to live a heavenly life in this death-ridden world, live, not only in the presence of men, and women, and things which are dead, but in the presence of all the spirits of death, which are with increasing intensity coming upon the children of God, to register death upon them; these spirits that seek to make them accept death, to put up a real conflict spiritually with something—the only word which expresses it is death; that which is active, malicious, wanting to crush the life out of you and to bring you down and under; how can we live in that? We need a very full victory. That rod declared the fulness of the victory, going right on to the end—ripe fruit. It covers the whole field of resurrection life. Christ risen answers the question, How can we live? Because He lives we live. He, risen, is our life, even in the midst of death.

I know how very simply, very elementary that statement is, but it is not too elementary for me. That does not set the standard, of course, but for me that is a message, and because it is a message to me I give it to you. Beloved, as children of God, we cannot live in this world, only in the power of the risen life of the Lord Jesus, but we CAN live, even in this world, in the midst of the full force of spiritual death, if we

know Christ in risen life, the fellowship with Him in His resurrection. We can live, and it is what we have got to learn to do. We have to learn from day to day how literally in our hearts to lay hold of the Lord as our life, to make it possible for us to go triumphantly through this world, this living tomb, this realm of death.

Now all that is according to the truth: all that can have the Word of God brought to its support throughout. You probably realise that more or less. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus has got to become to His own a daily reality. It is not merely something that happened so many years ago. We do not celebrate something that happened centuries ago, we celebrate something that is real now in experience. I cannot sing a hymn about something that happened so many centuries ago. I can only enter into this thing if it is a reality to me now. I want the value of it to my own heart now, and then I can sing. This matter of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus has got to become an increasing reality to us in our life, to live in triumph in the midst of death. It is so real and true to experience; very often it is wrapped up so carefully and so cleverly by the enemy, that the whole tendency and peril is to put things down to the account of something else; to put it down to the fault of people, to the accidents of life, to the mere converging of circumstances, to blame somebody, or something. And so it is wrapped up really to divert us from the source of it, so that, being occupied with something which is not the original occasion, but merely a means of it, we shall not get right to the source, and be able to tackle it there. If your experience of spiritual death comes about, in measure, through some means seen or known, and you become occupied with the means, the channel, the instrument, the person or the thing, you have no power to deal with the matter at its fountain head. You simply get up against people and things, and blame them and feel sorry about them. But if you recognise that that is only the wrapping of the enemy, and see that the issue is a question of life and death, and you get right to the source of it, and say, now, although so-and-so may have been unwatchful, unwise, and in measure responsible, I see that the enemy is back of that, and the effect of this thing is intended to be that I am spiritually put out of action, brought down into death; then you are on the way to being able to master the whole situation. And how often when we get back of the thing or the

person, and deal with the thing in its spiritual realm, the other thing of itself clears up, and you find that that is taken out of the enemy's hands. It is very true! It is important for us to recognise the ultimate matter, and that is the one of spiritual conflict between the prince of this world and our spirits, to bring us again into the bondage of spiritual death.

Ministry in Resurrection Life.

That is not all, but I must close. I want to remind you that it is not only a matter of living. Chapter xviii. carries this thing further. It carries it into ministry. The answer of the end of chapter xvii. works two ways. It works, on the one hand, toward living in the presence of death, and being delivered from death; it works in the other way, in the matter of spiritual service. It is a glorious thing to notice that it is not only a matter of being able to maintain yourself in life, or being maintained in life, but a ministry in resurrection comes into view. Chapter xviii. brings the whole matter of spiritual ministry in resurrection in a new way before the Lord's people. Aaron, his sons, and the Levites, on the ground of this great miracle of resurrection come into a spiritual ministry. It is not necessary for me to remind you that the Levites are, in representation, all the people of God; all the people of God, in consecration, in separation unto the Lord; and their ministry is the ministry of all the Lord's people, and all the Lord's people have their ministry in the Levites. In the New Testament you do not divide the Body literally. Here it is a principle, a type, an illustration of a spiritual reality. In the New Testament it is Christ and His own. If you want the proof of that, read your Letter to the Hebrews again, and you will find, in the very first chapters of that Letter, the Lord Jesus, Who comes in as the greater than Aaron, speaks again and again of His own as being brethren, children: "I and the children....." "I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren....." "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus....." And there Christ is seen as "A Son over God's house, Whose house are we." It is a priestly family that comes in with the New Testament. The Letter to the Hebrews makes it perfectly clear that that is all on resurrection ground. He, through death, has destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and delivered all those who all their lives were

in bondage through fear of death. On the ground of resurrection this priestly family comes in with Him as its Head. That is Numbers xviii. quite clearly. And so spiritual ministry comes in, not for a class, but for all the Lord's people. If there is any difference between the sons of Aaron and the Levites it is one of spiritual development, and not of class distinction. It is approximation to maturity, as represented by the sons of Aaron, but the ministry of the House of God is spread over all the Lord's people. Every one of you—take it to your heart—every one of you stands now, in the New Testament day, in the position of the priests and the Levites of Numbers xviii. That is a privilege; that is a responsibility.

Now, of course, your mental difficulties will be as to the nature of ministry, and you will perhaps be asking questions. You may ask, Have I to preach, have I to be on the platform, taking meetings? No, it does not mean anything of the kind. It does mean that you have a ministry spiritually, by your very relationship to the living Lord. Oh, that we could get delivered from this mechanical idea of ministry. The Lord has taken tremendous pains with some of us in this matter. Ministry does not consist in someone getting Bible addresses ready, Bible readings and subjects, preparing them, and getting up and giving them forth at meetings. That is not the ministry. The Lord has shown to us that it is impossible to minister in the power of the Holy Ghost, in the Word of God, in truth, unless we have the fruit of Christ's resurrection in us. You have to come, not only to the initial experience of the bud, being raised together with Christ; you have to come to the place where the beauty of Christ in the flower is there; and then the fruit of Christ is there in ripeness. I would not come to you to minister at any time simply because there is in the Bible a good deal of interesting matter that I have seen, and which I would like you to know. My cry to God is, Forbid me to speak to this people, unless you give me a word in my own heart that is meaning something to me. Ministry flows out of living union with the Lord Jesus, and if ministry is not that it is not the ministry of God. Do not take on ministry in a mechanical, organised way; that will kill you sooner or later. This ministry is only possible in the power and fruit of His resurrection.

Are you knowing the fruit of His resurrection in your own heart, in your own life, so that He

is really causing you to partake of the fruit of His resurrection—ripe almonds? It may be in a simple way, but you are knowing that beauty, that unction, that fellowship with the Lord in your own heart. If you are, you need not worry about ministry; that will show itself. The Lord will find ways for you. I have no doubt whatever but that when the Lord gets a child of His into a place where they are really in their own hearts enjoying the fruit of the risen Lord, the Lord will make contacts with that life which will be fruitful, and that will be ministry. He knows where there is someone

who is just longing for a taste of the fruit of His risen life, and He will make the contacts. That does not exempt us from being ready, anxious to be used as the Lord will, on stretch to be of service to Him; though all eagerness to minister will be in vain, if we are not in resurrection with the Lord Jesus, but, given that, ministry follows, it comes out of that.

Numbers xviii. comes out of Numbers xvii. The ministry of the House of God is spontaneous, when there is union with Christ in risen life; the fruit is there at once.

T. A.-S.

The Essential Newness of the New Creation

No. 2

The Centre and Sphere of the New Creation.

READINGS : Isaiah xlvi. 6-11 ; 11 Cor. v. 14-18.

IN the latter passage (II Corinthians v.) the statement is very complete. It says, in the first place, that by reason of our death with Christ, in that His dying was the death of all, "all died in Him," henceforth we know no man after the flesh; then that our knowledge of Christ is no longer after the flesh but *after the Spirit*. A further statement follows, ".....if any man is in Christ there is a new creation....." (B.V.M.), all things have become new, and *all things are of God*. Our knowledge of Christ is after the Spirit, that is, the relationship is a spiritual one. "If any man be in Christ there is a new creation." That clearly means that the new creation is a spiritual creation. Christ is known spiritually. All our intercourse with Christ now is of a spiritual character. Christ is a spiritual reality, and all that Christ is is spiritually known and apprehended, so that the new creation is spiritual union with Christ. Christ sets forth the nature of the new creation. The statement is that it is not after the flesh. The new creation as represented by Christ here is essentially spiritual. Christ is the new creation. Spiritual relationship with Christ brings us into the new creation. There all things are of God. That means that everything is spiritual, as related to Christ.

That may sound a little difficult and technical, but we must get the significance of that, because it is all-important. Let us put it

simply. The new creation is Christ. We come into *it* when we come into *Him*, but, in order to come into *Him*, and, therefore, into *it*, there has to be a *spiritual* thing done, we have to become spiritual people.

The word "*flesh*" as used here is comprehensive and general. Not knowing Him after the flesh, and not knowing one another after the flesh means really what we should think if we were to say we do not know one another naturally, in the natural realm. Whatever that might be, that is all-embracing. We know one another as we know Christ, spiritually. The context here sets forth that our relationship with Christ in the new creation is purely a spiritual thing, and therefore our relationships with one another as being in Christ are spiritual relationships. The whole new creation is a spiritual matter, because it is Christ.

That leads us to this specific point, which goes right to the heart of things. *In this realm the thing which dominates is the measure of Christ*. Everything here is determined and governed by the measure of Christ. Christ fills this whole realm; Christ dominates this whole realm in a spiritual way; from this realm of the new creation everything which is not Christ is excluded: all things are out from God. We might say that God's world is Christ, so far as we are concerned. The entire sphere of God for us is Christ. For us as believers there is nothing else whatever in relation to God but

Christ. Nothing is accepted by Him but Christ. Nothing is blessed by Him but Christ. Nothing is used by Him but Christ. Nothing is seen or considered by Him but Christ. Here, filling God's entire realm so far as we are concerned, is Christ, only Christ.

That is the realm of the new creation. It is "in Christ." That is why the Cross stands right at the very threshold of the whole realm of the "all things" of God, "henceforth know we no man after the flesh....." All died in Him. Everything that is of the old creation has been, by that Cross, cut off, and not one fragment of it ever enters the realm of God.

The Fire of the Cross.

The passage in Isaiah xlvi. is full of significance when read in the light of II Corinthians v. "I have shewed thee *new* things from this time, even hidden things, which thou has not known. They are created now, and not from of old; and before this day thou heardest them not....." Now you notice certain things follow. One is: "I have refined thee, but not as silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." Now note! "*For mine own sake* will I do it; for how should my name be profaned? and my glory will I not give to another." That is New Testament teaching in very essence. A new thing; a new creation: then a Divine activity in the fire; and the motive—the object—God's own honour, God's own glory, that all things may be of God!

Let us put it this way. The profaning of the Lord's Name, and the taking away of His glory, is the inveterate habit and course of the old creation nature. should you see any of the old creation getting into the realm of the things of God, what is the result sooner or later? That man takes the glory, and dishonours God. Is not that the tragic, dark story of "the Church"; man in his old creation powers and life pressing into the things of God, and making a name for himself? The Church has been the happy hunting ground of men for reputation, position, influence and all such things. The flesh always does that. It takes God's glory away, it profanes God's Name. In order that that might not be so there must be a new creation, where all things are of God. That creation is based upon the Cross, and inasmuch as you and I have accepted by faith the meaning of the Cross, and are now in Christ, what is the next thing? It is the application of that

Cross in the terms of the fire which refines, the furnace of affliction.

Now note—the furnace of affliction is not for the ungodly. The fire of eternal judgment is for the ungodly, not the furnace of affliction. The furnace of affliction is for those who by faith are in Christ. What happens in the furnace of affliction? What is it that is dealt with in the fire? Is it you, and is it I, that are refined in the fire? Are *you* refined in the fire? Am *I* refined in the furnace of affliction? I say, No! emphatically NO!! If we say, Yes! well, let us look at the furnace of affliction, the fire with the metal in the crucible. What are you doing with that metal? Well, you say, you heat the fire intensely and all the uncleanness, the corruption, comes to the surface; this is skimmed off, and when that process has been carried through to its end, there is left pure gold! Then if you say that is you or that is me you will have to abandon your doctrine of total depravity, and you will have to come back to the place where you say there is good in us, after all! You will have to say there is good and bad in us, and the furnace of affliction is to get the badness out of us and leave the goodness! Is that true doctrine? No! The furnace of affliction is not for the removal of the bad out of us so as to leave the good that is in us, and secure it! Then what is its purpose? Is it to refine Christ in us? We need not discuss that! Christ needs no refining! What is it for? It is to divide between what is us in fallen nature, and what is Christ, and to get rid of the one in order to give full place to the other? The furnace of affliction is the application of the Cross to the getting rid of you and me, in order to leave the whole place for Christ. It is the measure of Christ that God is after, not to cut in between the good and bad in us, but to cut in between what is Christ, and what is ourselves. That is what the Lord is doing. He is after increasing Christ, and in order to do that He has to displace self, the old creation. It is all the measure of Christ in this realm. The realm of God is not going to be refined self, reformed self, or any kind of patching up of self. It is going to be *none* of self, and *all* of Christ.

That is God's standard. That standard has been fixed in the Cross of the Lord Jesus before God commenced. God is working to a fixed standard. He has applied the rule from the beginning, and He is working to bring us to that measure. The measure is *none* of self and *all* of Christ. The new creation is that of all things

of God, and the activity of the Lord in our lives is simply to get rid of us as to the old creation, and to bring us in full measure into the new creation, which is Christ.

I want that we should be taken hold of by clear, precise, definite truth in Christ, and that, if the Lord will, this shall be fixed upon us in a new way, so as to grip us. We speak much about the Testimony of Jesus, and we say the Testimony of Jesus is our concern. Now what we have just seen brings us back again, perhaps in another way, to the defining of the Testimony of Jesus. What is that Testimony? It is simply the testimony to the fact of the utterness, the absoluteness of the Lord Jesus as in God's sight, that *He* is the centre and the circumference, *He* is the absolute sphere of the Divine interest and concern, that *has* made Him all and in all, and that outside of Christ in the consideration of God *nothing* is acceptable, usable, or a ground of blessing. God's entire concern by the Holy Spirit is to put Christ in, and to enlarge Christ until there is nothing but Christ.

This cuts a clear line between all things being of God and our coming in in some way in the realm of the things of God, either in life or service. This explains why it is that in such an absolute realm of Divine thought and intention it is altogether impossible for man to come or be brought in any way whatever.

What a True Believer Is.

It is this which first of all establishes the nature of the believer. What is the believer? In God's sight the believer is one in whom Christ is implanted, and God never looks at Christ in a limited way. He always looks at Him in an absolute way, and when Christ is implanted at the beginning of our life it is not as though God implanted Him in a fragmentary way. God's thought was that the end should be bound up with the beginning, and that Christ should be All and in all. That is why conversion is never an end in itself. It is only the first step toward the full end of God. It defines the nature of the believer in God's sight, that it is of Christ. You cannot make that. No decision cards can accomplish that. You can never make men and women Christians by inviting them to make certain decisions, to assent mentally to certain propositions of Christian doctrine, though perfectly true as to the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. There has to be something which constitutes in that individual, right at the very centre of the being, a living union

with Christ, and a deposit of Christ. Anything other than that is a false conversion. It is the depositing of Christ at the very centre of the being, with a view to His spreading to the very circumference, that is the nature of a believer.

What the True Church Is.

What is true as to the nature of the believer is true as to the nature of the Church. You are taken from Romans to Ephesians, and you find that the Church is the Body of Christ. It is Christ! It is the fulness of *Him*. The Church is Christ, and in God's thought the Church simply sets before the universe the fact that here is an expression of Christ in fulness. No one can join the Church. You can never invite people to the Church. That is so pathetically contrary to the Divine thought, this spiritual relationship to Christ to which we referred at the outset. The Church is *Christ*. Christ is planted right at the centre in order to fill all, and it is only in the measure in which Christ is there that the Church realises its Divine being and purpose. The Church is to be the registration and impact of the living, exalted, heavenly Christ in this universe.

What True Ministry Is.

What is true as to the believer, and as to the Church, is true of every other aspect of life in relation to God livingly in Christ. What is ministry? Ministry in the New Testament is not giving addresses, preaching sermons, taking classes, giving lessons and all or any of the other aspects of an organised work of Christian activity. Ministry, according to the New Testament and God's thought, is simply Christ being imparted, a ministration of Christ. That requires a living, spiritual relationship with Him. You cannot fulfil that ministry by writing out addresses and reading them. I do not say that Christ has never been ministered in that way, but you cannot *do* it that way of purpose. No! Ministry is simply the measure of Christ that is being passed on. It is ministering Christ. That has to be vital, that has to be living. There is something more than words in that. It means that through ministry those ministered to receive an accession, an increase of Christ; not an increase of doctrinal intelligence, but an increase of Christ. And as for the minister behind the ministry, what makes you a minister? It is just the measure of Christ, just in so far as Christ fills

you, dominates you, governs you, just in that measure you are a minister of Christ.

You see the pathetic hopelessness of trying to propagate anything by organised means and methods which really is all of God. It simply has to *grow*, it simply has to *be*. Ah, but when *it is* so it is mighty, it is indestructible, it is incorruptible. Nothing can stand in the way of Christ. It is that which rouses hell and the energies of the Devil. He does not mind all the other doctrine, work, profession. That may often serve his ends as a great deception, misrepresentation, but bring Christ in, bring Christ through, realise Christ, and then you meet every force in this universe which is antagonistic to Christ.

The Unveiling of Christ.

The new Testament is occupied entirely with the unveiling of Jesus Christ to the believer, in the Church, and through the Church to the universe. The word "apocalypse" is a very interesting word in the New Testament. We bind it up with the Book of the Revelation and call that the Apocalypse, the unveiling of Jesus Christ. But you will find that the same word is used as to believers. The Lord Jesus was apocalysed in Paul: "It pleased God.....to apocalyse his Son in me" (Gal. i. 15-16). Christ has His apocalypse in the Church. He is revealed in it. Christ has His apocalypse through the Church unto principalities and powers. Then Christ will have His apocalypse to the whole universe later on. The New Testament is occupied through and through with this unveiling of Jesus Christ.

Without venturing to proceed along that line we suggest to you that every letter in the New Testament embodies some aspect of the revelation of Christ, as set over against the old creation.

ROMANS. The revelation of the Lord Jesus in resurrection! The primary factor in the letter to the Romans is resurrection life in Christ. Through universal death, sin, judgment, and the curse, at last you come on to resurrection ground, and then everything which is of God begins. It is Christ in the power of His resurrection.

I CORINTHIANS! Christ in the Spirit, as over against believers in the flesh; or, more exactly, in the soul. The whole trouble throughout the first letter to the Corinthians, the trouble which you find indicated in the first chapters, is in connection with believers living in the realm of "nature," the word there being "soul."

Recall all that follows in that letter. *Believers*—not unbelievers—coming into, or seeking to come into, the realm of Divine things with their own natural equipment, intellect, emotion, will, and a terrible mess consequently. Therefore the emphasis is: "Now the natural man (the soul 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, but he that is spiritual....." (1 Cor. ii. 14). That strikes a note of the "all things" of God. Therefore, in order that the Lord's Name should not be dishonoured, and His glory taken away by another, which is the flesh—"I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 2). "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24). The same Spirit is at work to bring Christ spiritually into the full place, to set aside this merely soulish kind of Christianity. Not that the soul itself has to be set aside, but the merely soulish Christianity. Many people think that because soulishness is wrong the soul is wrong. When soulishness is spoken of, we do not mean that the soul is wrong, and has therefore to die; we mean that the domination of the soul in things spiritual is all wrong. Christ has to be known in the Spirit, and to be lived in the Spirit, as against that old nature in the realm of spiritual things.

II CORINTHIANS! Here it is ministry. "We have this ministry" is the governing note. What ministry? ".....God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. iv. 6). We are pressed, pursued, perplexed, cast down, we had the sentence of death in ourselves! What is all that for? What else is this but the fire of affliction to apply the Cross, in order that everything should be of God; "that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves" (II Cor. iv. 7). It is all things out from God. We have this treasure in vessels of fragile clay, we are pressed, we are pursued, we are perplexed, we are cast down! Yes, but it is all to this one end, "that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not of ourselves." It is the undoing of man by nature, in his strength, in order that the Divine glory in the face of Jesus Christ might be shown forth.

You will find that every letter is occupied with the presentation of Christ in some way,

over against the old creation, and the object is to bring Christ into His full place, because it is that that matters, that is all important.

I feel that we should recognise the necessity for real exercise of heart in this matter, that everything for us in the future should be valued according to God's scale of values, that is, how much it represents Christ. You cannot accept me in the things of God on any other ground whatever save of how much of Christ comes to you through me. You cannot accept me for the volume of words and ideas, the number of messages given, and how much truth comes to you through me, or any other thing, save how much of Christ is ministered to your spiritual life. That thrusts back upon the Lord, and makes ministry not professional, but a matter of my knowing the Lord for your sakes, living on the Lord for your sakes. That applies to all who in any way minister. It is not the wonderful arrangement of messages, of truth, or anything like that, but just the measure in which Christ is being ministered. That is the standard. An assembly must be estimated according to that standard, not because of any other thing save the measure of Christ that is represented there. If we talk about a fellowship, it will not be simply because we come together and have good relationships, but it will be fellowship in Christ, which means that by that fellowship Christ is ministered to one another, so that we have an increase of Christ. Do you see the principle? It spreads itself

over everything that has to do with God. It is the measure of Christ, and anything that is not Christ is not reckoned in at all by God. "..... henceforth know we no man after the flesh....." That means that we can only know one another in Christ in so far as there is Christ in each other. I cannot go on with you, and you cannot go on with me, only in the measure in which Christ is met. Christ is the mutual ground of our relationship, our fellowship.

I see the appalling state of things today amongst the Lord's people everywhere; death, weakness, limitation, defeat, failure, inability to stand up, to go on; and, without being critical, sensorious or judging, you have to come to the conclusion as you speak with so many, that the measure of Christ is pathetically small. Sometimes when you speak about the Lord to people, who have borne the name of Christian for many years, they gape at you as though you were talking a strange language.

Let us ask the Lord that, so far as we are concerned, there may be an increase of Christ in every way. Let us seek grace for any fiery furnace in the light of the explanation, that it is neither what is of Christ that is being tested in us, nor any good within ourselves, but that what is not Christ should disappear, that it should be Christ, only Christ. At last this universe will know nothing but Christ. He will fill all things, and that will be a great day! May He be fully formed in us.

"ONE day about four years ago he was talking of an experience he had on a day of prayer that was being observed for India. He was speaking intimately to intimate friends. He said, 'On the day of prayer God gave me a new experience. I seemed to be away above our conflict here in the Punjab and I saw God's great battle in all India, and then away out beyond in China, Japan, and Africa. I saw how we had been thinking in narrow circles of our own countries and in our own denominations, and how God was now rapidly joining force to force and line to line, and all was beginning to be one great struggle. That to me means the great triumph of Christ. We do not dare any longer to fight without the consciousness of this great world battle in which we are engaged. We must exercise the greatest care to be utterly obedient to Him Who sees all the battlefield all the time. It is only He Who can put each man in the place where his life can count for the most.'"

—From 'Praying Hyde.'

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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The Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus

(Continued.) No. 4

READING. Phil. iii. 1-7.

"FINALLY, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord....." On the face of it, it looks as though the Apostle was going to close his letter at that point, but we find that he goes on for some considerable time afterward. The word "finally" does not necessarily mean conclusion. It is a word which is translated in various ways in the New Testament, and can just as readily be rendered "henceforth" or "for the rest." Here it seems clearly to indicate that Paul is making a new start upon some other things, bringing something more into view, and is saying, For the rest, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.

".....To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not irksome, but for you it is safe." We are not told what it was that was being referred to by the Apostle, when he writes of "the same things." Some have thought there to have been an earlier letter which has been lost. Others have seen in the words a reference to Paul's own talks with them, while in their midst. Others, again, consider the words to imply a repetition of this exhortation to rejoice in the Lord; and certainly Paul did not find that irksome, whilst as certainly for them it would be very safe. It is always safe to rejoice in the Lord! But we do not know definitely to what he was referring, but we can enter quite well into the spirit of what he writes.

This letter is simply the letter of a heart overflowing with the Lord Jesus, and, when that is so, "finally" may be said many times, but you never really conclude there. The whole spirit of the letter is just that; that being full of Christ you must speak, you must give out what is inside. That is the best kind of preaching; but be sure it is the fulness of Christ that makes you go on.

There comes in, at this point, the striking of a fresh note. At one point in the letter at least, there seems to creep into the sky a black cloud, the dark cloud of a painful recollection, and it is at this point that you meet that cloud.

"Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision....." That is indeed a dark cloud of painful recollection. It is just something held over from the great controversy which came to its climax in Galatia, the great battle with the Judaisers, who were seeking by every means, mainly foul, to seduce the believers from Christ in clearness and in fulness, and to bring them back again into the bondage of a set, traditional, religious system.

Very few of the assemblies of the Lord's people which came into being through the ministry of the Apostle Paul escaped the work of those Judaisers, and evidently this fair work at Philippi had also been attacked; and, although now the full force of the blaze of conflict has spent itself, and Paul's Galatian letter has broken the stream in the main, this reference is like the rumblings of the departing storm. Still, however, there is the necessity for keeping the Lord's children alive to the fact that this evil thing is not yet altogether dead, and that still there are perils, and still they need to be warned. No stronger language could be used than the Apostle uses of the Judaisers here. He calls them "the dogs." It is a strong word for Jews, because the Jews had always called the Gentiles dogs. What was specially in the Apostle's mind we do not know. We know that the term "the dogs" was usually employed to imply uncleanness. In the book of the Revelation we read that the dogs will be kept outside of the city; they are the unclean things, the scavengers. Whether the Apostle was using the term in this sense, and if so, was referring to the spiritual rather than the moral uncleanness of these Judaisers, we cannot tell. It may be that, because they had dogged his heels wherever he had gone, and yelped at him, and sought to destroy his work, he so termed them.

"...beware of the evil workers..." Literally not workers, but workmen, men who are not only doing works of an evil kind, but men whose business it is to do them. "Workers" is a more or less general term, and does not

imply that that is their principal vocation in life. But when you say more precisely, as in the Greek, "evil workmen" you are referring to men whose one business in life is to do this thing. And the Judaisers had made it their business to destroy the work of the Apostle, and to destroy the work of these believers.

".....beware of the concision; for we are the circumcision....." Here is a contrast. These Judaisers were going about saying, Unless ye be circumcised ye cannot be saved, making circumcision essential to salvation. This, however, was not exactly the point, but what they were doing was to go about with a view to making these marks the marks of a tradition in the flesh of believers, merely in order to have so many people who could be numbered as having been circumcised. Paul speaks of them in the Galatian letter as wanting "to glory in your flesh." That is to say:—See how many converts we have made, and they all bear the mark of their conversion in circumcision! Paul says that is simply concision, the making of a mark, a cutting, an external sign; and he puts over against that "the circumcision." The more outward mark is not circumcision. That is what Paul is saying. Circumcision is an inward thing, a spiritual thing, a deeper thing than a mere outward form. He then immediately goes on to give three marks of true circumcision.

Spiritual Worship

"We are the 'circumcision,'" as differing from the mere concision, outward marks, who "worship by the Spirit." The first mark of true circumcision is "worship by the Spirit of God." That will take us back immediately to John iv where the Lord Jesus, indicating the Samaritan Temple in Mount Gerizim and then the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, said:—"The hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father . . . the true worshippers shall worship the Father *in spirit* and in truth . . . God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth." You note a change of dispensation from the merely outward, the merely traditional, the Jewish system, from a religious order which is connected with external forms and rites, to a dispensation in which everything is in the Spirit. And the first thing in this dispensation is spiritual worship. What is spiritual worship? What is it to worship the Father in spirit and in truth? Worship quite clearly implies that

God has the central, and the supreme, and the exclusive place in a life. But that has to become a thing which is inward by the Holy Ghost. It is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, putting God into His supreme place at the centre of our being, and that is worshipping God in *spirit* and in truth. That is a mark of true circumcision, that now right at the very centre of our being, by the Holy Ghost, God is enthroned in supremacy.

That is not exaggerating the position, because all that follows in this third chapter is simply a bearing out of that. The true circumcision is marked, firstly, by worshipping God, or worshipping by the Spirit of God. That is different from the formal worship of the Temple of the Jews, the outward service, all that elaborate ritual and order of the old dispensation. Now everything has become inward by the Holy Spirit, and the first thing out of which all else arises is found in God being in His place at the centre of our being by the Holy Ghost, and everything in our lives going out to God, all for God. Taking the illustration of the old Jewish system, we note how God had a mark upon everything. Everything that a Jew possessed had the mark of God put upon it. If he had a crop of corn, the first ripe handful was marked for God. It said: All this harvest is God's, and you have to hold and use all the rest for God's glory, and indicate that you do so by bringing your first handful to God, and saying: This is but a tithe, a firstfruits; it is a testimony that I hold all the rest for God. If a Jew had a family, the firstborn son was marked as God's. But the firstborn was not an isolated unit. He represented all the rest of the family, and all the rest of the family, and of the family life, was gathered into the firstborn. It does not matter where you look in the whole life. God put His mark upon it, and claimed it, and demanded first place.

Now the outward order has passed, and the new meaning has been established in a new dispensation, and God has come into the first place in everything, so that everything in life has to be held in relation to God. That is worshipping God by the Spirit.

Do you see the relationship between this and the testimony of baptism? You only have to turn over to the Colossian letter, chapter ii, and verse 12, and you will find a very definite reference to circumcision as being related to baptism. The circumcision of Christ, "the putting away of the whole body of the flesh

in the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism." So that baptism is the outward testimony in this dispensation to the fact that all that relates to the self life has been put away, and that now everything in life has become related to God, is to be held for God, God having primary place. The first mark, then, of the circumcision which is spiritual, is worship by the Spirit of God.

Glorying in Christ

It is a very sad thing to see how many come to this testimony of baptism, and in all earnestness assent to the challenge of it, that now it is "no longer I but Christ," and at the time are rejoicing and glorying in Christ, but afterwards are found in that position which implies that they have taken everything back from Christ, and all is for self again. May that not be true of us. Circumcision in its spiritual meaning and value means that Christ is the object of our glorying.

No Confidence in the Flesh

" . . . have no confidence in the flesh . . . "

There is no need to enlarge upon that at the moment. All we need to do is to see how Paul deals with that matter. He follows that clause immediately with an explanation of what he means, as having been already demonstrated in his own history: "Though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh: if any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more." What is it to have confidence in the flesh? It means to lay store by these things which follow, or by that which is implied or represented by them. "Circumcised the eighth day . . ." That was a mark of the true Jew. It was the *eighth* day. Circumcision was performed in Egypt amongst the Egyptians, and was also practised amongst the Ishmaelites. But neither the Egyptians nor the Ishmaelites circumcised on the eighth day. The Ishmaelites left it to the thirteenth day, and the Egyptians had another day. But amongst the Jews it was the eighth day.

For us there is a spiritual significance about that. We see that there was a Divine thought in the eighth day, and that if the putting away of the whole body of the flesh is related to the grave, then resurrection unto newness of life, which is unto Christ, is a matter of the eighth day, "eight" being the number of resurrection. Paul is saying that being circumcised the eighth day marked him out as a true Jew; not

an Ishmaelite, not an Egyptian, and not a proselyte, but a true Jew, something of which Jews who had that privilege boasted.

" of the stock of Israel" The Edomites were through Isaac, through Esau. Ishmael was also from Abraham. But these were not true Israelites; for they were not in the covenant. Paul is saying "of the *stock* of Israel," that is, within the covenant, claiming and possessing all the covenant privileges.

" of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews." Of pure Hebrew parentage. To the Jew these were the great things, the advantages, the privileges of birth. To these he adds some of the advantages of being a Pharisee, and occupying a position of influence, because of his preeminent zeal. All this was to his natural advantage. If he had liked to use it, as he did once, it would have carried him a long way, it would have meant a high position, a great influence. It was a basis upon which, standing and working, he would have been carried a long way in this world. Now he calls that "confidence in the flesh." In a word, this means not to rely on any natural advantages, whether inherited or acquired; not to work on the ground of anything which we have or can be of ourselves; not to use our own strength, our own wisdom, our own wit, our own resources to get on, to make our way, to get a place. That is all confidence in the flesh, and true circumcision rules all that out; rules out reputation, ambition and all natural resources, and brings to a place where Christ alone is our resource for everything. Paul's own life is a wonderful commentary upon this. Naturally he lost influence, position, reputation; naturally he lost everything by this spiritual circumcision. But what a gain it has been! What an influence! What a reputation! What an achievement! It is so supremely superior to anything of nature, or that nature could have accomplished. It was not for one moment the result of any natural resource. It was Christ. And so the whole of this chapter goes on to talk of the supereminence of the knowledge of Christ. That is what follows.

Do you say that it is all very well for us to speak about what true spiritual circumcision means, or, in other words, what the Cross requires? I am quite sure that sometimes the repetition of these things is irksome, when stress is laid so much upon the Cross as a means of circumcision, and that all that is of nature must be set aside, all that is of this world must

go, and how we must come to the place where nothing that is personal must influence or be resorted to, that the Cross cuts off our natural life absolutely: Well, if that emphasis is repeated frequently it may become an awful barren kind of doctrine.

But take these things which Paul put at one time on the credit page of his life book. These were the big things that counted. And then to lose those things while he was in that natural realm would have been to lose everything. The day came when Paul scratched out at the top of that page the word "credit" with reference to his natural inheritance and attainments and put "credit" on the other side, and under the word "credit" on the other side he put another list of things; not this time, "Circumcised the

eighth day, of the stock of Israel," and all the rest but, "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," and all that that meant. That was the credit. Now which was superior? The going of the one made room for the other, and there is no comparison between these two. If the Cross stands between, and all that is of nature is smitten—the true circumcision cuts all that off—what comes in? All this other, all that Christ is. Note all that, Paul says to us. That was my life! All that was my glory once! That was everything to me! But now it is as mere refuse, as that which you throw away and for which you have no use, because something else so supremely superior has come in—the knowledge of Christ. That is what the true circumcision leads to.

The City which hath Foundations

PART III.

WE have been seeking to bring into view that essential heavenliness of the Church, which is a basic and governing law of God's purpose for her. This we have seen to be a factor of tremendous importance in God's dealings with Jerusalem. The more we read and meditate upon the matter, the more we see that this lies behind Jerusalem's history. Jerusalem and Palestine present for us a solid block of evidence on this matter. When we pass our eye over the Old Testament, we see that Jerusalem's coming into position, her ascendancy or her revival, always related to those elements which speak of heavenliness, just as, on the contrary, her loss of place, of power, of glory, was due to earthly and worldly elements getting the upper hand.

Jerusalem reached her supreme crisis, when the Lord Jesus came into her midst. It was then that two things in an outstanding way marked the crisis of her history. The first, the heavenliness of His own Person and life, ministry and mission. The second, the earthliness of Judea's vision, interests, and associations. This contrast is one of the most outstanding elements of the Gospels. Never was Jerusalem's earthliness, earthboundness, more apparent, more conspicuous, than when the Lord was in her midst. He brought heaven in His own Person. He was the embodiment of everything

heavenly, and by reason of His presence the opposite state was dragged out into the light and made unmistakably clear.

The Heavenliness of Christ and His Own

As to the first of these two things, the heavenliness of His Person, life, ministry and mission, John's Gospel more than any other brings it into view. We know that the Gospel by John is mainly concerned with matters within the compass of Judaism, and we know that in that Gospel Jerusalem figures very largely, and in a special, intensive way. Against that fact we see in this Gospel the heavenliness of Christ, as that which represents Him more particularly than anything else. Then, so far as His own people are concerned, that Gospel makes the spiritual life of the believer a heavenly thing at every point. That is to say, the spiritual life of the believer is seen there to have its beginning in heaven; he is born anew, or from above. That life is seen to be sustained from heaven. All the relationships of that life are seen to be heavenly. In that Gospel the Lord takes pains to woo His own from this world, and allows the shadow, if it must be so termed, of His going, to fall very heavily upon them, until their hearts are much troubled and distressed by what He says about His leaving them and going to the Father within a little while. All this is with the purpose of showing, firstly, that

their life is to be a heavenly life, their hope a heavenly hope, not an earthly one—for their trouble of heart was largely due to disappointment as to their worldly expectations in relation to Himself—and He carries them away from the world, from the earth, and fastens their hope upon Himself in glory. That is to say, their's becomes a heavenly hope and not an earthly one. Their service is also set forth as a heavenly service. "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John xx. 21), making their commission a heavenly one upon a heavenly basis, and settling it for all time that the nature of His own mission here was equally the nature of theirs, a heavenly mission.

We know how all that is gathered up into one heart cry in chapter xvii., and how repeatedly in that prayer the statements are positively made concerning both Himself and them, that they are not of this world. His prayer moreover was that they should be kept, while in the world, from the world, and from the Evil One, as the one who governs the evil world. The heavenliness of Christ and His own is brought very clearly into view right in the midst of Judaism at its official headquarters in Jerusalem, and it was on that ground that the earthly Jerusalem reached its supreme crisis.

The Earthboundness of Judaism

As to the second thing, that is, the earthboundness of Judaism in all its aspects, there is no doubt that this was the background and the cause of its rejection of Christ, and John's Gospel brings that also very clearly before us. That earthboundness of theirs, the grip of historic tradition upon their minds, resulted in spiritual blindness to all that was heavenly. This became manifest, as blindness always is manifested, in various ways. The Gospel by John gives us a clear unveiling of the out-working of that spiritual blindness in jealousy, envy, prejudice, hatred, smallness and pettiness, suspicion, passion. These all run riot in the Gospel by John, and the Jews are seen in a very bad light there. And when you reflect upon that in connection with this dominating feature, the heavenliness of everything in relation to Christ, you see how utterly blind they were to all that was really heavenly. That blindness working out in all these ways led to their full and final rejection of Him as a nation, and Jerusalem was the centre, and the seat, and the focal point of that intensified religious earthliness in its out-working.

It may be well for us to remind ourselves at this point, that we are having to do with the Church. You and I are supremely interested in the Church. Our great concern is the Church, which is His Body. And that being so, you and I are very deeply exercised, or should be, to know the nature of the Church, what it is that spiritually constitutes that true Church. If these things are true about the earthly Jerusalem, and stand at length in such vivid contrast to the heavenly Christ and the heavenly Church, they lead us to see quite clearly that jealousy, envy, prejudice, pettiness, suspicion, passion, hatred, and such like things, are marks of spiritual blindness. At very best they are marks of spiritual shortsightedness. That means, on the contrary, that spiritual vision and spiritual revelation should always work out to the absence of such things as jealousy, and envy, and suspicion, and prejudice, and the rest. It is a contradiction to say that we have heavenly light, revelation, that the heavenly Christ has broken upon our hearts, and to have any of these things. That in which they are found is not the heavenly Church.

The state to which we have just referred, obtaining in the earthly Jerusalem in the days of Christ, has been the state of that Jerusalem and of Judaism ever since, and is their state today. When Christ rose from the dead two things can be noted: (1) He never again appeared to Judaism nor to official Jerusalem; (2) He took the Church away from the earth spiritually, and centred it in Himself in heaven. But then history began to develop upon two plains, and along two lines, a true and a false. Firstly, the Church as a spiritual and heavenly thing, developing under the direct government and control of the heavenly Holy Spirit; that is, its entire management became a thing as out from heaven. Secondly, a false expression of Christianity as an earthly and man-governed system. Along these two lines history moved after the resurrection of Christ. Very soon in the Apostolic age this point of departure could be recognised.

The Jerusalem beneath has from very early in this dispensation become the seat of the most intensified expression of this false idea, this false conception of the Church. Palestine itself has since Christ's day seen the greatest outrages on the heavenly conception of the Church. We concluded our last section of this meditation with a citation from the history of Islam's conquest of Christianity, with this

focal point in Palestine, and we saw then how that Islam triumphed over Christianity because of the corruption of Christianity, evidenced by these very things of which we have spoken, divisions, warrings, jealousies, factions amongst Christians. And Islam as a solid body, presenting a solid front, knowing nothing of such factions and divisions, was able to overwhelm that divided thing, that schismatic thing, that internally disintegrated thing; and that overwhelming had its seat in this very country, around this very city of which we are speaking. That in itself is a very forceful lesson; that the subjugation of the earthly Jerusalem, being the result of weakness produced by spiritual division, points to the absolute necessity for the Church's oneness in spirit as the heavenly Jerusalem, if she is really to rise to her place of universal supremacy. We know how very much is connected in the New Testament with that truth. Oh, if it is true that the Lord Jesus was moving out of this world, and taking His Church spiritually with Him, recognising that Jerusalem's undoing was coming because of these unhappy and unholy conditions, how essential it was that He should pray, "that they may all be one" (John xvii. 21). Error, whether it be Islam or any other error, ancient or modern, known or something quite new, will always gain its advantage by the spiritual weakness produced by division amongst the Lord's people. Such things are only kept at bay as the people of God stand together in spiritual oneness.

We said earlier that the history of Jerusalem presents to us a solid block of evidence, that the governing law of God's Jerusalem is heavenliness, and heavenliness is most certainly spiritual oneness, and spiritual oneness is heavenliness. To put that in another way, immediately you and I come down to earthly considerations, earthly levels of things, our oneness is bound to be assailed, to be broken, and therefore God's own thought for His people is set on one side.

Not only is this seen so clearly in the triumph of Islam over Christianity, but one other page of history affords very strong evidence and very clear illustration. We refer to the history of the Crusades. Lasting a hundred years, they are really the story of one of the most disgraceful happenings in the history of Christianity, destined, of course, to fail, as indeed they did. As children we were primed with the heroics and the romance of the Crusades, of Richard Cœur de

Lion, and such like. But since we have grown up, we have read the story for ourselves, and all our childish glamour has disappeared, and the more we come to understand things from God's standpoint, the more we blush with shame as we look back upon that page in the history of Christianity, when mighty armies were gathered and lives slaughtered wholesale, desolation and carnage brought about in the name of the Church, to try to re-capture Palestine for Christianity. No! That is not the heavenly way of doing things. Our warfare is *not with flesh and blood*, and the weapons of our warfare are *not carnal* but spiritual. "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight....." (John xviii. 36). These are bed-rock laws of the heavenly Jerusalem. Palestine today is a nauseating spectacle. Every place connected in any special way with Christ's earthly life is marked by something which is more than a tragic misrepresentation of Christianity, a shameful misrepresentation is nearer the truth, something called a Church in which rivalries run so high that even soldiers have to be kept, either on the premises or in the vicinity, for safety's sake amongst the Christians.

I expect many of you have been reading Morton's book, *In the steps of the Master*. I will give you one or two fragments from it, to illustrate what I mean: He is speaking here of his visit to Jerusalem, to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. This is what he says:—

"The church gives one an overwhelming impression of darkness and decay. There were passages so dark that I had to strike matches to find my way. And the decay everywhere of stone, of wood, and of iron was fantastic. I saw pictures that were rotting on their canvases, and I even saw canvasses still framed, that were bleached white: the last fragments of paint had peeled off, but they were still in position. There were ominous cracks and fissures in stone and marble. I thought how odd it is that extreme devotion can have exactly the same effect as extreme neglect. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre wears its air of shabby decay for the simple reason that the re-hanging of a picture, the repair of a stone, and even the mending of a window, assume such gigantic importance in the eyes of the communities, that they provoke a situation capable of indefinite postponement.Art and vulgarity stand side by side. A priceless chalice, the gift of an emperor, stands next to something tawdry and tinsely, that

might have been pulled from a Christmas tree. And hundreds of ikons, glimmering in old gold, receive candle drippings on the stiff Byzantine figures of saint and king.

"The Greek monks swing their censers towards the blaze of candle-light, and the blue clouds of their incense spurt out to hang about the ikons and the gilded screens. The worshippers, kneeling on the marble floors, seem to be prostrate before a series of exotic jewellers' shops.....

"This was the hill of the Crucifixion : Calvary, the holiest place on earth. I looked round, hoping to be able to detect some sign of its former aspect, but that has been obliterated for ever beneath the suffocating trappings of piety. The chapel before which I was kneeling was the Chapel of the Raising of the Cross the chapel next to it was the Chapel of the Nailing to the Cross."

Turning to his visit to Bethlehem he speaks of his entering the Church of the Nativity, and of this he says :

"The church is built above a cave which was recognised as the birthplace of Jesus Christ.....

"Fifty-three silver lamps lighten the gloom of the underground cavern. It is a small cave about fourteen yards long and four yards wide. Its walls are covered with tapestry that reeks of stale incense. If you draw this tapestry aside, you see that the walls are the rough, smoke-blackened walls of a cave. Gold, silver, and tinsel ornaments gleam in the pale glow of the fifty-three lamps.....

"This church, like the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, suffers from divided ownership. It is in the hands of the Latins, the Greeks, and the Armenians.

"So jealous are the various churches of their rights, that even the sweeping of the dust is sometimes a dangerous task, and there is a column in which are three nails, one on which the Latins may hang a picture, one on which the Greeks may do so, and a neutral nail on which no sect may hang anything.

"In the floor there is a star, and round it a Latin inscription which says : 'Here Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary.' The removal of this star years ago led to a quarrel between France and Russia which blazed into the Crimean War."

My point is this, that that place which rejected the heavenly Christ has become the scene of the expression, the most intensive expression, of the false Church, the false conception of what that Church is. We have said that in Jerusalem the delusion of Christendom has its intense expression, but it is only an explanation of how far a failure to represent God's thought really can go. The degree may vary ; the principle remains the same. If man apart from the dominion of the Holy Spirit in any measure, however minute, intrudes into the things of God, be it in thought, intellect, reason or feeling, desire, emotion or will, determination, possession, the effect will be a proportionate measure of death, division, confusion and contradiction.

I have carefully written out that statement, so that it should be precisely presented. I am going to repeat it, because upon that everything hangs. The degree may vary ; the principle is the same. If man apart from the dominion of the Holy Spirit in any measure, however minute, intrudes into the things of God, the effect will be a proportionate measure of death, division, confusion and contradiction !

Therefore, man must go out as man : Christ, the Heavenly Man, must be the Son over God's House, must be the Head of the Church, and His Headship must be administered only by the Heavenly Holy Spirit. Herein, also, lies the necessity for the Cross as a constantly working and active reality by which that whole realm, and range, and tissue of carnal man is ruled out, and kept out. Herein then is the necessity for the fulness of the Holy Spirit, if the Church is to come to that place seen for her, as coming down from out of heaven, to be the centre of God's universe, God's government of this universe.

The next special Monthly Gatherings at Honor Oak will—God willing—be on the 5th and 6th October.

The next conferences at Kilcreggan, Scotland, will—God willing—be on September 14th to 16th and September 21st to 23rd.

The Essential Newness of the New Creation

No. 3

The Centre and Sphere of the New Creation in Practice

READING: 11 Cor. v. 14-18; Romans vi. 4.

THE sum of everything in the new creation is in Christ, or, to put that in another way, it is outside of man himself. It is apart from man, and it always will be. Although Christ, the sum of the new creation, may be in us, that new creation will remain in Christ, and we are only in it by reason of our union with Him. He becomes the fulness of everything *in us*, but *the practical outworking of that fulness will ever, and always, be purely and solely on a basis of faith.*

If the thing could be said at any time to have its origin in us, then faith would be dismissed. If we had it in ourselves, if it were our constitution, faith would be dispensed with. That would result in a repetition of *us*. Man at the beginning, under the deluding, blinding, misleading activity of the Devil, sought to have things in himself rather than as solely in God, to be enjoyed by faith and obedience. He sought to have it in himself. Since that time unregenerate man has the idea that he has it in himself, that it is *hi him* to be and to do.

The very heart of the deception, as of the Deceiver, is pride. Sometimes we use another word, which is not a scriptural word itself, but which has a little keener edge on it than pride. It is the word "conceit," which simply means having it in yourself, with the seat of it in you. That is pride. Satan sought to have it in himself, and then prompted man to seek to have it in himself. The delusion of man is that he thinks he has it in himself, and it takes a great deal of Divine activity to get that idea out of man's mind. The trouble, not merely with the unregenerate but with the Lord's people, is the getting rid of that thing which is so deeply seated and rooted in the being of man, the idea that he can make a contribution out of himself toward the realisation of his Divine destiny.

You and I are troubled with that original sin, the idea that somehow we can provide

something out from ourselves which will contribute toward Divine ends. All our struggles, all our difficulties, all our discouragements, all our wretched morbidness, is consequent upon that; that we have not come fully and finally as a settled thing, beyond any more question, discussion or hope, to know that we cannot provide one iota out from ourselves toward God's end. We are all the time—perhaps not consciously or deliberately—living on that old basis. What is our wretched introspection? It is eyes turned in in the endeavour to find something worth while in ourselves, something that can help God. That is all it is. How many people are cursed with that thing! And that is only one aspect of the great trouble.

What we are saying is this, that in the new creation *all things* are out from God. To put that the other way is to say that *nothing* is out from ourselves. All things are stored up and centred in Christ, and they always will be. You and I will never be able to be independent of Christ in any way whatsoever. That means that the thing will never be in us as in ourselves. We have it in Christ, and its practical outworking is only along the line of faith in the Lord Jesus. Man in himself, even as a child of God, will always be totally at a discount in the things of God. That is a tremendous lesson to learn. Let us repeat that. Man in himself, even as a child of God, even as one who has known the Lord for a lifetime, and has come into a very real wealthy knowledge and experience of the Lord, still *in himself* will be totally at a discount in the things of God. That is, he will know the more he goes on that his dependence is entirely and utterly upon another, upon a spring, a source, a fountain which is not in himself, not in his own constitution. Though it may be centred in his spirit as to location, it is not in his own being as a part of him. He will always be passing through new experiences in which he realises how utterly

impossible it is for him to face up to the situation of himself and meet the demand.

That is quite elementary. It lies right at the beginning of things, though, blessed be God, it brings us face to face with the other side. That may perhaps sound discouraging, disappointing, but we ought to be getting to the place to which Paul came, when he came to rejoice in that fact. "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (II Cor. xii. 9). We have all things in Christ, and those "all things" in Christ become an inward spring for us to draw upon.

Before we pass from that, let us notice that this fact reveals to us what the continual difficulty will be. The difficulty which we shall be meeting all along the way will be ourselves. We shall find that the main obstacle, the main enemy to our fulness in Christ, to all that the new creation means, will be ourselves in some way. It will either be our self-occupation—which is but a form of trying to be something fine, something in ourselves which will bring satisfaction to God—or it will be our self-effort in service. It will be this natural life of ours cropping up in some direction or another, and as it crops up it will cut clean in between us and the "all things" which are of God, and we shall find that it is ourself which brings us up short, which creates the arrest. The Lord in effect, and in mighty effect, will be saying: I cannot go on with *you*, *you* must get out of the way!

Is not that the explanation of so many of our experiences in the Lord's dealings with us? They are with a view to getting our self-life out of the way. We loom so much upon our own horizon. We are so big in our own thoughts. Not necessarily in that wrong way in which we think a great deal of ourselves, though it may be that the thinking so badly of ourselves is another form of thinking of ourselves very largely. We may be so occupied with our terribly worthless self that Christ is blotted out altogether. Some people are never at an end of telling you how bad they are, how worthless they are, drawing out a tale of their woe about themselves, and that obscures Christ, and does not honour God. We should have settled that. We shall ever know it. We shall know it more and more, but there ought to be running parallel with that an appreciation of what He is which takes the sting out of that, which takes the power out of that which would break us,

crush us, and make us so that God cannot be glorified in us.

The new creation is in Christ. It is not in you, and not in me, and never will be. All that it will mean in time, and in eternity will be through our spiritual union with Christ. All God's fulness is in Christ. We shall receive all that fulness, and enjoy it in a practical out-working. But this, while we are yet here in time, will ever be by faith's union. In eternity, where the reception of that fulness will be unhindered, the work of faith, though not its fruit, will have passed. But we shall never be absorbed in Christ in the sense that we become so many Christs. It will still be Himself as distinct Who is to be glorified. We shall never be glorifying ourselves, neither shall we be glorified by others as though we were Christ. Christ is not some great widespread essence, which is going to become the constitution of a great multitude, so that that multitude becomes a Christ in essence. It will ever be true that Christ remains apart in His Person, though manifested in His glory and in His excellence in the saints, and we shall still therefore be worshipping Him as objective and distinct in His own Person from ourselves.

Perhaps that hardly needs saying. But it is very important that we should recognise that *for ever* God has bound up everything with His Son, and that nothing will ever be had or enjoyed apart from Christ, while for this present life that is only by faith in the Lord Jesus. The object of this present emphasis is to seek, as the Lord will enable, that there shall be an emancipation from ourselves; for *that* occupation, *that* consideration, is always taking from His glory. Let us ask the Lord to cut us really free from ourselves by an unveiling and presentation of His Son to us, as the sum total of all that ever God desires and wills.

The Active Feature of the New Creation— the Spirit of Life

You notice that is where Romans viii opens up. In that chapter we are now represented as being in Christ, "they that are in Christ Jesus," and it is said that in Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life has made free from the law of sin and death. The active feature, then, of the new creation is the Spirit of life. Everything is bound up with that. The final issue of God's purpose in us is that we should be *seated* in that Spirit of life in Christ, imparted to us through faith. As to the nature which is

going to be developed in us, the Christ nature : As to the Testimony which is going to be manifested through us. Everything is seated in that life, that Spirit of life. All the power and all the nature of Christ in glory as the fulness of God is there as the active, energetic principle of the new creation.

Let us illustrate that in a familiar way. The first two witnesses in the history of this present world were Abel and Enoch. There is a wonderful significance in those two names being brought together at the beginning of Hebrews xi.

Abel! Abel introduced the whole Testimony in its principle. Blood was brought into view through Abel, and the shedding of that blood, as we have come since to understand by the teaching of God's Word, speaks of a life which is an incorruptible life, which cannot be corrupted, which has no seed of corruption in it, and is therefore a life which is indestructible.

Abel offered a sacrifice through shedding of blood, and instantly God bore witness to his offering that he was righteous. How did Abel become aware of righteousness not his own? By reason of his spiritual faith union with a Blood in which there was no corruption. It was that Blood which we know to be the symbol of Divine life as it is in the Lord Jesus. It was that Blood, that life, which, being incorruptible, became the basis of his faith, and therefore through faith in that incorruptible Blood, he had witness borne that he was righteous.

The second aspect is manifested in Abel, in that he was therefore deathless through faith in that Blood. It was that very thing which the Devil discerned, namely, that here was the raising up in this first man of a testimony to something which cannot be corrupted, and cannot therefore be destroyed. Satan came out against Abel to try to contradict that testimony of the incorruptible and indestructible, and slew Abel; but the Word says that through his faith "he being dead yet speaketh." We know that he is gathered up in that large company of Hebrews xi: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises . . . God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect (complete)" (Hebrews xi. 13, 40). This means, quite clearly—if logic means anything—that they are coming into our fulness through their faith.

What is the fulness which God has provided

for us in this dispensation? It is the fulness of Christ in the power of His resurrection as seated at God's right hand, and their faith brought them into that. Abel came in on the ground of the Blood, incorruptible, indestructible, and that is the basis of all Christ's fulness. It is the ground of the new creation in Christ Jesus.

Enoch! Immediately after that the writer of the letter to the Hebrews brings in Enoch. "Enoch was translated that he should not see death" (verse 5). There is that leap, that one bound from the beginning to the end of the Testimony. The Apostle Jude says: ". . . Enoch . . . the seventh from Adam." If you count up you will find that literally he was not the seventh from Adam. There may be one explanation of that way of putting things, inasmuch as the Hebrews counted inclusively, and not as we do. But there is a typical significance about that. "Seven" is the number of spiritual perfection, and undoubtedly Enoch is a type in the Old Testament, perhaps the type of perfect humanity. What happens to perfect humanity? It never goes to destruction and corruption! It goes to glory! It breaks the ordinary course of corrupted-humanity by way of death and the grave, and so Enoch was translated that he should not see death. From the beginning of the Testimony, which is in the power of an incorruptible and indestructible life, you immediately leap to the end of that thing in Enoch, and see what the ultimate result of that incorruptible and indestructible life will be. It will be a complete and final triumph over death in all its forms in a rapture.

Alive only unto God

Everything is centred in that Spirit of life, that new creation life. If we look within ourselves to find more good, we are going to look in vain. We shall never find anything in ourselves but corruption. Is that really settled with us? On both sides, the people who have some opinion of themselves had better settle it once and for all that there is nothing in them but corruption, and also those who have settled it, and yet are so occupied with their old man as though it were something really worth being occupied with. Put it where the Lord Jesus has put it, in the grave, and do not walk round it, turning it over, if peradventure you might find something worth while. Fix and fasten your faith in God's Son, and leave yourself alone for ever.

Only so will you find your emancipation. If Christ is in us, whatever we may be in ourselves, there is that which is incorruptible. Christ is incorruptible, and Christ is in us.

Now see God looking clean through us as in ourselves as though He never saw us, and seeing that deposit, His Son, and keeping His eye upon that. When we come to talk to Him about ourselves He says, I am not interested in that; I am interested in this! I am not concerned with that; this is what I am after! Come with Me, and let your eye be on this, and let us be occupied with this and its increase, and when you are brought into the fires remember always it is not that I am against you, but in order that I may bring this out more fully, and that I may make more of My Son in you! When you get into difficulties, and are conscious of the fact of your own helplessness, it is only to make you know how much He can be to you! When again you are feeling utterly empty, and there is a big demand which you are quite unable to meet, then remember that faith takes hold of Him in His fulness, and you will be able to meet the demand! It is all Christ in every way. That is glorifying Him. God is set upon glorifying His Son in us. We must become centred in Christ, wholly and utterly.

Do not try to crucify the old man piecemeal. It cannot be done. Taking him a bit at a time, and trying thus to get rid of the flesh is not the way. The Lord has taken the old man in his entirety, and dealt with him as a whole. We focus upon some special weakness, some special fault in ourselves, and are wanting *that* dealt with, and are going round *that*, to be saved from *that*. We are going the wrong way to work. The Lord says, The *whole* of that old creation *at once*, and Christ will be to us according to the measure in which we have accepted that injunction. The fulness of Christ will depend upon our acceptance of the fulness of His death to the old creation.

The incorruptible life, the Spirit of life in Christ, is the secret, the law, the foundation of all sanctification, of all holiness, of all conformity to the image of Christ. That is why it says that we should walk in newness of life; that is, an active going on in this new life, this Spirit of life. And as we go on, not in ourselves, not on ourselves, but on this life, we become conformed to the image of Christ, which is there in that Spirit of life.

Then there is a wonderful expression, a

growing expression of how incorruptible that life is, because that life gains ascendancy over corruption. Now we are touching something very precious. If only the Lord would just lay this in our hearts, that we might see it anew! We have said that what is incorruptible is indestructible. In other words, that in which there is no corruption can never know death, but must conquer death, must bring death into subjection.

Life for Spirit, Mind and Body

In every part of our being, spirit, mind and body, that incorruptible life can be energetic.

In our spirit it can be the mighty energy of God which lifts our spirits completely above all death conditions around. Would to God that His people believed that more, and took up their position upon that more definitely! Death is all around, and is a mighty working force in this universe. We may meet it at any moment. It may come to us, assail us, through numerous channels, by numerous means, and we know what it is to feel our spiritual life, our inner life with God, come under the hand of death, under the pall, the cloud, the damping suffocation of spiritual death.

Now this Spirit of life in Christ, Who is in us is there in order to lift us into a place above that working of death in our spirit, so that, while the death is not immediately destroyed in the sense that it is blotted out, it is destroyed in the New Testament meaning of the word, rendered ineffective, made void, so far as its domination is concerned. There is an ascendancy over it, and it is made subject.

What is true in the matter of our spirit can be true also in the matter of our minds. The quickening power of His Spirit of life can renew our minds. The New Testament says so: ".....the renewing of the mind....." The mind is something deeper than the brain, so that often when the brain may be at a discount, there can be such a quickening of intelligent apprehension of the Lord, that we are lifted above that death in the realm of the mind, and it is as though again the heavens were opened above us, and our minds have become energised anew in relation to the things of God. This operates wonderfully in times of weariness when the mind is heavy, and there is the consciousness of there being no mind at all. (I do not mean that we are out of our minds in the common acceptance of that word, but we have

no mind for things.) The Spirit of life, laid hold of by faith, will lift us in a wonderful way above that which would require in the natural realm, and along natural lines perhaps, a prolonged rest; and then there will not be the same result even after that. Perhaps you need a renewed mind to go on, to keep on. Well, Christ as the new creation life in you can quicken your mind, renew your mind, so that there may be a newness of the mind, a testimony to this triumph of the incorruptible life over all that which is working of corruption and death in the mind.

Blessed be God, this also applies to the body. Paul has quite a lot to say on this matter, as you know. It is true that the Spirit of life in Christ *can*, and *does*, subject the corruption, even of our mortal bodies, to Himself. We do not mean that He gets rid of the mortality, that here and now the change takes place from the mortal to immortality, or from the corruptible to the incorruptible order. We mean with all our heart that the life, which is Christ's life in us, can lift us above the death working in our bodies. Would to God that we laid hold of that more! The Lord would be more glorified along that line. "That the life whereby Jesus conquered death should be manifested in this *dying body*." There is no question that the body is dying. *It is* corruptible, and therefore *it is* destructible. But there is something here deposited within this mortal temple which is Christ, incorruptible and indestructible, to take ascendancy even over the death working in the mortal body. It is the new creation at work triumphantly over the old. This is our heritage in Christ.

Living by Faith

You see that everything is governed by faith appropriating the values of the new creation. It is not a doctrine, not a theory. It is a Divine energy, a life, a power, which is Christ by the Holy Spirit ministered to us, and the proper course of the new creation in your case and in mine is, that rather than that there should be an increase of death, a breaking down, and a failing, as we get older, there ought to be an increase of life and ascendancy. We are all conscious that we are getting older. We are all conscious that in the natural realm the human forces and abilities are abating, but we are not going to accept that as the governing law of our life. There should be an increase of this incorruptible nature of Christ as we get older, and therefore there ought to be a beautifying

and sweetening of our lives the older we get. Though it be true that our natural powers of endurance are weakening, and the nervous system is being called upon to carry a weight too much for it, and we are ageing; yet if Christ is having His way in us, there ought to be in the midst of these very conditions a testimony to the new creation, which does not break down, and does not wane, but is ever fresh right on to the end.

Freshness, newness of life! That life never gets tired. That life never runs low. No marks or signs of exhaustion are in that life. There are no fading lives where that life is. There is no falling fruit there. That life is in you and in me in Christ. Then what should the testimony be? It should be a testimony to freshness, continual freshness, a testimony to newness, that the things which are the most well known, most familiar, are still livingly precious with us, and never lose their freshness, beauty and glory. God forbid that we should spiritually grow old, and contradict the real nature of the new creation. God forbid that natural conditions in body, and in mind, and in the world, should ever become the dominant things in us, but that to us the uppermost thing should ever be that there is a Spirit of life regnant, triumphant, ever fresh.

The Lord bury this word in our hearts very deeply, and keep us living on this ground.

For particulars of all conferences, literature, etc., write—

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The Spiritual Background of the Word of God

(Continued.)

Hebrews v. 10 : " Named of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek."

VERSE 10 ends with the mention of Melchizedek. The apostle goes on to say that there is a very great deal that he would like to say about Melchizedek. It is impressive to note that the story of Melchizedek only occupies seven verses in the Old Testament, and then there is one subsequent brief reference to him a thousand years afterward, and that is all you have about him in the Old Testament. Later he occupies a large place here, and the apostle says that he could occupy a very much larger one, if only he himself had an open way to say all that he would like to say. " Of whom we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing." The difficulty is not always in the messenger himself, but is sometimes found in the want of that clearness, that openness and livingness on the part of those ministered to ; and that means that a good many things have to be held back. I trust that none of us will be in that state, that many difficult things should be held back because we are dull of hearing. " For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God ; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food....." Wherefore let us cease to speak of the first principles of Christ, and press on unto perfection ; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. I think for our purpose that is all that we need read at the moment.

Now first of all let us go back to the main theme of the Conference, and remind ourselves of that with which we have been occupied so far. Briefly it is this : We have been seeing, as revealed in the Word of God throughout, and as proved true in history, that there is a deep rooted antagonism between this world and God, and between God and this world, as also between what is of God and this world. That, moreover,

in the very nature of man now since the fall, there is that which is antagonistic to God and His things, and in God that which is antagonistic to that in man, and these two things to be incapable of reconciliation. This world therefore outside of Christ lies under God's judgment, and is spiritually a realm of death. For the present it is not God's method or intention to destroy this world, as He destroyed the former creation, and left it without form and void, and darkness covering the deep. For the present God's purpose and method is to take out of this world spiritually a people, in whose heart that basic antagonism has been destroyed, and in whose heart He has put something which is in fellowship with Himself, and is *not* antagonistic. Through this present day of grace, this dispensation of the Gospel, God is in all the nations taking out that people, spiritually taking them out ; separating them spiritually from this judged and doomed world. And so God has in every nation through His grace, in response to His Gospel, a people who are inwardly no longer at variance with Him, alienated from Him, in antagonism to Him, but in living fellowship with Him. That number is increasing, but a definite time limit is fixed for the accomplishment of that purpose, and the Day of Grace has its end clearly marked in the purpose of God. When that last hour of the dispensation is reached—and if we are not in the twelfth hour now, we are at the end of the eleventh, we are quite sure ; and some of us think that we are very near the end of the twelfth—then that Day will close, and out from the nations God will take by resurrection all those who are asleep in Jesus, and by translation of those who remain alive at the time, He will take those who are in spiritual fellowship with Him. Then the world will be closed down to its fiery judgment, and the Lord will cause this order of things to be destroyed. Peter uses very strong language about that. He says the very elements will be on fire with fervent heat ; all these things will be dissolved. Then God will make a new heaven and a new earth, as He has done before, and those who in this dispensation

have come into that living fellowship, and have suffered with Him, will come back with Christ to reign.

The Way out of a doomed World

Our point for now is the way out of this judged and condemned world, the world which is held unto judgment. We are in it by nature. No one here can dispute at least one thing that we have said, and that is the inward variance or antagonism of the human heart with God. You may try and put it in various ways. You may—some do—say it is not God with whom we are at variance, but the kind of Christians we have met who have turned us aside, and so on. But that to me is only an excuse; for the same attitude is taken toward anybody who is a Christian, without proof as to whether they are genuine or otherwise. The human heart is that, and there is distance from God inwardly, and I think it is very difficult to dispute it. We are aware of it. We know quite well that it represents a real work of God's grace to make it otherwise, so that we really do love God, and love all that belongs to God, and that becomes our very life, and our very interest.

Consider then the way out of our natural condition, and our way out of this doomed world, and realm of death. There is but one way out. The Lord Jesus came into this tomb of death. He entered into this state of things. He associated Himself with the race. And, although in Himself there was no sin, He voluntarily took upon Himself the sin of man, entered into the penalty of man's sin, received the judgment of God due to man upon Himself. We shall never know this side of heaven—but we shall know then and fill eternity with worship because we shall know—know and understand all the meaning of that judgment which fell upon the Lord Jesus in that death upon the Cross, which in character was so much more than that of a man being crucified and put to death for his deeds; when God turned from Him, and all hell was loosed upon Him; when in spirit and in soul, not alone in body, He was tormented, because He was there voluntarily accepting the full consequences of the world's sin under the judgment of God. He went down into that judgment and received the wages of sin which is death. His was not just a martyr's death; it was the wages of sin in the realm of His spirit that He knew. He who knew no sin was then made to be sin for us, made a curse for us. He tasted death for every man. Thus

when He died He died as a sinner. He died as you and as me. He died as, and in the place of, every other man and woman in this creation, under the judgment of God. He died so in order that you and I might not die in that way.

What He experienced in His soul in that terrible death is what is reserved for every other man and woman in this creation who does not accept that death by faith as the means of their own salvation. When He died, and accepted the full penalty, all the judgment of God, all the result of human sin was exhausted upon Him; there was not another drop in His cup. He drank that cup of the wrath of God dry, and there is no more wrath of God for Him henceforth.

Then, that whole order of creation being brought to an end, God is perfectly free and clear in raising Him from the dead; and God raised Him from the dead with all that other past, and everything now new, without sin; without sin's bondage, without sin's penalty, judgment, without death. He lives for ever after the power of an endless, deathless life. The way out for Him was through death, by death, and then resurrection.

Christ our Exodus

Now Christ is offered in all the value of that to man. The Gospel is that Christ, who has exhausted the wrath of God, and has swallowed up sin in its full dimensions of guilt, responsibility, power, penalty, is offered to you, with all the good of that; that you, by accepting Him in what He has done as your Representative, may be delivered from sin, its power, its guilt, its penalty. You are called upon, and I am called upon, to say what we will do with Christ in that Representative character. If we believe, and if we accept, then God says, Give testimony to the fact that you do so. This is something which must be proclaimed, and proclaimed in a practical way. Here is a representation of a grave; here is that which symbolises the grave of the Lord Jesus. Declare that you accept His death as your death, His burial as your burial, His resurrection as your resurrection. Declare it before men, before angels, before demons; declare it. Your acceptance of that by faith is your only way out.

Do you want to know escape from a doomed world, and a doomed creation? Do you want to know how to get out of that realm where that judgment still holds good apart from Christ? Do you want deliverance, salvation,

escape? The only way out is your faith acceptance of union with Christ in that death, when He died as you. Declare that when He died you died. He was buried, and put away from the sight of God. Will you accept that by faith? Then, that having been done, He was raised by God from the dead, no longer to be in or a part of that creation, but outside of it. And He was raised as the Firstfruits, and you, by faith, are to be part of the harvest to follow. Do you accept it? This is the only way out. There is no other way. You say, Yes, I accept it, I believe. Then the Word of God says: "Then they that believed were baptised." Why? Because baptism was their practical expression of faith. The Lord does not believe in mere theories. If you make a declaration of anything in relation to God, sooner or later you will find yourself in a position where you are compelled to prove it. If you are really walking with God, it does not matter what you say as to truth, you will be tested on that before very long. And here is the first step. You say, I believe that I was doomed as a sinner, locked up in a judged creation. Christ came into that. As I was helpless and hopeless and unable to get myself out. He came in and took all the state, and all the result of the state, of my fallen position upon Himself, and through His death found a way out. I believe that!

Practical Proof of Faith

Then the Lord says by His Word, prove it. Here is a means for you of proving it. Here is the symbol of a grave. Declare it in practice, in act. Strangely enough, if ever the Lord speaks to a heart about that matter, and it is not just the suggestion of someone else; I repeat, if the Lord touches the heart about that matter, and the heart does not respond, that life becomes strangely locked up again. Spiritual growth is at once arrested, the Lord has nothing more to say to that life, it does not grow beyond that point. It may be soon, or perhaps a long time afterward, but sooner or later, at any rate, that life begins to be terribly exercised. The question is, Why is it I am not growing. Why is it I am not enjoying the fulness of the Lord? And there is trouble in the heart, and then in the deep exercise before God, the Lord just puts His finger upon that. Do you remember that I spoke to you about so-and-so? Well, we have never been able to walk together since then.

"How can two walk together except they be agreed?" From that day there has been no progress; be obedient in that and we will go on again. Many lives are simply locked up like that for years, because of a reservation.

Now you see, coming to the passage we read what the apostle says here about what are called "the principles of the doctrine of Christ." The principles of Christ. Literally it is "the first principles *about* Christ." He is speaking to believers, as you notice, and he says, You ought to have gone on growing spiritually, but you are still back at the beginning, and needing someone to teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God. Then he uses that phrase, "the first principles" again, and he says that those first principles are the foundation: "Not laying again the foundation....." Oh, do get this. This is not advanced truth. This is not something for advanced saints. This is said to be the first principles, the foundation. And it is said that they are babes, even when they have got these things. They ought to have advanced long past this. This is truth for the immature. It is a sad thing that we have to put such force into our emphasis, to say that today, even to believers. This is for infants.

The Threshold with Six Pillars

"The first principles of Christ." What are they? "Repentance from dead works"; that is one. "Faith toward God"; that is two. "The teaching of baptism"; that is three. "The laying-on of hands"; that is four. "The resurrection of the dead"; that is five. "Eternal judgment"; that is six. Six first foundation principles, concerning Christ. These are not Jewish ordinances, they are foundation principles about Christ. That can be proved without any difficulty. If the apostle had been speaking about Jewish ordinances first principles and foundations, he would have commenced: Not laying again a foundation of circumcision, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Passover. Those were the foundations of Jewish life.

Then these doctrines here are essentially Christian doctrines. The resurrection of the dead is not an Old Testament doctrine. Hints and references may be found, but there is not the doctrine, for you cannot have the teaching of the resurrection until Christ is resurrected. Resurrection is not merely the re-animation of a body, a corpse. Resurrection is unto life or unto condemnation. And you cannot have

resurrection unto eternal life or unto eternal condemnation until Christ has come, because all the issue of resurrection hangs upon Christ's resurrection. We can never be judged in resurrection unto life eternal or unto judgment eternal, only on the ground of Christ's resurrection; because Christ's resurrection has provided the ground of our judgment, has determined for ever our position of faith or unbelief. If you read the rest of this sixth chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews, the thing is borne out by what is written as touching those "who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost," that it is impossible, if they should fall away "to renew them again unto repentance, seeing that they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh." Does not that put you on this side of Calvary? It is not Jewish ordinances. Christ was not crucified in this sense before Calvary. You see, you are brought right on to New Testament ground, post-Calvary ground, and you are told therefore that you are related to the first principles concerning Christ. It is not a case of Jewish ordinances at all.

Perhaps to you it is hardly necessary to emphasise that, but there are a great many people who say this is purely a Jewish thing, and these are Jewish ordinances that are being referred to. That is why I have stressed this. Amongst the six there is baptism—a foundation; the laying-on of hands—a foundation; a first principle concerning Christ. Is it not conclusive? The apostle says to these people: Now you have laid those foundations—he is taking it for granted that those foundations have been laid—but, he says, the trouble with you is that you have not gone on from your foundations; and here you are away back there, still where the foundations have been laid, have been settled; you are not moving on at all; you have somehow remained in a state of arrest. Now, he says, let them be once and for all settled and go on unto full growth.

The very gateway into the fulness of Christ is through these six pillars. These six pillars form the entrance into the fulness of Christ; they stand right there at the beginning. Repentance from dead works, faith toward God, baptism, laying-on of hands, resurrection of the dead, eternal judgment. That has all to be dealt with, settled, recognised right at the beginning, and then with that done, move on unto the fulness of Christ. There can be no

fulness of Christ until that is settled, but, having that settled, the way is open. If the Lord has shown any one of these things as a basic thing, and put His finger upon it, and there has been a holding back, a reservation, you may go on in time for years, but spiritually you have not advanced at all. And it may be after ten, twenty, thirty, forty years you come to the realisation that you have not got through the portal yet, and you say, I am not more than a babe as yet. It is a terrible thing to awake to the fact after all that loss of time. The Lord says, That is My door; and fulness lies that way. There is not one pillar more important than another. Some people seem to think that they can select out of the six what they agree with, and leave the rest.

Here you are face to face with what the Word of God calls "First principles concerning Christ." The only way in which Jewish ordinances come in here—and they do come in, there is no doubt about it; they are in the Letter to the Hebrews all the way through—the only thing is that here you have the Antitype. There had to be in the Old Testament period, that which typically represented faith toward God. The apostle says to the Corinthians that they were all baptised into Moses in the sea, and in the cloud, so that when they passed through the Red Sea that was a type of baptism; and he speaks of the flood as being also a like figure; "whereunto even baptism doth also now save us." In the antediluvian period as well as in the patriarchal you have the same thing. But it was typical there. You come by the Spirit into the meaning of it now, because all that was pointing to Christ, and now you have reached Christ, Who is the fulfilment of it all.

You can go back to the rest of your New Testament, and see everything else in the light of your foundations. You say, Is baptism for all in the will of God? Well, I say, it says here that it is one of the first principles concerning Christ. You say, Is the laying on of hands for all in the thought of God? I say, It is mentioned here as a first principle. I ask you, Is repentance to apply to all? And you say to me, Oh, no, of course some can get in without it! No, you would never say anything like that. And I will say, Is judgment for all outside of Christ, and you will not say, No! only for some. I ask you, Is the resurrection of the dead for all in the desire and will of God? Has He provided that for all? Will you exclude yourself or some from that? Surely not.

You see the implication. Who are you, or who am I, to discriminate between what God calls "first principles" and say, That is for some, and not for others. It says nothing like that here. We must be honest with the Word of God in our dealings with truth, and while I grant you that there may be interpretations of these truths, and constructions put upon them which might justify certain reservations, nevertheless the thing itself in its purity is there as a thing for all the people of God. And we must be honest enough to discriminate between the false association with the doctrine, and the pure doctrine itself. I know the enemy has prejudiced the doctrine by what he has tacked on to it, and if we are able to discern the pure meaning of the doctrine, we must not set it aside as of secondary importance, when it says that it is a first principle. The Lord help us to be faithful.

READING : John xvi. 1-33.

Of all that we have been saying together in these gatherings, I think we could sum up everything in one thought, and that is that God is seeking in this age to extricate from this world a people for Himself, in living union with Himself. We have traced through the Word of God the abiding antagonism between God and this world, spiritually ; between all that is of God in this world and this world's antagonism to that. We have seen two great factors in that state of antagonism. On the one hand the factor of an inward constitutional "something" in the very nature of man, by which he is bound spiritually to this world, bound up with it ; and, on the other hand, the great system of spiritual intelligences bent upon maintaining that inward affinity. And even where it has been broken and suspended, and there has been brought about a counter affinity, through grace, with God and His things, the enemy does not abandon his object. He persists right on in seeking in some way, by force, by deception, by subtilty, to again entangle spiritually in this world. This explains the whole history of the Church, and of the people of God, in their continuous spiritual battle with the world, in which so many have fallen back again into the world, because of the strength of the world's call and draw. The Church has again and again fallen into that entanglement, so that ere the apostolic age was closed, you find in that representation of the Church universally, the seven Churches of

Asia, with but one or two exceptions, an entanglement again in this world.

All this has been a very great emphasis upon the need for an utter separation unto God, and we shall pursue this matter, and come to consider now another factor in the conflict, and in the victory.

The Value of Spiritual Revelation

This factor is the supreme value and power of a spiritual revelation. It seems to me to be THE factor in the full extrication and emancipation of a people spiritually from the world unto God. I can see it running through the Old Testament, and I see it standing out so clearly in the New Testament ; the supreme value and power of a spiritual revelation as the means of spiritual emancipation. It has been God's method all along. Whenever there has been an entanglement spiritually in this world, and God has moved again to break that entanglement and to deliver from that bondage, to bring out into a clear place with Himself spiritually, He has begun by a revelation of Himself. We will not trace it through—it would take too long—but we can touch upon one or two of the instances, which will immediately show you the principle of God's working in this matter.

The case of Abram

You may take Abram ; that great movement of God toward having a people for Himself in this world, and yet utterly separated from it. We are told that the God of glory appeared unto our father, Abram, when he was in Ur of the Chaldees, and Abram had a revelation of the God of glory. The issue instantly was that Abram left Ur of the Chaldees and came out. The terms and basis of his coming out are so strikingly akin to spiritual relationships : ". . . unto a place that I will show thee . . . and he went out, not knowing whither he went." And I say again, that very well represents the spiritual experience of the Lord's people. Very largely, *in a certain realm*, spiritual people are a "Don't know" people. That is, they cannot interpret themselves to the world, they cannot explain their goings in terms of human wisdom and understanding. To the world their's is a most foolish and unreasonable line of things. The world would say that it was unpractical, it was altogether contrary to common sense. Abram left Ur of the Chaldees. Abram,

where are you going? I don't know! What do you expect to find there? I don't know! Well, what are you going for? Well, I have been told to go, that is all! That is not the way of this world's business, "not knowing whither." You might say that it is being suspended between heaven and earth, and spiritually that is very true of the Lord's people. Yes, it very aptly expresses, defines spiritual experience. Abram has had a vision, and it accounts for all sorts of extraordinary behaviour that the world could not understand. He is sure of one thing, and that is, of God. He is sure that he is moving under divine compulsion, though He himself cannot understand. He will find that in the course of things he will be more and more bewildered; things will become more and more difficult of understanding, and impossible of explanation; and at any point in his life, if you ask him for an explanation, of a variety of experience and its meaning, he will have to say, I don't know. All that I do know is that God has told me, and I have to do what God has told me. I believe God; the rest I have to leave with Him. Where will you be tomorrow, Abram? I don't know! How long are you going to continue in this kind of life? I don't know! And yet, deep down, as settled as anything can be, is the conviction that he is on sure ground spiritually. God has appeared to him, and he is a man spiritually outside of the world, even outside of the world's intelligence, understanding. He is outside, and he cannot be reckoned amongst those of this world; he cannot be judged by this world's standards; he cannot be explained according to this world; he is outside, resultant from a revelation.

The case of Israel

Later in his life the revelation of the divine purpose developed; and God, in His foreknowledge, in His eternal present, saw the seed of Abram in bondage in Egypt, and had regard to His determined purpose to bring them out of that bondage. In order to get them out of the world, He will proceed along exactly similar lines to those which He has used in getting Abram out—by revelation. And so, in the 15th Chapter of Genesis, God appears to Abram again, and says to him, Thy seed shall be captives (bond-slaves) in a strange land. He gives him certain details, and then says, after four hundred years I will bring them out. That revelation has come through,

as you notice in the chapter, by great conflict, tremendous conflict. God did not say that to Abram until certain things had taken place, until the ground of emancipation had been typically laid, in the sacrifice, the altar, the flame, the torch. You see in these all the symbols of our emancipation from this world—the shed Blood of the Cross, the mighty power of the Spirit, and then powers of darkness beating down, and a horror of great darkness. And then the revelation is given. It seems as though all hell is out to frustrate that revelation, because once that revelation is through—something made known by God—it is something God can never go back upon. Once He has expressed Himself and committed Himself to man, He is bound to do it. And so, to prevent the revelation, all the forces of darkness rage, but God gets His revelation through to His servant in spite of the horror of great darkness and the vultures, and all the forces working in opposition. And the fact—this is the point—the fact that a revelation has come, is the certainty of an emancipation. The emancipation hangs upon the revelation. The revelation is the ground of the emancipation. That is the law that we are indicating.

You see that at work many other times in the Old Testament. In the case of Israel's later emancipation from their captivity the same thing happened. Revelation came, and through the revelation came their deliverance.

Now, when you come to the New Testament you find the law still at work, that God must first of all, according to the law by which He has bound Himself, work according to a revelation. He first of all gives a revelation, before He acts in relation to it.

The case of Paul

We take the outstanding case in the scriptures. What is the position peculiarly and uniquely represented by the ministry of the apostle Paul? Undoubtedly it is the Church in the heavens. A Testimony, in a word, to the real, spiritual nature of the Church, the Body of Christ, as not being something of this world, but while, in part at least, here in this world, as certainly quite apart from it spiritually, having a heavenly life, a heavenly relationship, and everything heavenly. That is Paul's ministry, that is the thing which he represents. Before ever that could come about, God had to give a special revelation to an instrument, to secure it. We will touch that again later.

I am simply trying to indicate the working of this law, that to certain divine ends, before God takes in hand the practical aspect of it, in the working out of it he always gives a revelation of it to some instrument, individual or collective; and it is that spiritual revelation which is of supreme value and power in accomplishing the extricating work.

Revelation of—not extra to—the Scriptures

Seeing that law—(I do trust that you have grasped it. I am not wanting to give you just truth. I have a tremendous revolt in me against increasing truth and doctrine as such, and if there is no real eternal, heavenly value for us from what is being said, and it is all for naught, I would pray to be delivered from words. But this, to me at any rate, is of very great importance)—seeing, then, that law clearly in the Word of God, let us seek to get inside of this thing, to reach its inner meaning, and see that, back of all things which are said, there is a spiritual reality and meaning, even in the Word of God. The Word is necessary, but it is only a vehicle. It is a vehicle of light, of truth. The things that are written in this Book have back of them something which cannot be seen, only as the Holy Spirit illumines it. Back of all things said, there is a spiritual reality and meaning for which we need a spiritual faculty. This Book can be an absolutely closed Book, though you may read it through and through, unless the Spirit of God illumines. But once the Spirit of God begins to illumine, this Book lives, it lives from end to end. What is it that you have in the Book? Perhaps you have had it in your pocket all the time, on your desk, on the shelf; but now you have something more than the printed page, even more than the words, and the sentences, and the chapters; you are receiving God's Mind back of it all. That is revelation, and it is that which is the emancipating thing. It is that which extricates, and which is of such tremendous power to deliver the life from bondage. We may organise the Book, organise it into very clever, able, interesting, fascinating Bible Readings, addresses; organise its material into subjects and themes, and what-not, and still there be no spiritual emancipation. The criterion is always this; not. Have we had an interesting time, a very interesting Bible address or Bible reading, a very fascinating presentation of scriptures? The criterion is, How much,

spiritual revelation has it brought to us? How much have we been brought out spiritually into a larger place in the Lord? That is the test. Back of the things said there is a deeper reality and meaning, and to possess that is to have revelation. I want to emphasise that, because some people think that when we use the word "revelation" we mean something extra to the Scriptures. Let that thought be dismissed from any mind if it has come in. We are bound by the Scriptures, and would not move into any realm of what is extra to the Scriptures. We have no need to. At any rate, for my own part, I have no desire for that, because I have found that the Scriptures have given me far more than enough with which to be occupied without having anything extra to them. When this Book lives, beloved you do not want anything extra. You will find your life is in this. Blessed be God, it can be like that! Now that is what we mean by revelation; it is that deeper reality and meaning back of the things said. That is a power that is of tremendous value.

Experience necessary to understanding

Of course, there is one thing that goes along with revelation, and that is experience. I mean this; the disciples had a great many things said to them. They had all that is contained in the four Gospels, at least, and we have reason to believe that they had a very great deal more. John tells us at the end of his Gospel, that if he were to write all the things that the Lord Jesus did and said, he supposed the world would not contain the books. So evidently they had a very great deal more than we have recorded in the four Gospels. But we have a good deal to go upon in saying that they understood very little of it. They had very little of what we are now calling "revelation." We find that when the Lord Jesus had been crucified, their light had gone out, and John 16 was surely fulfilled: "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice." You will be in sorrow, you will mourn. Then after His resurrection one of the first things that the Lord Jesus did on resurrection ground was to take up the Scriptures as they had them, all the Scriptures of the Old Testament—Moses, the Psalms and the Prophets—and to give them some revelation, with the result that they did not say, Was not that a fascinating exposition of the Old Testament! They said "Did not our

HEARTS burn within us . . . ” That is revelation. “The eyes of the heart being enlightened . . . ” It was emancipating. But for the fuller appreciation of all the things that the Lord had said and done in their presence, they had to come into an experience. And as they went on through experiences, some of them deep and dark, through trials, through those weeks of testing and breaking and emptying in their lives, through the pressures, they came into a deep heart understanding of what the Lord had said. And it was by reason of the way in which the Lord had led them, that they came into a real living appreciation of what the Lord had said. It is ever thus. You and I have discovered the meaning of the Word of God by reason of the experiences into which we have been led. We have come into revelation through being broken, through being emptied out. Something has happened, in which our spirits have become open to the Lord, our hearts have been touched. In suffering, in sorrow, in adversity, in trial our hearts have been touched, and we have come into a heart appreciation of the Word of God, and it has become alive to us. Let a life encounter a real good bout of conflict with the devil, and such a one can well understand what Paul has written. You say, Now I know what Paul is talking about. Or again, how some of us remember having plodded away for months and years in ministry, giving the Word of God! There came a day when a brother came and said: “I believe I can see what you have been talking about all this time.” Just that; and when that comes about there is life, something can happen, there is emancipation.

The Lord has to do things in relation to His Word in order to bring us into the good of it. Revelation is not only the study of the Scripture; it is our being wrought into it, sometimes by heartbreak, and having it wrought into us. Facts as facts have never yet constituted a messenger of God. Now, you young preachers, take that, and write it down inwardly, and not only in your notebooks. Facts merely as facts have never yet constituted a messenger of God, neither have they constituted a vessel of testimony. The essential to a messenger of God and a vessel of testimony is spiritual understanding; and spiritual understanding comes by life, by something inwrought; and that usually by experience. The Word is: “That ye may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and under-

standing.” Spiritual understanding! You cannot gain anything spiritual, only by spiritual life and spiritual experience. It is not a matter of manuals and text-books; it is not a question of what certain people stand for and teach; such may know the teaching for a very long time and never enter into it. That is the danger. I have not infrequently had letters asking me to send literature to certain people, because they would like to teach our teaching and give out our truth. This is a false and perilous position. Nothing makes me recoil inwardly more than that. Such reasoning is not the fruit of life, but the work of the casual mind in the things of God. As an expression of life, it can never be merely a question of a teaching for which certain people stand, of which you come to the conclusion that it is very good teaching, and that everyone ought therefore to have it, and you yourself will do your best to get the teaching out; however justified and right your approval of what is taught may be. God save you from doing that! It is all too possible for people to be in the presence of teaching in that way, and yet never to have come into the real spiritual good of it, while their approval and taking up with it in that way has been thought to secure this; and that is the condition which gives rise to the blind spot in a life. The earnest and active dissemination of the truth as the *result* of life, while it may involve outward activities of a like kind, is yet quite another thing.

In order to get into the spiritual good of it, really to have revelation, time is very often essential, and a good deal of emptying. Revelation requires a spiritual state, and a spiritual condition, and an emptying of the natural life. There are two factors.

The Way of Revelation

Firstly, time. If you are going to be in a hurry about this thing, you are not going to have it. Time is a great factor.

And then there is the other factor of seeming to be losing rather than to be receiving. You lose what you have, it seems. Yes, the Lord empties out, and then begins right down at the bottom of the vessel to fill up in a new way, but this time it is not mixed, it is something that is pure spiritual understanding. That is a thing of pre-eminent value and tremendous power. It means that such instruments or vessels are brought into a heavenly position, which represents something very great for the

Lord spiritually.

Spiritual understanding! What is spiritual understanding? It is, as we have said, the inward apprehension of that deeper meaning and reality of the things said and written by the Lord. It is a thing of the Holy Spirit, with which only the spiritual are conversant. Let me illustrate. When the people of Israel went into captivity, as you know they were in captivity for seventy years. That meant that all the old men and all the middle aged men died, and only the younger ones were left at the end of the captivity. That again means that the youthful and infant part of the generation had grown up in a foreign country, with a foreign tongue spoken all round. Their fathers and their grandfathers had died, and left them with a foreign language. They learned that foreign language, and forgot their own, so that when the remnant came back from the captivity, they had lost their own language, and you find that in the 8th Chapter of the Book of Nehemiah certain men, who were conversant with the language of the Hebrews, were called upon to stand up in the midst of the congregation on that great day, to read the law, and *give the sense* thereof. Why give the sense thereof? Because the people did not know their own language, so that these interpreters of the law would read something and say, Now that means so-and-so. From infancy they had learned another language and had lost their own.

Out from that there came the official set of people called the scribes. The scribes were the official or professional interpreters of the law, and they took the law and read, and then said, That means so-and-so. Do you see the perils of a professional party of scribes taking hold of the law and saying, That means this. Get away from the spiritual men who really have a spiritual insight into the law, into the merely professional realm where there is only a scholarly understanding of the language, and you get two distinct realms. In the New Testament you find a great deal referred to in the use of the phrase: "You have heard that it has been said . . ." The Lord Jesus used those words. The interpreters have said that it means so-and-so, "but I say unto you . . ." The Lord Jesus never contradicted the scribes, but He transcended them and the professional interpreters of the Scriptures, and you find that you have in the New Testament a very great deal brought in which was

merely the sense that was given to the Scriptures by the professional party of interpreters. What had happened? The pure language had been lost by the people, so that they could not read the Scriptures in it, and an extra party took up the Scriptures and gave what they thought to be the meaning, but it turned out to be something else in the long run. It was the thought of their own mind cleverly imposed upon God's Word.

We are in a like case today, beloved. The pure language of the Holy Spirit concerning the Word of God has been almost universally lost, and what we are receiving today is the professional, scholarly, giving out its mind about the Word of God, and people are brought up on that. The great mass of Christian people today are not brought up on the language of the Holy Ghost in the Word of God. They are brought up on what so-and-so says. Of course, I know the big question arises as to who is to determine what is the pure language of the Holy Spirit. Well, you can answer that question only inwardly. The test is, Does it result in emancipation spiritually? If it does, all right. If you are walking with God, then the Word of God brought to you, being in the power of the Holy Spirit, will be your spiritual enlightenment, your spiritual quickening, or spiritual liberation. It must be tested out that way. How much does it mean of real spiritual growth out of all those trammels and limitations of our natural life? That is the language of the Holy Spirit.

Now that is spiritual understanding. It is having the sense thereof according to the true interpretation of the Holy Spirit. Revelation, in a word, is the language of the Holy Spirit inside of the written Word of God; not apart from it, but inside of it. Are we conversant with the language of the Spirit? I simply mean this, as you take up the Word of God and read certain words and sentences and phrases, does the Holy Spirit give you a deeper insight into that, and by what He shows you in that bring life into your heart, and liberation and joy? That is giving the sense thereof. The need of revelation is quite clear.

The Outward and the Inward

There is a heavenly background to everything in the Word of God, and it is that heavenly background which constitutes revelation that you and I need to know.

If we are only seeing the things on the surface, then we have but an earthly thing after all, and that has been the trouble with God's people all along. They have seen the Old Testament and the order of the tabernacle and the temple; and they have reconstituted the church accordingly, with a ceremonial, with a vestment-order of things, and elaborate buildings. Of course, it is a beautiful reproduction of the Old Testament order of worship; and they would appeal to the Scriptures, and say that Solomon built the most magnificent temple for the worship of God, and point out how your Old Testament is simply filled with this beautiful order of worship. Yes! but that is on the face of things, that is not revelation. You can have the spiritual good of that in an emancipating way in a dungeon, in a catacomb, in a garret. It is the deeper thing that is liberating. You can have all the outward form, and still be spiritually in bondage, and that is for so many THE bondage. But another will say, May we not have what is behind the representation, and still profitably retain the typical order and symbols. We find, however, that the possession of the spiritual reality teaches us, that to repeat the typical order is to miss the whole divine intention, to rob it of its distinction, and to convey a false idea.

To retain the typical order when the reality is come is to take a formerly God-given thing and to perpetuate it as a thing of the earth. This is, in effect, to set up an earthly conception of a heavenly nature and life, which all who have been born anew from above have now received and entered into by the Spirit. This earthly conception ever conveys to the natural mind of man the idea that spiritual life consists in the use of sacred words and forms of address, the observance of religious rites and the like; that to be godly and spiritual is, in a properly regulated life, to have a department for these things, a religious side to life, to sanctify the whole, in contrast to others who practise no such ways at all; and that the doing of these things in public and in private is itself spiritual life and that approach to God and worship such as can be known of man down here.

The truth as we have seen is that God, on a ground of His own providing in the Cross of His Son, gives into the convicted, contrite and prepared heart a new nature, a new life, and it is in this life that we know God, pray,

worship, serve, and grow up into His likeness.

This life is not without its expression and ordered way when its possessors meet as a corporate company to worship God; for it is led and directed by the Spirit of life within the members joined by the same Spirit to Christ their living and directing Head on high: But to seek this life in forms of provided expression, or to confine it within such limitations, is to hinder the true spontaneity of its own expression from within, to suppress the pure activity of its powers and glory, and often, if not always, to violate the very law of its operation and freedom, and not least, of its warfare. It is, in a word, to convey a totally false idea both of its nature and of its law of increase, expression, authority and will. It is what is behind that you and I need to know. There is a heavenly order back of everything said in the Word of God.

“The Decree of the Watchers”

Here is an interesting, and I think, illuminating instance of that. Look at the Book of Daniel, and at two passages in Matthew and Corinthians.

Daniel, Chapter 4. This chapter shows the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, of the tree that was cut down. Nebuchadnezzar had become exceedingly high and exalted. “See this great Babylon, which I have made.” His pride caused him to reach, like this tree, unto heaven, and he had the dream. The tree was cut down, and Nebuchadnezzar went out like the wild beasts to eat grass; to eat grass like an ox, driven from the habitation of men. Look at verse 17 of chapter 4. Do you notice that extraordinary statement: “The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand (or the matter) by the word of the holy ones . . .” Have you ever thought about that? Matthew v. 21-22. “. . . In danger of Gehenna.” The fires of Gehenna. The judgment: the council: the fires of Gehenna. The judgment is the lowest court, where the first judgment is given about a matter, a fairly simple matter. Moses appointed those in Israel to go as judges in secondary matters. If any man had a matter that was more or less simple, he went to the judgment. If a matter was more difficult it went to the council, that is, to Moses. If the matter was criminal it went to death, the final destruction and the stoning. You have got three realms of judgment there. Now that which you have with

Moses is an earthly representation of something which is in heaven: "The decree of the holy ones."

Corinthians 1, 11-30. "... Not a few sleep." "For this cause . . . not a few sleep," that is, die; "BUT if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." What has happened? Something has gone to the judgment, and it has gone to the council, and there is the death sentence. "When we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." What has happened with these Corinthian believers? The thing has gone to the judgment, and to the council. That has worked out in the Lord taking them away, so that they should not be delivered to the fire of Gehenna with the world.

I do not know whether you can follow that. I believe that is what the apostle meant when, speaking about women having their heads covered in the assembly, he said: "Because of the angels." Why? "The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones." The angelic councils. In heaven there are angelic orders, who are watching, and when certain things take place, of a serious character, those angels come together and deliberate upon that, and pass sentence. What happened with Nebuchadnezzar? What happened at Corinth? The angelic councils saw these things happen at Corinth, this violation of the Lord's Table, and they were so horrified that they came together and said this thing must be dealt with, and they deliberated upon it. "For this cause not a few sleep." The degree is by the sentence of the watchers, the demand by the word of the holy ones. You see you have the presence of some other realm, for it goes on to say: "To the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men." Do you see what that too indicates? That this judgment and this council and this fire of Gehenna, which had a literal expression on earth through Moses, is only an earthly representation of something in heaven. There is something in heaven, and the Lord Jesus, mark you, in this passage in Matthew is not talking about the judgment and the council of Moses. He is not saying, I say unto you that he that is angry with his brother shall be in danger of this company of men in Jerusalem, who pass sentence upon such things. They are in danger of the judgment, that is, the court.

And whoever saith "thou fool," his case is taken to another court in heaven and is judged.

My point is this, that there is a spiritual and heavenly background to everything that is here in the Word of God. I am not taking this as a subject to apply for any purpose in this present gathering, I am simply indicating one thing that is clear in the Word of God, which points to the fact. We could accumulate evidence of this, that God has simply given a pattern of things here in His Word, and that is a pattern of things heavenly. The tabernacle is not THE thing. It is a pattern of something in heaven. The temple is not THE thing. It is a pattern of something in heaven. The judgment, the council, the fire is only a pattern of something in the heavens. "Fear not him who is able to destroy the body, but fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in the fire of Gehenna." That is something in heaven, it goes to the council there.

Now, for our present purpose, what we need to grasp is just this. Revelation is to come to see what that heavenly reality is as back of the representation in the Word of God; and when you get the revelation it is so emancipating, it is so enriching.

But remember that spiritual revelation—and spiritual revelation is for all the Lord's children—is a thing which has bound up with it a great price. It is a costly thing. The enemy is against it. He is against revelation; he is against the receiving of it; he is against the utterance of it; he is against the outworking of it. It is fraught with conflict, and it explains why Paul had such a time as he had. This was clearly because he was all the time giving the spiritual interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures, while all those who held those Scriptures were saying: Paul is reading into the Scriptures something of his own mind; it does not say what Paul says it means. And, therefore, they would have none of him, and even Peter had difficulty: "Even as our beloved brother Paul in all his letters, according to the wisdom given unto him . . . in which there are some things hard to be understood." Peter is having difficulty with Paul, but it is that revelation of the inner meaning of things, that put Paul into a realm where so few could follow him, because of the lack of revelation in them. That is one reason why I believe he wrote the Letter to the Hebrews: "Of whom (Melchizedek) we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are

become dull of hearing." You have not spiritually grown, therefore I must keep quiet about these things. It demands this spiritual faculty inwardly, if we are to receive what the Lord wants us to have. Melchizedek has a tremendous amount to say to us, but we will never understand the seven verses in the Old Testament about Melchizedek, and all the realm that is bound up in those seven verses, unless we have got a spiritual faculty.

The Lord lead us to pray, as we have never prayed, that a spirit of wisdom and revelation may be given unto us. That is what brings a people out, into a price, into a conflict, but into a place of living power, where they have something for the rest of the people of God.

Acknowledgments

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The Battle For Life

I.

READING : Rev. i. 1-20 ; ii. 1.

What the Eyes of Flame look for

By way of a brief introductory word let us focus your attention upon what we feel to be the Lord's concern with His people at this time.

When we read the second and third chapters of the book of the Revelation, the addressing of the Churches by the Lord, as those eyes that are as a flame of fire peer into the inner spiritual state and lay bare the condition—analyse, dissect, separate, place on the two sides of debit and credit, and form their final verdict and pass it—we see that there is one thing which is common to all. There may be particular differences in each : the aspects may vary ; the elements may be very different : yet when all has been surveyed and gathered together it amounts to one thing. This one thing is that which constitutes justification, from the Lord's standpoint, in the continuation of anything which claims to represent Him. The issue with every one of these Churches was the issue of whether they could go on or not, under the Lord's permission, whether they could continue before the Lord. The Lord had them before Him, shall we say, had them in His hand, and was determining whether He could keep them, or whether He would have to put them away ; whether He would have to remove the lampstand out of its place, or whether it could go on in relation to Himself. So that the question was clearly one of continuing in relation to the Lord's purpose or of passing out.

We have seen bodies cross the sky at night, coming from afar, gaining in brilliance it seemed as they got nearer to us, flashing on their way, and then disappearing altogether from view in the darkness of the sky. Here are " stars " brought in out of the eternal counsels of the Godhead, flashing in with the glory of His grace, some of them to pass right out, to fade from view, lost to sight.

The question concerning every instrumentality raised up by God in relation to His purpose is, What justifies His maintaining it ? There are evidently some things which do

not justify Him in preserving such instrumentalities. These letters make those things clear.

In the first place, because God originally raised up an instrumentality, and it came from *Him*, was His work initially in bringing it into being, that does not justify Him in keeping it. That is made quite clear. We should take serious account of that fact, that because God raised up a thing, it does not mean that God must of necessity keep that thing right through, no matter what its state or character may be eventually, or in the course of time.

Again, because God has greatly used a thing which He Himself raised up, that does not justify Him in preserving it.

Further, because that thing has had a wonderful history of devotion to Him, and has at some time been a very real and full expression of His grace, of His power, even that does not resolve itself into a claim upon Him to keep it, and He does not regard Himself as under any obligation to preserve even that.

But we have to press the point still further. Because at any given time many commendable things are to be seen in that instrumentality, which the Lord Himself may praise—there may be not a few such things—nevertheless, this record shows that even that does not justify God in preserving it in its place ; even that does not mean that He may never consider putting it out of its place, or that He is bound to refrain from doing so.

That is a very thorough sifting of anything. It might be thought that if God raised up a thing, if it came in the first place from His own hand ; if God had used that thing and blessed it, and it had shown the features and characteristics of His grace and of His love, and if that instrumentality still had in it many things which God, looking with His eyes as of a flame, could commend, surely that is enough to argue for its continuance before the Lord ?

You understand that we are speaking about instrumentalities. We are not speaking about souls. We are not dealing with the question of

salvation. We are dealing with the question of service to the Lord.

What then justifies the Lord in preserving and going on with any such instrumentality? We must look to see what it is that was behind His hand when He brought it into being, what was in His mind and in His heart. We shall find all that we need to know from the very description of the instrumentality itself. In the passage to which we have referred, it is called a lampstand, "seven golden lampstands" (R.V.M.). Our knowledge of the Word gives us a good deal of light upon what that means, and the Old Testament comes at once to our help; for whether it be in the tabernacle or whether it be in the days of Zechariah with his candlestick all of gold (Zech. iv. 2), we know that the candlestick of the Old Testament in either case represented the living expression of the Holy Spirit's energies. Take the candlestick all of gold. We remember the seven bowls, and the seven pipes, and the living olive trees, and the oil being emptied out of the living olive trees through the pipes into the bowls, to provide the resource for the light of the candlestick. It was a very complete, a very comprehensive illustration. It is something that is living. At one end there is a living fountain, shall we say, a living spring. The prophet does not say there were cisterns, tanks, some man-made receptacle, reservoir of oil, but living trees, and oil being poured continually, ever fresh, ever fresh—warm from the very arteries of that living organism, as it were—into the candlestick, and burning with its steady, undying light—a light which does not vary, which does not go out, which is maintained at full strength continually.

The Undying Flame

It is the testimony of an unending life, an undying life, of an all-sufficient life. It is the testimony of a mighty life which is not an abstract, which is not something just stored up, but something which is coming all the time from an inexhaustible stream. In a word, it is the testimony of a mighty, glorious life. As that candlestick burns, it is a constant declaration of victory, and that a victory over death, death which would seek to quench the light, quench the flame, smother it. It burns in the midst of surrounding death, a continuous declaration that that death has no power to quench it.

To come back to the book of the Revelation:

What is it, and what is it alone that justifies God in maintaining any instrumentality in relation to Himself and His purpose? It is not that the instrumentality has a lot of good things. It is not that it had its origin with Him. It is not that it has a great history, a great past. It is not that it has a name, a reputation, the same name carried on as it once had in more glorious days. It is that there is *today* the same undying flame of divine life in its *mighty* testimony against the power of death all around. That is God's justification.

You notice that in relation to the seven golden lampstands, there is reference to the seven spirits of God, and to Jesus Christ the Faithful Witness. He is identified with these lamps. He is in the midst of them, closely associated with them. They were called into being in order that they might be an abiding expression of the Lord Himself as the Faithful Witness, the Living One, in the power of the Spirit of God.

When you come to analyse the state of these Churches, you find that in five of them at least there is a variety of elements, each of which is something that is a contradiction to the Holy Ghost, a contradiction to the Spirit of Life. That thing being *within* the vessel, the instrumentality, amongst the Lord's people, constitutes an element of death, and provides Satan with His foothold, His place; and all unconsciously for the most part amongst those people the testimony is definitely contradicted and nullified.

The point is this, that Satan will resort to anything—his methods and his means are numerous—to get into a divinely constituted instrumentality some foothold for death, so that that whole thing becomes a contradiction right at its very centre. It has a name: it has good works; it has many things which even the Lord Himself cannot judge because they are good; *but the thing* by which alone the Lord can be justified in maintaining that instrumentality has been countered.

It is not a question of what was at one time, and what is today as good, but rather, Has the Lord got that central, basic, essential, indispensable thing for which He has ever raised up His instrumentalities, whether individuals or companies, and brought them into relationship with Himself, that for which He apprehended them, that which was intended to be their specific vocation.

That applies to all of us. We have all been

apprehended of Christ Jesus, and there has been a purpose behind that apprehending. We have not been apprehended just to be saved. Our salvation is but basic, and introductory to something very much more. Then, as collective vessels, the Lord gathers His own together to form them into a corporate vessel of divine purpose. He raises up such instrumentalities from time to time; but whether it be individuals or whether it be companies, the one constant danger is that *the essential thing* in the divine thought in raising up, in apprehending that vessel, should somehow be lost while many other things may continue.

The Lord's Standard of Judgment

This one inclusive thing arises from this survey of the Churches. It is that the Lord deals with everything in the light of His specific purpose and not its general usefulness. If the Lord were simply taking this view: Well, the thing is not bad; there is much that is of value here; it has not altogether gone away from Me, therefore I must look after it and support it, preserve it and bless it, and let it stand, these chapters would not have been written. But He is not doing that. We may be thankful to the Lord for anything that there is in this world which is good and which is of Himself, and as we go into the world, we are grateful that the Lord should have anything in a world like this; but, oh, so far as His own people are concerned, so far as the Church is concerned, that never satisfies Him. We can *be quite sure* that that does not satisfy Him.

Why are we saying this? Because so many people say, Well, you know, you are trying to get something so extreme! Why not be satisfied with all the good Christians that there are; all the people who love the Lord; all the people who are working for the Lord; all that there is that is commendable about the Church today! Why not be satisfied? Take it as it is! Accept it and be thankful that there are so many who belong to the Lord and bear His Name in a world like this! I find that this record does not allow of that. God knows we are grateful that there are Christians in this world, be they but poor ones. You cannot go abroad in a world like this and see its state, its Godlessness, its sinfulness, without being thankful to find even a very poor specimen of a Christian who has some love in his heart for the Lord. You are thankful for the smallest thing that speaks of Him. Oh, but when you come to see God's purpose, when you see that what

He has designed for His Church, is the occasion of His call, His choosing in Christ, you can never be satisfied with nominalism, you can never be satisfied with general goodness.

When you come to a word like this, you find it taking you right on—if you like to call it “extreme” you may—right on to the end, and it tells you quite plainly that whether there be a great past; a great history of divine blessing and usefulness; a great reputation for good works, and many things still obtaining which are not evil, which are good; none of these things is an adequate justification for the Lord to keep that thing in His hand for His purpose.

He must let it go, unless *the thing* for which it has been raised up is being fulfilled.

The Nominal is Rejected in the End

What was the Church raised up for? I do not believe that the Lord originally thought of having a general Church, and then a special one within it. I can never believe that the Lord was going to be content with having a general mass of believers, and then a company called “overcomers” in the midst. That never has been the design of God. That is what we might call an emergency state of things. That is essential because of failure. It seems to me that the very word “overcomers” declares very loudly that there is failure somewhere. The Lord's purpose for *all* His Church as a vessel—which nevertheless may only be realised in a few—is that that vessel should maintain the testimony of a life which has conquered death, and will conquer death right to the end. It is a life question.

The Lord Jesus is constituted the great Witness upon the ground of the power of God which was exercised in Him in raising Him from the dead. Remember that the Testimony of Jesus is always related to His being raised from the dead; that is, that He lives by a power which has conquered death. He is the Life on that ground, on that basis, in that sense, and all witnesses to Jesus, according to the New Testament, are not those who talk the truth about Jesus, but are witnesses of *His resurrection*; that, of course, in a spiritual way, witnesses to Christ as risen. It is the New Testament's testimony of Jesus, that God raised Him from the dead, and that He is alive for evermore. That is the essence of the Testimony. So the whole thing resolves itself into a matter of a testimony in life, a testimony of life. It is not a testimony of truth in the first place, it is a testimony of life. Is the flame burning as at

the beginning, witnessing that Jesus lives and is triumphant, even over the dark, deadly background of this world? That is the question for the Lord's people. It is the question for your life and for mine, and that is the question for every collective instrumentality.

If the Lord continues to lead us in this way, we shall see a great deal of what that means. We simply focus our thought upon the issue. I have no doubt in my heart as to what the issue of our time is. I trust that we may rightly claim to be of the tribe of Issachar, so to speak, in this matter, to know what the time is saying, and what Israel ought to do. I have not the slightest shadow of a doubt but that the issue of our day, of this hour in the Church's history, is, more than ever, the issue of life and death in a spiritual sense. Are you not more and more experiencing that awful sapping of your very vitality, that draining of your life, that exhausting of your energy, especially in relation to prayer? Is that not true? It

requires a supreme effort to pray, and then to get through when you have started to pray. You need energising from another source, than that of your own natural energies in this matter, and that increasingly so. There is a strange, deep, terrible sapping of vitality: mental vitality, physical vitality, as well as spiritual. Spiritual people, at least, know something about that. And lying behind that is the final conflict of this age. It is the issue of life and death spiritually.

The Lord would say to us something about that at this time, and we have but directed our eyes in the way of the Lord's thought, to the great issue which is at stake for His people. But I trust that we shall know that He is not only making us aware of it, and not only warning us about the perils of it, but that He comes mightily to our aid, and shows us what is on our side in the battle. May that be so as we hold on definitely in prayer.

The City which hath Foundations

Meditations on the Spiritual background of Jerusalem

IV.

Features of the Overcomer

READING: Rev. iii. 7-13; xxi. 1-4.

You will notice in the passage we have read in chapter iii. of the Revelation, that the overcomer is to have the name of the City of God written upon him. "He that overcometh..... I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem....." That is a somewhat remarkable statement, and full of interest; and certainly the more you think about it, the more you wonder what it means that the overcomer is to have the name of the New Jerusalem written upon him. We want to understand, therefore, a little more of what that name signifies, and how it is associated with overcoming.

As has been our custom so far, so again, we go back to the earliest touches upon Jerusalem which we have in the Scripture, and there we shall get our key.

The first reference to Jerusalem in the Bible comes in with Melchizedek in Genesis xiv. 18-19. There we find the first mention of it by its

abbreviated title of Salem. "Jerusalem" means "the City of Peace." A very great deal more has been made of it, and there are volumes written upon the name of Jerusalem, and many very wonderful ideas have been associated with the name, but it is quite simply expressed as "the City of Peace." There may be a root in the word which means safety by reason of its position, its strength and elevation: and in that sense it may be termed the City of Peace, as being a city exceedingly difficult to upset, to destroy. But we can be content for our purpose with the simplest of definitions, "the City of Peace." Apparently, Melchizedek was king of this city, as well as priest of "God Most High."

We see from this chapter that Melchizedek first comes into view with Abram's return from the defeat of the kings. If you read the whole chapter, you will see that a number of kings made a league, and they brought the rulers of Sodom and other local cities under their power. These served them, and paid tribute to them, for a number of years. Then they revolted against these allied kings, with the result that

the allied kings made this assault upon them to bring them to heel again. They overpowered them, robbed them, and carried away spoil and many prisoners, including Lot and his wife. Abram was informed of what had happened, and with some three hundred and eighteen men, trained in his own household, he pursued after the kings, and by a night manoeuvre gained an advantage, overpowered them, recovered all that had been taken, including Lot, and brought them back. On his return from this successful and victorious expedition, the king of Salem as well as the king of Sodom met him, and Melchizedek blessed him, and Abram gave him a tenth of all.

Here, then, is Abram in the capacity of an overcomer, and you recognise, as we pointed out in our last meditation, that Abram's strength—a strength which in a spiritual sense he passed on to the City of which he was the father, for which he looked—was largely due to his own spiritual detachment from this world. He refused all gifts from the king of Sodom, refused this world's honours and favours, and in various other ways kept himself free, while in some cases the Lord, on His part, very strongly broke him free from earthly elements and relationships, and so maintained him in a position of spiritual strength. Now we find that spiritual strength, by reason of his detachment from things earthly and attachment to things heavenly, expressing itself in this victorious warfare, and in the position of an overcomer he comes into touch with Melchizedek, and Melchizedek with him, and certain preeminent spiritual elements and features are introduced. It is interesting to notice that all the associations of Melchizedek are spiritual and not temporal. Wherever you touch Melchizedek in the Scriptures, you touch some abiding spiritual principle, something which is not temporal, not passing, and not merely of this earth; not even related to this earth when what is touched is of God, but something higher than that. The bringing of Melchizedek and Abram together in this way brings out this series of spiritual elements, which run right on and become the governing features of the New Jerusalem.

If you look at some of these elements, you will see that they are impressive, but you will, in the first place, be impressed with the uniqueness of the person of Melchizedek. How strangely he comes on the scene. He is never heard of before, and nothing is known about

him, beyond what is said here in a couple of sentences, and yet here he is, a king, and priest of God Most High, in a land full of iniquity. He suddenly comes into full view like that, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, blessing Abram in the Name of the Lord: a remarkable personality, and quite fitted by these very features, by the uniqueness of his person, to occupy some very important place in the spiritual history of Jerusalem. He seems, so to speak, to have come out of the unknown, to have suddenly dropped out of heaven, in immediate maturity. There is no immaturity here: you do not begin in infancy; you find this man right in the fulness of things, the fulness which is to take centuries to develop in the history of the Lord's work. A tremendous amount of history will come, before there is realised on this earth what is represented by Melchizedek. He comes in in this full way, this mature way, and it seems as though he immediately sets up the whole thought of God. The whole mind of God is represented in one man, who comes we know not whence. It is as though God puts the fulness of His thought in a man at the beginning of things, and then develops history according to that pattern. That is how God does things. So Melchizedek becomes a most impressive person, and we know from the New Testament, especially the letter to the Hebrews, that he was intended by God to be a type of something very full. He introduces an order of things which is super-earthly, super-Aaronic—without genealogy, without father, without mother, without beginning of days or end of life. There you have eternity, universality, all gathered up in this one man.

Typical Relationships of Melchizedek with Christ

Note his typical relationships with Christ, as he introduces these preeminent spiritual elements. I think we can say that they are, in the main, five.

1. Kingship

The first is kingship among the Lord's own people in relation to the elect: kingship in contact with the overcomer, and the overcomer brought into touch with the throne. That is the first full thought of God, represented in Melchizedek. As we have just mentioned, a tremendous amount of history will develop before that is fully realised, but God is going to work from this point toward something which we shall note in a moment.

2. Priesthood

Not an earthly, but a heavenly priesthood : not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedek—a heavenly priesthood, an abiding priesthood is what is set forth ; in a word, priesthood in God's full thought.

3. Righteousness

The principle of righteousness comes in with Melchizedek in a special way. It is no new principle. Righteousness is as old as God. It comes in in a special way with Melchizedek, as he becomes king of righteousness. We mention it now, and will speak more fully of it later.

4. Peace

Righteousness leading to peace. Peace and righteousness in relation to kingship and priesthood is what is brought before us. When you put those things together, you cover an immense range of the work and Person of the Lord Jesus. Work backwards—peace, because of righteousness, because of heavenly priesthood, because of absolute sovereignty.

5. The Endless Life

“like unto the Son of God.....after the power of an endless life ” (Heb. vii. 3, 16). That is the designation given by the New Testament to Melchizedek.

Let us sum those up again both ways—kingship, priesthood of a heavenly order, righteousness, peace and endless life : endless life, because of peace being given, on the ground of righteousness, through the heavenly priesthood, with the throne of universal sovereignty upholding it all. That is an outstanding vision and setting forth in one man of those typical elements of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus.

Think a moment or two longer of kingship as introduced by Melchizedek in relation to Christ. The remarkable thing is that Christ came out of Judah, the tribe of government, the tribe of monarchy. But no priest came out of Judah : there was no priesthood there. The Apostle argues that if Christ had been on earth—a striking phrase—He would not have been a priest, because there are no priests out of Judah. That carries His priesthood away from earth at once, and brings in a heavenly order of priesthood. So that Christ's priesthood arises on another ground from that of Aaron. He is Priest established in relation to resurrection. The one hundred and tenth Psalm makes it very clear that His priesthood does not belong

to that side of the grave which relates wholly to this earth. The grave breaks fully and finally our contact with this earth. That is the meaning of baptism. Baptism is intended to be a declaration of the fact that in our death union with Christ all relationship of a spiritual kind with this earth has been brought to an end. Mark you, we only come into the values of Christ's heavenly priesthood in so far as that is true, because His priesthood is not of the Aaronic order, applying to people on the earth living earth-bound lives. Christ's priesthood is founded upon the fact that He is in heaven, and that at once speaks of resurrection. So that His priesthood is in the virtue and the good of resurrection.

Come back to Abram, and you will see that, with regard to the City Abram had to come in a typical way right on to this ground, the ground of resurrection, with even Isaac broken away from this earth as holding any kind of relationship with it still, and that right out on resurrection ground in relation to heaven the purpose of God as to the City is fulfilled. So Christ's Priesthood is established as related to resurrection. “ Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee ” (Heb. i. 5) touches His resurrection, and this priesthood of Melchizedek is typically after the power of an endless life.

Why did Christ's Priesthood become dependent entirely upon His resurrection ? For the simple reason that God was awaiting kingship ; that there can be no true priesthood apart from kingship in the thought of God. Lay hold of that, and dwell upon it. There is no full priesthood in God's mind apart from kingship. Kingship is essential to priesthood, if priesthood is to have its fullest expression.

The Aaronic priesthood broke down in Eli. Samuel was then brought in, and what happened ? Samuel was not brought in to introduce a new order of priesthood. Samuel was brought in to introduce the king ; and from that time the king always preceded the priest, and took precedence over the priest. David, himself king, wore the linen ephod, combined the two in his own person. But the priesthood in David was subservient to his kingship. All the meaning and value of the order of Aaron, of course, is gathered up and included in Christ, but it is transcended by the order of Melchizedek.

Kingship is the supreme, the dominating note. That is the first and highest position. Then what comes next ? Righteousness ! But

that introduces the priesthood. The question of righteousness is dealt with by priesthood; but it is a righteousness which can only be established by a throne of supreme authority. It is the throne, the kingship, which gives the power to the priesthood. The Old Testament makes that perfectly clear. The priesthood afterward derived its power and its appointment from the throne. Notice how David dealt with the priests. He dismissed high priests and brought in others. When high priests failed God, David put them out of office. That was a momentous thing to do. Go back to the days before there were kings in Israel, and let anybody touch the priest! But here is a man who has taken a position above the priests. With David it was a question of the throne governing in the matter of righteousness. If the high priests failed God, broke down on the question of righteousness, then the throne intervened, and that priesthood could no longer stand.

These two things are found together in Christ, and you see that He is King and Priest, and by His very throne He upholds righteousness and His priestly work. We have a *great* High Priest, Who is King, Who is Sovereign.

When you have the throne established, righteousness upheld by supreme authority, then you can know peace. All these are operating in the power of resurrection. He is King, He is Priest, and He has established peace in virtue of His resurrection.

Thus sovereignty comes in, and sovereignty is seen to be not a matter of a realm only, but rather a matter of moral and spiritual glory. His Kingship is that. It is the sovereignty of peace.

There is a great value about this, if we could grasp it. These moral and spiritual elements, such as peace and righteousness, are things which have behind them all the tremendous power of supreme lordship. You and I know quite well that our righteousness cannot support us: and neither can it support anyone else. Our righteousness will break down. It is a poor thing, a puny thing. We know quite well that our peace will not support very much. What is the strength of our own peace? Well, it is as the strength of a very weak assault upon it. It does not take much to upset *our* peace. Then take any other moral and spiritual virtue you may think of, and see just how far man's own virtue will carry him; man's

own moral and spiritual features. Not very far! But then think of the Lord having righteousness and peace and all the other virtues, and by His Spirit imparting those, and putting all the strength of His *throne* behind them, all that that throne means of victory. It is righteousness triumphant, because of One Who is absolute Sovereign in this universe. The sovereignty of the Lord Jesus is the sovereignty of righteousness. If you can upset His throne, you upset His righteousness. If you can upset His righteousness, you upset His throne. If you can destroy His peace, you destroy His sovereignty. These two things go together. What we need is that the Lord should be enthroned at the centre of our being with all the sovereign power of His mighty righteousness, all His glorious peace, all His deep imperturbable joy. It is not an abstract. The throne, and all that it means, is with and behind all.

That is surely what was intended to be the embodiment of those spiritual and moral truths, and realities. When Jerusalem was supported by righteousness, then Jerusalem was unshakable. When Jerusalem forsook righteousness, then the very supporting of Jerusalem was withdrawn, and Jerusalem collapsed.

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem” (Psalms cxxii. 6). Jerusalem lost its peace, when it lost its righteousness, because it lost its sovereign upholding. These things go together. You cannot have the Lord supporting you in His sovereignty, in His Kingship, if you are violating righteousness.

Abraham was made to know God on this matter in connection with the cities of the plain. “Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do?” (Gen. xviii. 17). The Lord told Abraham that he was going to destroy the cities, and Abraham went in search of righteousness. “Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked?” God said, in effect, Try it! That is not My way! I never destroy righteousness! If you find righteousness, I cannot destroy; I am bound to uphold righteousness! So Abraham made his exhaustive search, and found none. He had to say, You are perfectly justified in doing this thing! God could not have done it, if Abraham had found righteousness. Righteousness and the protection of the throne go together. The lack of righteousness means that the throne cannot function to protect. The New Jerusalem, which came in

through Abraham, was to take its character from him, was to be the embodiment of all these things. And when you carry the matter beyond the historic Jerusalem, you find the next focal

point is Christ Himself, and then the Church, which is His Body—the New Jerusalem, which is to express all that God had in His mind as spiritual thought concerning His own people.

The Essential Heavenliness of the New Creation

IV.

THE Word teaches us very clearly that Christ has been taken right out of this old creation and set at God's right hand in the heavenlies. On the other hand, it shows us that His being there, and our being in spiritual union with Him, means that for all spiritual purposes and resources, we also are in the heavenlies in Christ. Of this truth there are, again, two sides.

There is the side of what Christ means to us in heaven as our own fulness; that is, as fulness for our own spiritual lives. There is also the side of what Christ being in heaven means as to our vocation, our ministry, our service.

It may be that we shall not deal with all that ground at this time, but we might consider very briefly, and in as simple a way as possible, the former of these two.

Baptism is union with Christ in death, burial and resurrection. It is the dividing line where the old things have passed away, and where all have become new; where the things which have been, in the main, out from ourselves and out from the world, have been concluded, and the all things out from God have had their commencement. That is the Testimony which we bear in our baptism, and it brings Christ into view in a very full, rich, and blessed way; in the four ways in which we need to know Him.

This may be illustrated for us by Israel's own history, the history which was divided at the Jordan. We have first those forty years of failing to enter by a living faith into the full provision of God, and of struggling, striving to live in self-satisfaction, self-pleasing, self-gratification, self-glory, the manysided self life. The uppermost factor of the forty years is undoubtedly the self-life of Israel. In spite of all the Divine presence, and the Divine provision, self is in evidence, and self has certainly not been put out of sight. Hence there is a

history of disappointment, of failure, of spiritual tragedy. Then there was the Jordan, and a new history; all things new. The features of that new life are the features of Christ in heaven for us, when we come by way of the Cross into heavenly union with Him. We look, then, to see what those features were and are, as illustrated in Israel's case.

1. Christ our Fulness

Deuteronomy viii. gives us the first. There we have the great presentation of the wealth of the land. The Word says it was "a good land," a land "flowing with milk and honey," a land of oil, a land of springs of water, a land out of whose hills they were to dig brass. It speaks of fulness of every kind, of resource.

But even it, as a type, pales before the anti-type, and comes far short of that which it is intended to represent and illustrate. When we come to the antitype and spiritual counterpart, we can hear one saying "O the depth of the riches.....how unsearchablepast finding out" (Rom. xi. 33): ".....in him dwelleth all the fulness.....and in him ye are made full (Col. ii. 9-10). The Lord Jesus is a rich land, a wealthy land, a land of every kind of resource.

That is the other side of Jordan, not on this earth but, spiritually, above. The statement which sets that forth is Ephes. i. 3 ".....who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ."

Familiar as these words and these thoughts are to us, there are tremendous possibilities of freshness, and newness, about the enjoyment of these things. I submit to you quite simply and definitely, that this is the Christ of the new creation in Whom we are by faith. All this is gathered up into Him—the new creation in its boundless resources of spiritual wealth at our disposal, at our command, to our account, for us—"in him ye are made full," ".....every

spiritual blessing.....in Christ." If there is no fresh glimmer of light and glory associated with the reiteration of this truth, there is all the more reason why we should ask the Lord what has happened to us, that we could contemplate such a thing without a stirring of heart. Now, is that our Christ, the Christ of our experience, the Christ of our knowledge? Are we living in the realisation of that, not to its fulness—because that fulness will never be exhausted—but in the wonder of the fulness which lies before?—a land flowing with milk and honey, a good land indeed. Any fresh contemplation, of our Lord in this way should ravish our hearts: Christ, the fulness of spiritual blessing *now*, the Sphere of our experience, our exploring, our enjoyment, our satisfaction. That is heavenly union with the Lord Jesus. Anybody who is in that is in heaven. You have not to define and explain to such people what it means to be in the heavenlies in Christ. They know of what you are speaking. Spiritual geography is understood by those who walk up and down in Him and enjoy His fulness.

If you are not there, all that we can do is to be like the spies, and report upon it, and it is left with you to say whether you are going in or not. It is left to the crisis of faith or unbelief, just as it was of old. Do you believe that that is the Christ Whom God has presented as the Sphere of your life? If so, go up and possess; appropriate by faith the fulness that is in Christ for every need which arises, for every demand which confronts you. Break free from any kind of stereotyped demands in the realm of special ministry. That may be the true requirement of some; but every one of us knows from day to day within our own life, without going outside into a circle beyond our own personal spiritual life, that we must be in the place of enjoying the Lord, having our own personal spiritual need met by Him. Then we must go in and possess. Let us face the whole issue in this definite way: Lord, it is clearly represented in the Word that You are the fulness of God for me! Here is a need, a spiritual need. In order that You should be glorified in me, I by faith take You to meet this need! That is very simple. That is almost the infant class of things, but it is a very effective way of proving the Lord. Do not sink back afterward and decline into discouragement and say, Nothing has happened! Stand your ground just as Israel had to stand their ground and prove thereby that the Lord had indeed given.

They never knew experimental enjoyment, until they in faith had stood upon the gift and said it was theirs, and held on to it as theirs. Sometimes you have to dispute your rights in Christ with the enemy. He tries to take it, to drag it away, and rob you of it; but you have to hold on, and say, This is *mine*! So that the first presentation is Christ as our wealth, our exceeding great reward, our riches, our fulness.

2. Christ our Victory

The next is that which is represented by Jericho. Jericho is a matchless example and illustration of what Christ is to faith in the realm of victory. Jericho undoubtedly links with Jordan. Jordan represents God's miracle by which all things are secured on resurrection and ascension ground: and the Lord is saying, in effect, Now that you are on that ground, you have not to fight the battle of Calvary all over again; the battle has been fought. The holding up of the mighty waters of Jordan; the cleaving through the powers which could overwhelm, and drown, and destroy; the resistance, the overpowering might of God, as represented in the Jordan; the exceeding greatness of His power in making the place of death the place of life; all that is the scene of the full victory which for ever after is to be enjoyed, not by way of fighting for it, but by way of standing in it. Jericho was never a fighting for victory; Jericho ever witnesses to standing in a victory. You see how utterly the old creation is eliminated from a Jericho campaign.

Nowadays, in the natural realm, if you are going to seek to capture a city, you do not walk round it once a day and go home, and do that for seven days in the week. That is not the way of nature. You bring up all the resources at your command, every force at your disposal. You employ all the natural means you have, and focus everything upon the situation. Jericho was a scene where natural methods, natural means, natural processes were ruled out entirely. The people of that country, who were used to other kinds of warfare, no doubt looked over the wall and thought these people exceedingly foolish. Among themselves they must have reasoned, What do they expect to gain by that? They saw the children of Israel come out in the morning, and perhaps they expected there would be a stiff fight, but they watched them walk round without saying a word. Israel walked round quietly and silently. and went home again: and that seemingly was

all that took place. The next morning Israel came out in the same way, and the people probably exclaimed, Here they come again! What are they going to do today? And in their perplexity Israel's foes must have thought, This is a strange way of making war! The next day Israel went round again as before.

You see how utterly foolish to this world is the wisdom of God, and how utterly weak to this world is the power of God. Christ crucified is the wisdom of God and the power of God. The old creation is set aside, and a new position, a heavenly position, is brought in. We know the sequel proved the power of God. They were not, then, fighting for a victory at Jericho; they were standing by faith in a victory already won.

That was the basis of their conquest of the land. There were seven days, a day for a nation. Principalities and powers were falling, while they silently walked round. Oh, the mighty power of a living faith in a victorious Lord because of His Cross! A nation fallen in a day, and that while a people silently moved in faith in what Calvary had already done. Seven days and the whole land is boxed! Seven times round and the gate is open, and they go up into the land! If ever an old creation element comes back, as it does sometimes, there is arrest. But whenever the old creation elements are kept out, there is progress.

That is Christ in heaven, our full and inclusive victory. I glory in this fact, that now Christ in heaven is far above all rule, and authority, and principality and power. Jordan meant that all those nations *were* already defeated under the power of God, and faith entered into what had already taken place. God hath set Christ at His Own right hand, far above all, and faith brings about the manifest downfall of the nations, whose downfall has been brought about by Him in His Cross; that is, as to the spiritual hierarchies that govern them. Christ is our complete victory in the whole spiritual realm. Do we believe that? We do not believe it sufficiently. Our difficulty is to arrive at that, but that is the position. If the Word of God means anything, that is the truth.

3. Christ our Sustenance

Then the Word says that, when they went into the land on a certain day, the manna ceased, and they did eat of the old corn of the land. We will only stay for one word on that. It is a word which comes to us in the New Testa-

ment, with which we are very familiar: "When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory" (Col. iii. 4). Christ will be manifested from heaven, but as Christ in heaven He is our life. We understand "the old corn of the land" to be Christ in His ascended, heavenly place as the life of a heavenly people. The manna was for the wilderness, but the old corn for the land. The latter speaks of Christ in resurrection. It is not Christ coming down from heaven to us as an earthly people now but Christ as sustaining us in a heavenly position. The truth is that Christ can keep us in a heavenly place, can maintain us there in the "above all" position.

4. Christ our Rest

We know what the third and fourth chapters of the letter to the Hebrews have to say about their going in. Those who failed to go in failed, it says, to enter into His rest. Those to whom the Gospel was afore preached failed to enter in. That is remarkable! The Gospel was preached to them. These are they to whom the Gospel was afore preached. What is the Gospel? To answer the inquiry in that connection, it is Christ as our rest. That is the Gospel: and the Gospel of Christ as our rest was preached to them in type, and they to whom the Gospel was afore preached failed to enter in. Then, says the Apostle, "Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience." They failed! God set forth another day, saying, "Today if ye shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts....." The Gospel is preached to believers to enter into His rest. The Lord Jesus put this in the germ form of truth when He said: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Christ in heaven is our spiritual rest, heart rest.

What is the essence of rest? It is satisfaction and assurance. If you are satisfied, you are at rest, no matter how much work you have to do. And if you are quite sure that your work is going to be successful, you have assurance, and you are in rest. Everything for us is based upon Christ having entered as the Forerunner, and having become our Rest. We shall labour: we shall pour ourselves out; we shall spend; we

shall be spent; but in it all there can be real heart rest. We shall be assailed; we shall be pressed on every side; we shall be cast down; we shall be tried; but Christ can still remain our rest: for in the first place, we know that these things are not going to be to our destruction, since He has destroyed the power of destruction; and, in the second place, that our labours are not in vain, because He has swallowed up death victoriously. He is our Rest.

Faith is the Basis

Here you have the four sides of Christ in heaven, and of what He is for us as there. Faith is the ground upon which Christ as all that becomes real to us. Let us ask the Lord to give us a real, spiritual, quick, living apprehension of this great truth concerning our Lord Jesus, the great realm of the new creation into

which we are brought, and let us apply it, practise it, put it into operation from day to day.

You may have to go into a place where there is not much spiritual wealth on the outside, not much upon which to feed. Remember you have Christ, the whole land, lying before you. You may have to go into scenes where there is anything but rest, spiritual rest; where all is fret, care, drive, strain. Remember that you are in the land; you are in Christ; you have Him as your Rest. You may have to go into the conflict, into the battle, into the tremendous activities of the enemy to overthrow you. Remember you are in Christ, Who is victory, complete, final victory. That remains true, whatever the enemy may say about it.

Christ is all that we need for a life which is glorifying to Him. It is what Christ is, what we have in the new creation.

“The Will of God”

SCRIPTURE PORTION: Acts xxii. 1-21.

TEXTS: Acts xxvi. 16. “I have appeared unto thee for this purpose to make thee a minister and a witness.”

Acts xxii. 14. “The God of our Fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His Will.”

Eph. i. 9. “Having made known unto us the mystery of His Will.”

THE phrase from Acts xxvi. is part of the Lord's own word to Saul of Tarsus, while that from chapter xxii. was spoken by Ananias after Saul had been brought to Damascus.

You will see at once the connection between the three brief passages. The Lord has been speaking to me in relation to “The Will of God” and it seems to be His leading that we should consider it together in a simple way.

The Knowledge of the Will of God is the Supreme thing in Life

I do not think that in saying this we are exaggerating. Whether you are able to receive it depends upon what your conception of the Will of God is. It is all too common to think of the Will of God in somewhat smaller dimensions. We think of it as it relates merely to our own lives, our own conduct, and circumstances. But we desire this

afternoon, if the Lord will enable us, to consider the Will of God in a larger sphere than that; to think of it as something that is like God Himself; infinite, eternal, majestic, glorious; something that, being of God, possesses the very constitution of God. The Will of God is a mighty thing; an infinite thing. The Will of God comes out of Eternity and is, therefore, eternal in its range and scope. It comes into time, and, operating in time, lifts things that belong to time into the eternal realm. It is behind all the goings of God in the earth during times ages. The Will of God is that which ever marches on prosperously and victoriously. It can never be defeated. It must ultimately prevail in every realm. It is mighty as Himself, eternal as Himself, glorious as Himself.

The word which was spoken by Ananias to Saul of Tarsus, when, blinded and trembling, he was led by the hand into Damascus was this: “The God of our Fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will.” Nothing more important was ever said to a man on earth than that; he had been apprehended, chosen, in order that he might *know* the Will of God. We have many beautiful hymns about the Will of God. We sing them, and they all have their value, but too often their

approach to the Will of God is along the line of submission and resignation ; as, for instance,
 My God, my Father, while I stray,
 Far from my home, on life's rough way,
 O teach me from my heart, to say
 Thy Will be done !

A beautiful hymn truly ; a very beautiful sentiment ; an entirely right attitude of mind, if we are thinking of the Will of God in its relation to us as individuals. Submission to the Will of God is fundamental for all progress in the Divine life ; but if we have any real conception of what the Will of God is, if the Holy Spirit has revealed it to our hearts in its eternal character, in its victorious progress, in that purpose which it has brought into being, in that eternal counsel which it has initiated, our approach to it would be expressed in quite other terms. We shall be worshipping God because of it ; we shall be singing with Faber :

I worship Thee, sweet Will of God,
 And all Thy ways adore ;
 And every day I live, I seem
 To love Thee, more and more.

Ride on ! Ride on triumphantly,
 Thou glorious Will, ride on !
 Faith's pilgrim sons behind Thee, take
 The road that Thou hast gone.

There is all the difference in the world between those two attitudes, those two methods of approach to the Will of God. Both come from souls that have known redemption, from those whose lives are under the mighty hand of the crowned Lord, ~~but the soul that is worshipping because of the Will of God, has got a vision, has been enlightened, has been made to see something of the eternal glory, has perceived something of the Divine purpose which issues from that glorious Will, and having got the vision, it is worshipping. It has no desire other than that Will should be triumphant in every realm, and of course, that it should be triumphant in the little realm of one's personal life. That is a necessity and a glory. There can be no lack of acceptance of the Will of God as it operates in personal matters, when once the soul has come to know what Paul calls "the mystery of His Will." You notice that immediately the Apostle speaks of that he goes on to speak of the ultimate summing up of all things in Christ. The Will of God is related to the whole universe, and the gathering together in one, the heading up of everything in the~~

Son of God, the Anointed One ; in Christ. That is glorious beyond all human telling, "the mystery of His Will."

You know what the word "mystery" means in Scripture. It is something which cannot be apprehended, except as it is revealed, and it is only revealed to those who are in a position which enables them to receive the revelation. The mystery of His Will has been revealed in the Word, and it is a blessed thing, unspeakably blessed, that God has decreed, out from the eternal Will behind everything, that in the end all things in this universe, in heaven and on earth, shall be summed up, gathered up, headed up into Christ. Christ all, and in all.

Whether that is just a matter of words to us, or whether it comes upon our hearts with a sense of wonder and awe, bowing us in worship, depends upon whether the Holy Spirit has, in any degree made that to be light in our hearts, whether we have had its meaning revealed to us. It is possible to sit down with the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians and read it, and to rise from the reading saying "Yes, it sounds very wonderful, but I do not know what it really means." It is also possible to read that chapter, and have the soul bowed in worship, as the light and glory of it breaks upon our heart. And so it is with "the mystery of His Will." ~~The purpose which springs from the Will of God is that all things should be summed up in Christ. It is in such terms that the Will of God is declared to us.~~

The Directive and the Relative Will of God

In our thinking of the Will of God it is necessary to make a careful distinction between what one might call the Directive or Absolute Will of God, that which is essentially *the Will*, the sovereign Will, ~~that eternal thing which comes out of the heart of God, comes into time, and marches on into eternity, always victorious in its progress—and that which is related to circumstance, that Will of God as it touches us and our condition.~~ The Directive or Absolute Will of God is related to the supreme purpose of God in the universe. The Relative Will deals with us, our circumstances, and environment, and seeks to bring us into a true adjustment to the Absolute Will of God.

That may not convey very much to you. Let me try to put it in other words. God has a sovereign, supreme purpose, behind which is His Will, as a mighty energising force that

never weakens. Nothing can thwart it, it goes on marching victoriously and gloriously through the ages, through all time. But when the Will of God touches human lives, and human situations, it has to take account of all kinds of things which are not in accord with it, which may be positively opposed to it, which at any rate are not moving in that direct line which leads to the ultimate purpose, and we have, in these respects, to come into adjustment to the onward march of God. Very often the Will of God in its outworkings, as related to you and me, will seem to be devious, will seem not to be pursuing a straight line, will be going in and out and round about, and seeming to lead us in anything but a direct way. Why is that? It is just because God has so much to do in delivering us from the entanglements in which we are—entanglements of our flesh, our circumstances, the hindrances which have come in because we are what we are; because we are fallen men and women; because we have in us the nature which, though put to death in the Cross of Christ, yet has not come experimentally to the place of utter nullification, and is still operative. So God has to lead us along paths, and by means, which seem devious, and not to go directly in the way of His purpose or His will; and yet, in their outworking, from God's standpoint, do definitely and directly lead us into adjustment to His Directive, His Absolute Will.

I wonder if I may illustrate. I was asked by someone the other day to pray with them, and for them, as to whether it would be the Lord's will for them to accept a certain office in a Christian church. Most gladly. As a result of prayerful waiting on God that person felt most definitely led to assume the office in question, and I have no doubt at all in my own heart that the Holy Spirit did so lead, having regard to the circumstances, and that person's somewhat limited knowledge of God's eternal purpose and way. I have equally no doubt that when my friend has come to a fuller knowledge of God's plan and way for, and in, the church, it will be impossible to go on in that post. More accurate perception and larger vision will forbid. Yet in the working of God's, relative will it could doubtless be said that the present course is, for the time, the Will of God.

Oh yes, the Lord has often led us into a thing in order that He may show us, in that thing, what His real purpose and mind is, and then, when the lesson has been learned, He

has led us out. That is what I mean by saying that the relative Will of God, seems to lead us often by devious paths, but it is all to bring us into the Absolute Will, that Directive Will, the accomplishment of which is the chief concern of the Holy Spirit. It is all a question of getting us as individuals adjusted to the onward march of God in His great eternal purpose, that which came out of eternity, and is related to eternity, which is not only world wide, but universal in the full sense.

Revelation is Necessary unto Knowledge of God's Absolute Will

That is to say, you and I, by nature, have no capacity for apprehending the Will of God. That hardly needs stressing. You and I are finite. God is infinite, and how can finite beings apprehend the infinite will of the infinite God? Of ourselves we cannot know it, but it is possible for it to be revealed to us; it is possible for the Holy Spirit to give us that inward illumination which will—perhaps at first only in flashes, in glimpses, but later in a growing fulness—bring us into the knowledge of the Will of God in its glory, its range, its infinitude.

Look at Ephesians I x. The mystery of His Will is His purpose to sum up all things in Christ. What does that mean to us? Perhaps not very much. It depends. It is one of the greatest statements in the whole of Scripture, one of the most infinitely glorious unveilings contained in the whole of revealed truth. When God's Will is done on earth as it is done in Heaven, when God's directive Will has reached its end, the whole creation will be a manifestation of Christ, will be summed up in Christ, and there will only be one *Person* seen in all the universe. It will be Christ in His infinite glory and majesty. Everything is in that. You cannot get outside that anyhow. It explains all God's dealings with us. If only that can be broken up for us everything will be made plain. We shall see why God is dealing with us as He is, and that He is only seeking to get us into adjustment to that great, supreme, eternal purpose which comes out of the Will of God; "*the mystery of His Will.*"

We said that Revelation is necessary. I want to add this; that when the Lord gives us Revelation concerning this, such revelation will be found to be revolutionary. You cannot see the purpose of God in Christ, the ultimate

Will of God in relation to Christ, without everything being changed for you, and you changed in relation to everything. It was for that reason that we referred at the beginning to the portion in Acts 22. The Apostle Paul was chosen to know the Will of God and when that broke upon him it changed everything for him.

I want to point out a very interesting thing. Let us look again at the two passages from Acts, in Chapters 22 and 26, and examine them attentively.

"I have appeared unto thee for this purpose to MAKE thee a minister and a witness, both of the things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee." xxvi, 16: "A minister and a witness." Do not think of a minister as a clergyman. A minister there is one who serves. The original word implies an "assistant," literally "an under-rower," a common sailor, one of those who helped to propel ships in the old days when they were rowed by hand. But it is the little word "make" that is so important. . . . "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee" . . .

Taken in Hand by God

With that in mind come over to Chapter xxii, 14: "The God of our Fathers hath *chosen* thee to known His Will." The word make in Chapter xxvi and this word chosen in Chapter xxii, are rendered in the R. V. "appointed." It is the same word in both passages, and it is a special word which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is very significant that it is only used here in the two accounts of the calling of Paul the Apostle. The real force of the word is this "I have taken thee in hand!" The Lord Jesus says to Saul, as he is lying on the ground, smitten to the earth, blinded by the light from Heaven above the glory of the noonday sun: "You are wondering what has happened to you, Saul? This is something surprising? I have taken thee in hand!" And when he is taken into the City of Damascus, trembling; all his strength gone, all his arguments confounded, all his self-confidence shattered; and Ananias, the servant of God comes to him, Ananias takes up this unusual word, the very word used by the risen Lord on the Damascus road. He says in effect: "You are wondering what has happened to you? Why, it is this! The Lord has taken you in hand, that you might know His

will. That is the explanation of your shattering experience. You have been smitten to the earth, your confidence in yourself has been destroyed. You have been very zealous for God, you have been seeking to serve God, you have had a great religious past, you have been a prominent man in the religious world, but you have been mistaken as to the Will of God all the time. This experience that has come to you is simply explained. The Lord has taken you in hand that you might know His will. That is the explanation."

But there is something else in this passage. "The Lord has taken you in hand that you might know His Will." There are two words used in the New Testament for knowing. One of them denotes simply knowing a thing. Very often it is used for intuitive knowledge, a knowledge which belongs to us naturally, but this word has a different significance. It denotes a true personal relationship between the person knowing, and the object known. Now gather those two things together. Think of Saul of Tarsus in this amazing experience that has come to him; the light from Heaven above the brightness of the sun having smitten him, blinded him, brought him into the dust before God. Ananias comes with this twofold word of explanation. This is what has happened you to, he says. "The Lord, even Jesus, has taken you in hand to bring you into a real and true adjustment to the Will of God." "Not simply to give mental knowledge of that Will, not simply to give the power to expound that Will to others, but to make that Will the operative force of your life, to bring you, Saul, as a man, here in time, into both an understanding, and a perfect adjustment to that eternal, mighty Will. For the future, instead of fighting against God in the zeal of your heart, you will be carried on in the triumphant march of that eternal, active, glorious Will, which has for its object the fulfilment of the eternal purpose, to sum up all things in Christ."

That is what happened to Saul on the Damascus road. He was arrested, apprehended; he was turned inside out, and upside down; his whole outlook was changed, the whole basis of his life altered, simply because the Risen Christ had taken him in hand to make him to know the Will of God, and bring his life into adjustment to it.

When that happens to a man or a woman it is always a tremendous experience. I venture to say that if God does that with any man or

woman in this conference, while the change may not be so sensational in character as that of Saul, it will be like it in effect, and be just as revolutionary.

One word more before we close. It was a great experience for Saul of Tarsus. He says in Chapter xxvi: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (v. 9). There can be no question about the zeal of this man, his absolute and utter sincerity; he was, to the best of his knowledge, serving God. His heart was in all he did. But after that the Lord had taken him in hand, he spoke of his pre-revelation activities in an entirely different way. See how his point of view is changed. Serving God with all his heart? Nay, he was a blasphemer! A persecutor! He had persecuted this way unto the death in honesty of heart believing it was not according to God. But now he declares he was "Injurious." Darby translates that "an insolent overbearing man." Now, having been brought into adjustment to the glorious Will of God, he looks back upon his past, and sees that his activities were simply the product and expression of his religious self life. What had brought the change of outlook? Simply that he had been "chosen"; taken in hand by God, and brought into a real adjustment to

the glorious, infinite, eternal Will of God. That is all.

Many a man who has had a similar unveiling of the Will of God looks back upon his early religious life and knows how utterly it was out of harmony with that Will. He may not speak of it in similar terms to those used by Paul, but he knows that it was equally opposed to the onward march of that Divine, Infinite, Glorious Will, which has Christ for its object, and His universal glory as the one supreme goal.

Whatever the Lord may say to us later in this conference, I am perfectly sure that the object of the word will be to give us a like experience; that is, it will be to make us know the Will of God, that infinite, glorious, eternal Will, and to bring us into a true adjustment to it. It may take the Lord a long time to accomplish that. It may mean a great deal of disentangling from the things in which we have been reared, from the "Traditions of the Elders" which have too often become for us a substitute for the Word of God; but when the disentangling process is completed, and we are adjusted to the Sovereign Will of God, we shall both wonder and worship, and Christ will have become the one supreme object of our hearts.

The Lord do it in us all.

S. A.

Always remember that where there is truth, the counterfeit is lurking nearby to supplant it. To prejudice that which is of value to the Lord is an object of the enemy to which he will devote his every resource. He will make its best-intentional supporters its greatest handicap along the line of mental grasp, rather than spiritual apprehension. Immaturity will always be a means used to his ends. But *in the long run what is of God will triumph.*

The City of God

Babylon and Jerusalem

A Conference Message

READING : Daniel iii. 1-28.

The Lord has been directing our attention to the one supreme object of His own delight, even our Lord Jesus. We have been walking round, gazing upon Him from different aspects, and the Lord has been pleased to reveal Him in a fuller way to us. We have seen something more of our resources in Christ. We have seen God's intention for all those who on this earth have been redeemed, and shall be redeemed, by the precious Blood of Christ.

Now for a little while we shall consider the same thing, not so much from the individual aspect as from the corporate ; that is to say, passing from a consideration of what it means for the individual to be in Christ and like Him, we seek to know something of what is meant by an expression of Christ in the midst of His people, that is, in what we would call our Church life, our assembly life, or our family life as the Lord's people. How is this purpose of God, that Christ may be all and in all, to be realised ? We know, of course, that in the book of the Revelation the final, full expression comes in the holy Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. Now there is the anti-thesis of that. The city which is not God's city is the opposite, which is Babylon, and we may learn something of the positive intention of the Lord by considering this negative Babylon, which is Satan's imitation.

Babylon—Satan's Imitation.

We find the consummation of Babylon in several chapters of the Revelation which are probably familiar to us. There we have this expression : "mystery, Babylon." That is not a new word to us in the New Testament. What does it mean ? There is a mystery Babylon, a mystery counterfeit, as there is the mystery reality. You remember Paul is particularly given this task from the Lord of expounding to us something of the mystery as revealed in the people of God. "Mystery" does not mean something dark and impossible of understanding, but it does seem to mean

that which is not obvious, not on the surface ; it may be known, but it is necessary to be initiated into it to know it. It is, if we may say so, a secret rather than what we would call a mystery. It can be known, but it is not patent. You need to see what is behind the mere exterior and obvious, if you are to understand.

With regard to Babylon, you will remember those Chapters, xvi, xvii, and xviii, of Revelation. There have been many servants of the Lord who have read into these passages a description of the Roman Catholic Church. Having had some slight acquaintance with that system, I thoroughly sympathise with them. The description seems to fit it as a glove would fit a hand. It is there right enough. But it is a mistake to imagine that the part is the whole, or to think that an outward expression is the essential reality, and herein lies the mystery. It is not merely what you can appraise with the ordinary senses of sight and hearing ; there is something more behind it.

I want to give you a few references here, to show that while the Roman Catholic Church (and other such systems) may be included in this, there is something bigger involved in Babylon than any mere local expression of it which is visible and tangible to us.

You find, for instance, in Chapter xvii, verse 5, this description of mystery Babylon : "And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND AROMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

You may lay your hand on any particular abomination, but it will only be one among others. This is the mother, the source of them all ; this is itself the embodiment, the representative of them all. It is therefore something bigger than any mere local thing that we may meet with.

You will find in verse 15 of that same chapter, and in other places, that this Babylon has world rulership, that its scope is not confined

to any geographical limitations, which is not true of any of the various forms which embody the spirit of Babylon.

In Chapter xviii. verse 24, you find:—

“And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.”

Something bigger than any one organised, visible manifestation of the thing must be involved; for all the martyrdoms, all the blood shed for the Name of Christ, or because of loyalty to God, is to be laid at the door of this Babylon.

Then you will find in verse 20, that when the final cataclysm occurs, and the thing is no more, there are not just a few local suffering individuals who are concerned in its downfall, but there is a cry that heaven should rejoice, the holy apostles and prophets should be glad: for God has judged her on behalf of and because of these saints of His. Holy apostles! Prophets! More than one century is involved. The whole body of God's elect have some part in the downthrow of this Babylon.

I do not know whether this seems rather complicated, and without much practical bearing upon what we are considering, or upon your personal needs, but it is just a preliminary word, so that we might not limit what the Lord would say to us, by trying to fix into a local confine that which is bigger than any one manifestation of it.

We turn back to the beginning. Revelation is the end, the consummation. There is a book in the Bible which gives us a view of the beginning, and Babylon is there. We look at Chapter x. of the book of Genesis, and here we find the beginnings of this thing.

Let us remember all the time that we are seeking not merely to understand what the enemy is doing, or to get some interesting view into false worship, to corporate evil, but we are endeavouring to learn what the opposite is. This is man's effort! What is God's will? This is Satan's plan! What is God's plan? We seek to find the reality by considering its antithesis.

We find in this Chapter x. of the book of Genesis, in verses 8-10:—

“And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel . . .”

“Babylon” is the Greek form of the name; “Babel” is the Hebrew. Whenever you find Babylon in the Old Testament the real word is Babel. That is the beginning. “And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel . . .” It was a *kingdom*; this is the first kingdom mentioned in the Bible.

“Babylon”—a Spiritual System

This gives us a clue. Babylon is a whole realm of things, a whole order, a kingdom. It is true that here there was the practical expression of it. Nimrod sought to make, and succeeded in making, that which was, after all, a local and visible kingdom. There are such Babylonian kingdoms to be found in the books of Daniel and Revelation, but these are practical and visible expressions of a spiritual order of things which transcends and includes them all.

We need the Lord to work in our hearts that we should grasp this. It is something which exists beyond what can be seen. Take just the Roman Catholic Church again as a mere practical example. It is broken: it goes down; the thing is finished! But it is not finished. It comes up again. Though it is proved wrong, and men turn from it, it returns in ever greater strength. This hydra-headed monster cannot be slain. Like the phoenix, it rises a living bird from its own ashes again and again. Bunyan likened the Pope to a decrepit old man whose day of power was over. I wonder what he would say today.

Now that in a limited sense gives us some idea of what Babylon is. Where is Babel today? Where is that Babylon that Daniel knew? Yet mystery Babylon remains. You may remove the practical expression of it. There may be nothing visible. But the thing is there, and it will come up again. And Babylon has come up in some most unusual places, and revealed itself most unexpectedly at times, because it is a whole spiritual system of things a kingdom; and any visible proof that we may have of its existence is only one expression of that which does not depend upon a mere local circumstance for its existence.

Now look at the opposite of that. What is the Church of Christ? Can we lay our hands on it? Can we point to it? Is it visible, obvious? Has it a name in this world? Is it limited to human elements? Is it marked by a number of people, or by buildings, or by any visible tokens that our senses can appre-

hend? There have been, and are in various measures, manifestations of Christ in His Church, but they are but expressions of a heavenly, spiritual state and kingdom. Do we understand this? or are we expecting to have that which we can point to and say, This is the thing? Do we look for something? which is obvious to all who behold? We may have a very real representation, but it is not the whole thing. There is a spiritual kingdom, a whole order of things, which may be seen here and there on the earth, but which does not depend for its existence upon any one expression of it. The church is heavenly and spiritual.

Babylon—Rebellion against God

We see who began Babylon. Nimrod, who was a mighty hunter before the Lord. Gesenius, an authority on Oriental languages, tells us that Nimrod means "rebel." There are Jewish commentators who, instead of this word "hunter" use "rebel": "He was a mighty rebel before the Lord." The whole spirit of Babylon as it here appears to us is a spirit of rebellion, of selfwill. Nimrod came from Ham, of whom it had been said he should be "a servant of servants" (Genesis: x. 25), occupying a subordinate position. Nimrod soon appeared and said: "I will be a King, not a servant! I will be the chief, not the subordinate!" You see the rebellion against the Word of God and against the purpose of God. That was the whole spirit of this first expression, as it is the spirit of the thing in its essence. One of the essential characteristics of this very kingdom, this Babylon, is rebellion, a self-willed determination not to be held under by the law and purpose of God. These are those who will not bear the yoke; who will not be held under by the declared purpose of God, who will do things their own way. A servant of servants? Not they! They will be king. So you have this mighty rebel: "... wherefore it is said: Even as Nimrod the mighty rebel before the Lord." The explanation of that is that it became a proverb when anyone was particularly rebellious and godless, "Even as Nimrod," the very embodiment of lawlessness.

That is the general state of the human heart. It is no less the state of the human heart when religion is involved. It is no less the state of the human heart even though the Name of Christ be taken. Rebellion! Self-will! Self-determination!

What is the opposite of that? It is wonderful to think of this man, who ought to have been a servant, and who was appointed to such a place, refusing to occupy it; and then to think of another, who is really Master and Lord of all, yet Who came with this express purpose of being a servant of servants. How different is His spirit. It is set forth in Phil. ii, in Isaiah liii, and in Peter's commentary on that chapter in His first Epistle. That we should walk in His steps, submission, humility! Peter once had a very real spirit of rebellious self-expression himself, though with the best of intentions. Yet now he is the one who keeps saying, Humility! Submission! Take the yoke! Follow in His steps! He tells us of that which is so precious to God, "a meek and quiet spirit." Why is that precious in the sight of God? Because Christ is precious, and that is the spirit of Christ. This does not mean weakness. Look at Daniel's three friends in Babylon. They are the Lord's Testimony at that time. They are up against Babylon in one of the most powerful manifestations of it that has ever been, but they know where they stand. They are utterly submitted to the Lord, wholly yielded to Him, but they say: "We will not serve thy gods, O king." They tell him they are not careful to answer. Their attitude is one not to be determined by the occasion. It is a fixed matter, an understood arrangement, which they have with the Lord that they are His, and wholly His. They have not to have a prayer meeting, or to seek for guidance over this matter; they know that they cannot submit to anything which is not of God. Their spirit appears to be such a strong one, but it is a strong one because of its submission to God. As the Lord's people are indwelt by the Spirit of the One Who was a Servant of servants, so will they be strong for Him.

A Name in the World

We see in the next chapter of Genesis, chapter xi, how this worked out:—

Verses 2-4: "And it came to pass, as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. . . . And they said, Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us *make us a name* . . ."

That word "name" is just "Shem." God's Name was elsewhere. He had indicated through whom His purpose was to be fulfilled—through Shem. But Ham's descendents said, We will

have a name, we will be Shem! "Let us *make us* a name."

Now that is very clearly seen in so many ways. Even that which calls itself by the name of Christian is so often concerned with *its own* name. The wise Lord, who never wastes a word, had a reason for putting those long lists of most important people in Daniel iii. the governors, the rulers, the satraps, etc.—several times. Surely it is to let us see how they were trying to impress everybody with themselves. What an important occasion! What a tremendous impression they must have made! All these very wonderful, and noble, and extraordinary persons gathered together in one huge conclave! Poor Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego must have felt very very small before all that company. This is the Babylonish spirit. We will show who we are! We will impress people with ourselves! We will make it obvious as to how important we are! Our strength! Our ability! Our power! These must be manifest to all.

I am sorry to go back to the Roman Catholic Church again, but it is such a good example that I cannot resist it. Is not that just the way they do things? Everything is brought in which can impress people and appeal to their senses, and make them to realise that this is something tremendous, this is something that, by the very force of its own being, must be the right thing! Look at the size of it! Look at the power of it! Look at all the big names they have! Such is the spirit of Babylon. Did I say that we find Babylon cropping up in most unexpected quarters? Some of us may have had something to do with it. Of course, it is for God; but still it is trying to impress people with earthly greatness. That is utterly and wholly of Babylon.

What does the Lord supply as the answer to such an occasion? If Babylon can present such a tremendous show of the famous, and noble, and wise, and wonderful people from all the corners and provinces of its kingdom; if Babylon can bring out such a marvellous exhibition of glory, surely the Lord must vindicate His own Name, by providing something commensurate with His glory, and greatness. What does the Lord provide? Three men! Of course, I am sure there were others, but for the point of bringing the force of the thing home to us these three men are singled out, others were doubtless not in the public eye, and so were not considered. Three

men! How weak! Those who do not know the Lord say, A small thing like that cannot be of God! If it were of God, there would be something more to see, something with more weight in it. No, all the Lord provides is three men. Is not that the whole story of the Scriptures? We might have learned that lesson and found examples of it in many other parts of the Scriptures. Yet how slow we are to learn that lesson. The Lord is not in competition with this world's glory, to outshine it with something of its own nature, only on a bigger scale. The Lord does not care at all whether what is His impresses people by its outward appearance; rather does He seem to prefer that it should not do so. There is a tremendous lot that can be said, and which the Lord will show us, about this matter of impressing by outward show. That is Babylon's way of doing things, but it is not the Lord's, and never has been. The Lord's people have often tried it, but they have not been going God's way, and it is obvious when you turn to the book of the Revelation and see this thing manifested in its last, final form (and what a tremendous form it is), that God does not supply something to meet it on its own terms and with its own weapons. It is overcome, but it is overcome by those who love not their lives unto the death, the despised, the nobodies the outcasts, those who are worn out, crushed and broken. That is the Lord's answer. It seems a strange one, but it is His own wise answer to Babylon.

The False Unity

You see also the nature of the unity here revealed. There is a tremendous oneness as they gather to build this tower, but it is an outward conformity. One language! One name! Their oneness is of a purely external character, to be expressed in the building of this tower and in their gathering unto it. No doubt Nimrod, this great rebel, this strong king, this mighty hunter, laid hold of the more impressive and weaker people, and brought them all willy nilly into his scheme.

That is another characteristic of Babylon, its outward conformity. You see it in that third chapter of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar does not care what people think in their hearts as long as they bow down to his image, and so come in with the rest. For that reason he has a most impressive orchestra, whose long list of musical instruments is repeated several times even by

Nebuchadnezzar himself, for this purpose of securing outward conformity. When the band is playing it is a very difficult thing to walk out of step with the band. It is very easy to fall into step. That is the whole idea of the band. As the band plays, in you go ; you do not mean to, but before you know it, you are in step.

If we use our imagination and try to put ourselves where these three men were, we shall understand their situation. Think of it. That enormous image there, a great big golden image, towering above them in glistening glory : Nebuchadnezzar himself, no doubt a very wondrous person, surrounded with all the pomp and circumstance at his command—and that was almost unlimited : all this wonderful company of wise and important people ; a huge concourse ; and the band playing ! Now Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, what are you going to do ? You must fall into step, of course ! It does not matter what is going on in your heart, nor what you think about the image of Nebuchadnezzar ! Nebuchadnezzar himself is not troubling very much about that ; he is not going to require a detailed statement of your beliefs. As long as you come into line, and join in this outward conformity, you can have your own opinions !

It is the same in these religious systems which today claim to represent God. The utmost variety of belief and disbelief abound, but so long as you are in line nobody worries you. Anything of that nature, trying to insist upon or arrange outward conformity, does not express God's purpose, nor does it express that spiritual kingdom into which God is bringing us. Of course, there are certain fundamental factors of Divine revelation which obviously we must agree upon ! God only has one word, and one will. If we are His we must stand there. But the human heart always hungers after something which shall, in a number of visible and external things, express conformity. Is not that so ?

What is the reality, of which this is a counterfeit ? It is spiritual unity. God confounded this confederacy. It was evil, horrible. God said, "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language...." Break up this union and scatter them over the face of the earth. In chapter xvii. of John you find the Lord's desire : "That they may be one, even as we are one." Spiritual unity is utterly essential, it has been made in the cross, and we are called upon to guard it jealously. If one may

use such a word (perhaps it is not out of place), we must cultivate it.

Hunting for Personal Gain

To come back to Nimrod again. He was a hunter. I have only found one other hunter in the Bible, and that was Esau, a violent man, whose hunting spirit comes out very clearly in some of his descendants. Herod the king was a descendant of Esau, and he massacred the innocents, hunting for Jesus. The next Herod comes along, and John the Baptist is hunted, and his head is off. The Lord sends him a message : "Go, tell that fox...." (Luke xiii. 32). A fox is another hunting animal ! In the book of the Acts there is another Herod hunting. He has James's head off, and he is still hunting Peter. The whole spirit of the hunter is to get something for himself. He is not concerned with the welfare of that which he is hunting, but pursues it for himself. All gentleness and tender concern are lost in the chase. There is nothing so intolerant, so unsympathetic, as the spirit of the hunter. In the nature of things it must be so.

That is the spirit of Babylon ; always to be seeking after people, not for their good, but for the sake of having them—one more head, one more name, one more unit in the statistics ! That is a hunting spirit.

What is the opposite to a hunter ? It would seem to be a shepherd. The shepherd is not out for heads, he is out for the benefit and good of the sheep. How the Lord loves shepherds ! He seemed to consider shepherding an excellent training for His servants. He took Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, and made him a shepherd. He took Moses out of Pharaoh's palace, and made him a shepherd for a long time. David was among the sheep ; he came away and entered Saul's palace, but he had to go back again to the sheep ; and all his life long he was a shepherd at heart, as was Moses. Moses' great concern, when the Lord told him he was to die, was lest the children of Israel should be as sheep without a shepherd. It was not lest he should be succeeded by someone more glorious than himself. His concern for the people was so selfless that in that moment of deep disappointment, when he knew that he could not lead the children of Israel into the land, he said : "Let the Lord... appoint a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may come in before them, and which may lead them out, and which

may bring them in ; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd " (Num. xxvii. 16-17). Then our Lord Jesus seems to delight in that metaphor of himself as the Good Shepherd ; not because it was a happy chance illustration which came to Him, but because there is something in the very nature of shepherding which expresses a deep spiritual and moral truth. The Lord Jesus came right into the spiritual reality of it. He is the true Shepherd, the Reality of which these others are but types. It is the Lord's desire and plan for His people that they should be dominated by the shepherd spirit.

False Elevation

We see where they built this tower : " they found a plain in the land of Shinar..... " (Gen. xi. 2). When Nebuchadnezzar wanted to build his image, he set it up " in the plain of Dura " (Daniel iii. 1). We know enough of Zion to know that Zion is a mountain and the Lord's concern seemed to be with mountains. The plain is the antithesis of the mountain. From a purely natural point of view one can sympathise with those Jews away in captivity in Babylon. How they longed to see the mountains. There is a spiritual significance behind that. There is flat earthiness, and there is heavenliness. The mountain is that which the Lord loves ! The mountain is where the Lord dwells ! We have to have clean hands and a pure heart to ascend to it, but that is where the Lord dwells.

Although the Babylonian spirit is essentially earthbound God is not ignored, nor is Heaven. unconsidered. That is important to note. Babylon is not a non-religious thing. " Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven..... " They are after heaven all right, but they are going to climb up to it. Heaven is to be achieved from earth, earth is to rule heaven ; which is just the opposite of God's order. When the Holy Jerusalem comes, it comes down out of heaven. God's purpose is for earth to be ruled from heaven. Even the sun and moon, in the first chapter of Genesis, show us this truth symbolically. The Name of God may come into Babylon's system. The Name of Christ may come into it. But it is not heavenly, but built on the plain ; rooted, grounded, founded deeply in the earth, yet trying to reach up to heaven. What will happen when the earth is shaken ? The whole thing will topple down. God's way

is that earth should be ruled from heaven. Earth is in His Kingdom, but it is ruled from heaven.

These are spiritual principles, and there is far more in them than we have the capacity to explain, but they are worth considering. These three men were right in the midst of it. How did they meet it ?

May I give a little instance of how not to meet it ? I read the other day in a Spanish paper a most tragic letter, which really reached one's heart. It was from a Mexican pastor. I must explain to you that Mexico was one of the strongholds of Roman Catholicism for many years, and evangelical work was crushed and hampered in every possible way that organisation. Then there came about a revolution of what was called liberal thought, and the Roman Church began to be restrained. More ample and reasonable laws were made, and the saints of the Lord flourished in that atmosphere. Of course, the hierarchy of Rome was not going to submit to such a situation. They became violent, they in their turn became revolutionary, and so obliged the government which set out to be liberal, and which probably meant to be liberal at the start, to become stronger and stronger against them. It became more and more intolerant. It had to crush this " religious " menace to liberty, for it was a life and death struggle. But what about the saints of the Lord ? To the rulers it was " religion " that was fighting against the good of the people, they could discern no difference between the false Church and the true, and so they attacked " religion " in general. The result is that today the situation is extremely difficult for the Lord's people, just as bad, if not worse than in the old days under the Roman Catholic regime. (A ruling has been given in some States that a religious meeting consists of where anybody not normally dwelling under the roof is gathered there, so that legally one cannot invite a friend in to have prayer.) This pastor writes and says how intolerable it is all becoming, and he says, Yet we gave our sons to achieve this revolution ; and for it our young men died on the field of battle. You can sympathise with them if you know anything of the intolerance of Rome. When something rose up to crush it, these young men gladly joined forces against the common enemy, but they did not realise that Babylon could exist in a political as well as a religious form. And so their last position is worse than

their first. Now the Lord's way is a different way from that; it is a spiritual way.

But it is so easy to put weapon against weapon, scheme against scheme, method against method; to try to conquer Babylon by Babylon's methods! In these three men you have nothing of that, and yet the king himself confesses they changed his word. Babylon is beaten, utterly beaten for the moment, because, though they are in Babylon they have nothing of the spirit of Babylon in them. They are the opposite in every respect to what Babylon is, and that is how Babylon is beaten. We can see the same thing in the book of the Revelation. Not by trying to use the enemy's weapons, but by the spirit of complete separation unto Him is Christ's victory manifest in his people.

It is easy to talk about such a triumph, but what the Lord is calling each one of us to do is to come right into it. His heavenly Kingdom is not easily explained. It is not something that can easily be grasped, or can be grasped at all apart from divine revelation, but the Lord has brought us right into it. It may mean going into the fire. What did the fire do for these young men? It did them no harm for

they came out, having lost nothing except their bonds. And there in that fire we see what God's idea for His people is, One like to the Son of Man in the midst. Where two or three are gathered together into My Name, there am I in the midst! That is God's answer to Babylon, and that, in the mercy and grace of God, is going to achieve the downfall of Babylon. Make no mistake about it, Babylon is going to fall, finally and for ever. Its destruction will not be by accident, nor merely by an intervention from God. When Babylon falls, there will be a cry to the Lord's saints and prophets to rejoice because He has judged *their* judgment on her: because the saints of the Lord, separated unto Him in heavenly, holy walk, unconscious of what was happening, have by their very spirituality been hitting crushing blows at this thing. The Lord's gracious Kingdom will be finally and fully realised when that great Day comes.

One prays that we may have caught perhaps some little glimpse of what the Lord is seeking to lead us deeper and deeper into, a spiritual and heavenly walk with Himself.

H. F.

"In the Face of Jesus Christ"

No. 1

READING: Ps. viii. 3-6; Heb. ii. 5-9; Eph. iv. 13; Rom. ii. 16, iii. 24; Acts xvii. 31; Luke ix. 18-22; II Cor. iv. 6.

"IN the face of Jesus Christ"! In that phrase I see everything that relates to God's eternal purpose and to the Divine intention, both as to man and the universe. It embraces the counsels of the Godhead before the world was—it embraces the creation; it embraces redemption; it embraces the final glory. All that is in the face of Jesus Christ. Indeed, there is nothing which concerns us, as creatures related to God and eternity, which is not to be found in the face of Jesus Christ. God comes to us in the face of Jesus Christ, and all that ever we shall or can know of God is to be found in the face of Jesus Christ. The face is the human medium of communication. The face is the medium of personality. The personality is the character formed in secret, the sum of all

secret history, and it embraces itself in the face. Sooner or later, somehow, the personality will betray itself in the face. But in order to read the personality through the face, there has to be a certain amount of qualification. You cannot off hand read a person through their face. You need to have certain ability to do so. If all that is of God is in the face of Jesus Christ, there has to be given revelation in our hearts, as well as in His face. We have to be able to see the face of Jesus Christ.

All that is but a wide and sweeping survey or intimation of what the face of Jesus represents. It must be brought nearer to our hearts in a practical way, but I want to remind you of this before we go further, that it has ever been by reason of a vision of the face of Jesus Christ, that God has secured lives and instruments which have reflected His own glory.

"To this end have I *appeared* unto thee, to

appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast *seen* me, and of the things wherein I will *appear* unto thee. . . ." (Acts xxvi. 16). Note all the touches as to seeing the Lord in Acts ix., xxii. and xxvi. I think we can truly say that Paul was a fruit of the seeing of the face of Jesus Christ. I am certain that we depend for everything upon a seeing of the face of Jesus Christ. Do not misunderstand. We are not thinking for a moment of any necessity for a literal vision, but we mean that it is absolutely essential to our spiritual life, and to our spiritual service, that by revelation of the Holy Spirit, something of the significance of Jesus Christ, the face of Jesus Christ should be unveiled to the heart. I am being occupied very much, simply engrossed, in these days with the momentousness of Christ; and it is all gathered up into this phrase, "the face of Jesus Christ."

That phrase is employed to imply spiritual vision, spiritual revelation. It is a figure of speech, and in the main, therefore, not to be taken literally, as we have said. The words have in them the thought of our catching some view, some vision, of our having some spiritual insight as to the significance of Jesus Christ, presented to us as the expression, the countenance of God, in which all that is in the mind and the heart and the will of God is found, and is expressed. I believe it means that the face of Jesus Christ *is* the Man. If you want to know what sort of a person you are dealing with, if you want to know your man, you do not look at his boots (forgive my putting it in this way); you do not ask him to turn round so that you can see his shoulders; you look right into his face; you study his face; you get the proportions of his face. You watch him in repose; you watch him under tension; you watch his face in times of provocation or sorrow; you watch him in changing atmosphere, changing conditions, when things are for and when things are against. You learn the man by his face. If you have any special gifts at reading through the face, when you look at that face, you at once know the man. It is not always possible to do so, but you get a good deal through the face; at any rate, you look to the face to tell you what you want to know. It is in that sense that the statement in the Scripture is made ". . . the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"; that statement signifies that that face *is* the revelation of what lies behind of God—God's thought, God's mind,

God's will, God's feelings, God's desires, God's attitudes, God's purposes. All that is written in the face of Jesus Christ.

But the words carry us further than that: The face of Jesus Christ is the face of a Man. It is the face of a Man with God behind it. It is the face of the *Man* about which we want to meditate at this time. "The Son of Man" is the designation found in one of the passages to which we have referred (Luke ix. 22), "I am Jesus of Nazareth. . . ." (Acts xxii. 8)—His was the face that was seen of Saul on his way to Damascus—"Inasmuch as he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by the *man* whom he hath ordained" (Acts xvii. 31). The face of a Man with God behind it! We are stressing the significance of the fact that the Lord Jesus was *Man*, the Man Christ Jesus. I know, and never forget, and I hope you never will for a moment allow the other fact to fall out of your remembrance, that we are dealing with God, utterly and verily, in Jesus Christ; but it is the significance of Christ as *Man*, "the Man Christ Jesus" that is to me the great wonder, the amazing wonder, that is becoming to me the real meaning of salvation, of sanctification, of glory—the significance of the *Man*, the face of *Jesus Christ*.

I.—(i.) **Man Conceived.**

So we are led by the face of Jesus Christ, and the light in that face, back into the Word of God. We find that that light falls upon the counsels of the Godhead before the world was, in which Godhead man was conceived. We see the conception of man in the Divine counsels: shall we say, the thought of there being man originated in the Divine mind, and became a part of the Divine counsels. In some dateless point in the past eternity man was conceived, and before the foundation of the world "foreordained unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ." Do you catch the ray of light? In the face of Jesus Christ! Foreordained unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ! In that face you have the man conceived, foreordained, and the object of the conception and the foreordaining is unto the adoption of sons.

(ii.) **Man Created.**

Out from the man conceived we move to the man created. The first chapter of the letter to the Colossians tells us that he was created by

Jesus Christ. In Him, by Him, through Him, and unto Him all things were created ; and the man conceived was now created. We see how in the face of Jesus Christ, by the light of the face of Jesus Christ, the first Adam was created.

(iii.) Man Probationed.

Then, in the light of that face we see the man, now created, being conditioned, probationed. We can never understand the meaning of the conditioning and probationing of the first Adam, except in the light of the countenance of Jesus Christ. Do you want to know why man was put on test, before ever he reached the adoption of sons ? You have to come into the light of the face of Jesus Christ. That will explain all. We will pass to that presently. Remember the first Adam never did reach the adoption of sons. He failed in his probation. He failed under his test. The Word declares us to be God's workmanship, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God fore-ordained that we should walk in them!" But Adam ceased to walk in them, if ever he did walk in them at all, and therefore failed of the very creating purpose. The light on the face of Jesus Christ illumines all that for us. We understand it now in the light of His countenance. It is all a dark mystery, an enigma, until you come to the face of Jesus Christ.

(iv.) Man Ruined.

The man conceived ; the man created ; the man probationed ; the man ruined. Do you need to comprehend the ruin ? Do you need to know the meaning of the fall ? You can only understand it in the light of the face of Jesus Christ. It takes the face of Jesus Christ to make you know what the fall is. Those who have never the face of Christ have never seen the reality or known the nature of the fall. I am not surprised that some men in this world do not believe in the fall, repudiate the fall, or talk about it being a fall upward and not downward. They have never seen the face of Jesus Christ. You and I have in some measure, and like Isaiah we have fallen upon our faces and said : "Woe is me!" Like Job we have cried out : "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear ; but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." To see the face of Jesus is to see the ruin of man, and you never will see it, until you see the face of Jesus.

H.—The New Man.

(i.) Previsioned.

There is then the true Man—not that other man, but *the* Man, Who was ever in the counsels of the Godhead, the Man conceived of God, the Man previsioned through a long history. He was previsioned in prophet, priest and king, previsioned in a thousand different ways, and is seen *now*, as no one ever did see Him then, in the light of the face of Jesus Christ. It takes the light of the face of Jesus Christ to explain the Old Testament in its types and symbols.

That is exactly what happened after His resurrection. There were men who knew Moses, and the Psalms, and the prophets, but they did not see the inner content and meaning. But as He walked with them, and opened unto them the Scriptures from Moses, the Psalms and the prophets, in the light of the face of Jesus Christ they saw *the Man previsioned* throughout—"He interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke xxiv. 27). It requires a seeing of the risen Lord to give us the light on the Man previsioned. Until you really have a view of the face of Jesus Christ, the Old Testament is full of enigmas. Again, you cannot see Christ everywhere, except you have had a view of His face, but once you have seen that face, you will see Him everywhere. Once you have the clue by revelation you cannot read anywhere, from Genesis onward, without seeing the face of Jesus Christ.

(ii.) Provided.

In the fulness of the times God sent forth His Son—the Man provided—not created, but provided. There is a big difference now. The first man was created. The Last Adam is provided. "God will provide himself the lamb . . ." (Gen. xxii. 8). In every way the Last Adam is provided by God.

(a) Conditioned.

Even here the Man provided is conditioned. The Last Adam, as the first, was on probation. He was placed upon a basis of faith and obedience, just as the first Adam—faith in His Father, obedience the practical expression of that faith. Therefore, as Son of Man He had nothing in Himself, but everything in His Father. Whatever He had as Son of God is quite another thing, but as Son of Man He did not live upon the basis of His deity : He lived upon the basis of faith and obedience, having nothing in Himself but everything in His

Father—"As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth me, he also shall live because of me" (John vi. 57). He lived by the Father.

(b) **Tested.**

Of course, we know that that conditioning was the ground of His testing. He was conditioned by faith and obedience, with every resource in His Father and none in Himself, save the resources of such a humanity as His was. (I believe that a perfect humanity has resources in itself which fallen humanity has not.) But we are now speaking of the resources of His deity, of very God. Those resources were in a place where He, for a probationary time, could only avail Himself of them through faith and obedience. Thus conditioned, He was tested by His conditioning; and tested, not by chance but by Divine appointment. He was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted. It was a part of the intention that this conditioned One should at the very outset of His life be tested by the forces of evil in this universe, subjected to the fiery trial of hell's terrible darts of temptation. Satan left that work with no angel, or band of angels. He was called into it himself. Christ met the lord of all the evil angels, and was subjected to *his* testing, not only in the wilderness but again and again, to the very last moments of His Cross, when through sneering enemies Satan still made the suggestion that, if He would only come down from that Cross, all men would believe, and He would get the following. He had come for the Cross, not to come down from the Cross; but we must remember that in the awful agony of spirit and soul and body that suggestion would not fail to have its own fierceness of temptation. Oh, what easement from the agony was offered Him in that moment, if He would but come down from the Cross, for the seeming gain of all He hung there for!

(c) **Proved.**

Tested and proved are not the same thing. Tested, then, as the result, proved. When you are proved, you have graduated from the test. If you can say of anybody, They are proved! you mean that they have been through the fire and you know them; they are established.

(d) **Perfected.**

Perfect, yet perfected. Made perfect through sufferings, we are told. The *Man*—let the word

ring in your ears—the *Man* perfected! He has walked in the foreordained works triumphant. I work "today and tomorrow, and the third day I am perfected" (Luke xiii. 32). Perfect walk by faith, by obedience, and the perfected Man as the result.

(iii.) **Instated.**

The Man installed at God's right hand, The perfected Man, with a perfected Humanity, installed at God's right hand as representative, and as a representation of God's realised goal for the race. There you have all that is meant by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Installed as representative, as model, to which the new creation in Christ Jesus is to be conformed—perfected humanity.

(iv.) **Related.**

God "gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 22-23). The Man related, in the relationship of Head to the Body.

(v.) **Corporately Expressed.**

What is the final issue? The Man corporately expressed: "...unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ...." (Eph. iv. 13). That does not relate to an individual, but to the Church. "What is man," inquired the Psalmist, "that thou art mindful of him...." (Ps. viii. 4). The Apostle takes up the question, and, still relating it to God's thought for humanity in general, God's intention, goes on to say that so far we do not see that truth of man corporately, collectively consummated, but that we behold Jesus made a little lower than the angels, and travelling the same path as man up to a point for an express purpose, and realising it—"we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, *even* Jesus because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that...he should taste death for every man." Again, "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. ii.). There is the man collectively or corporately *expressed*.

That is the unveiling of the face of Jesus Christ. The face of Jesus Christ embraces all

What is signified by the "Man Christ Jesus" from eternity to eternity in relation to God's thought, God's will, God's design. It is all behind that face. That is what we mean, when we say, Catch a glimpse of the face of Jesus Christ and you have the wonder of all ages, the glory of God from eternity to eternity in the face of Jesus Christ; the Divine counsels, the creation, the redemption, the glorification of humanity, of man, in "the Man Christ Jesus." That is for those who see that Righteous One, hear the voice of His mouth. But for those who through disobedience, unbelief, still allow the veil which the god of this age hath cast over the hearts of the unbelieving, still allow that veil to remain, God "hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by the *man* whom he hath ordained...." (Acts xvii. 31). For the one, the Man represents the glory of God. For the other, the Man represents the judgment of God. It is to be in and through and by a Man. You see how God has summed up all things in Christ. It is all in the face of Jesus Christ.

I do not know what that conveys to you. It may sound to you more or less like a clever summary of the Bible and of truth. Let me make it clear that this is not the fruit of simply sitting down and studying. I did not sit down and study this. It came to me like the passing of something before my heart, and I tell you I was stirred in heart at what I saw to be the meaning of the face of Jesus Christ. I can understand now why Paul was revolutionised. He saw the face of Jesus Christ. He did not simply see a blazing light on the way to Damascus. He saw the significance of Jesus of Nazareth in the glory, the *Man* Whom probably he had seen in Jerusalem; the Man Whom he had hated, loathed as a blasphemer, as an apostate; the Man Whom he had thought to be of all creatures the most objectionable, an impostor; the Man Whom he thought had been rightly handled and given His due, when they crucified Him. He saw that Man, and what that Man meant as installed in heaven at God's right hand, and there broke upon him something of the significance of Jesus Christ, and he saw the face of Jesus in that eternal, and universal, and spiritual sense, that all-inclusive sense. Out from that beholding—for he never stopped beholding inwardly the face of Jesus—there grew and grew this explanation of history; this explanation of the race; this explanation of man; this explanation of human destiny; this

explanation of the Cross: this unveiling of things which no man could ever know by reason or study. There came out into the heart of Paul the knowledge of what went on in Divine counsels in eternity of old. It was all seen in the face of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ interpreted everything, explained everything, revealed everything.

This it was that made Paul the man he was. It was this that gave him the power of endurance, the power of suffering, the power of going on. He had seen the face of Jesus Christ, and what a realm, what a wealth, what fulness was in that face! He says, "We have this ministry" (II Cor. iv. 1). What ministry? Why this, God hath "shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"; and our ministry is simply to tell what we have seen in that face, the meaning of Jesus Christ, "the Man Christ Jesus"—the amazing wonder of a *Man*! Yes, not forgetting all that is extra to that, and ever was, and ever will be of Godhead, but in the light of that the amazing wonder of a *Man*! I confess to you that while I glory in Christ as Son of God, and while I glory in Him as very God, and in God as God, the real wonder of it all only comes to me as I see that wealth of glory coming down into the face of a *Man*; as I see that expressed in a *Man*, all taken up in a *Man*. Yes, *Man* of my manhood, but different! *Man* torn with all my passions, and yet without sin in Himself! That is to say, a *Man* beset by all my temptations, and knowing what it is to have to battle with that pressure which comes upon us in order to overwhelm us. In our case much of it arises from within; but, oh, we do know to some extent what it is to have that pressure come upon us from without, and to have something evil impinging upon us. He knew the full force of that as you and I have never known it—the impingement of universal evil to try and make Him think other than He would think, and act other than He would act, and choose other than He would choose, and that under all manner of circumstances which would facilitate the temptation and the tempter.

Yes, a *Man* has triumphed. A *Man* has taken up the fight. A *Man* has come through, and in humanity has realised God's end in Himself and taken that perfected humanity back into the glory, and is installed and related. And now by the blessed eternal Spirit, through faith, we are joined to

that Man; and when we gather around the Table and take the bread and the cup, we in faith are taking in spirit of that perfect humanity—joined to Him one spirit, to be one Body, one glorified humanity eventually, of which we now have the earnest in the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

It is marvellous! It is beyond our apprehension, our power of expression! Oh, that the Lord would open our hearts, yea, break them open, and give us a new apprehension and grasp of the meaning of the face of Jesus Christ! Dwell upon that, and ask the Lord continually to shine in, shine in, shine in, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The Son of Man! Do you notice where He took that title? He asked: "Who do men say that I am?" "Elijah!" One of the prophets of old! "But who say ye that I am?" "The Christ of God!" Then he commanded them to tell no man, but to keep that to themselves, to keep that covered. That was something which for the moment was to be suspended. At that point for the first time He took to

Himself the title "Son of Man"—"The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected...killed." What is the import of this. Oh, He has leapt over the bounds of Messiah-ship. "The Christ of God!" That is all right for Israel, but He has gone beyond Israel now. Israel is refusing their Messiah. The title "Son of Man" passes far beyond the bounds of Israel and is the racial representation. Not Israel, but all men: He is the world-wide, universal Son of *Man*. How? By the Cross. The Christ has leapt all the limitations of nationality, even of Israel, and has bounded the range of humanity. He took the title "Son of Man," as Israel refused, their Messiah and the Cross came into view. He saw that the Cross was leading to a baptism of passion, which would mean a baptism of fire into all the earth. Not to Israel now! Say nothing about that! This is not the time to preach Israel's Messiah! The time now has come into view when by the Cross *all men* are coming into God's eternal thought.

The Lord open our hearts to see the face of Jesus Christ.
T. A.-S.

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The Necessity for Brokenness

“By reason of breakings they purify themselves.”—(Job. 41 : 25.)

GOD uses most for His glory those people and things which are most perfectly broken. The sacrifices He accepts are broken and contrite hearts. It was the breaking down of Jacob's natural strength at Peniel that got him where God could clothe him with spiritual power. It was the breaking the surface of the rock at Horeb, by the stroke of Moses' rod, that let out the cool waters to thirsty people.

It was when the 300 elect soldiers under Gideon broke their pitchers, a type of breaking themselves, that the hidden lights shone forth to the consternation of their adversaries. It was when the poor widow broke the seal of the little pot of oil, and poured it forth, that God multiplied it to pay her debts and supply means of support.

It was when Esther risked her life and broke through the rigid etiquette of a heathen court, that she obtained favour to rescue her people from death. It was when Jesus took the five loaves and broke them, that the bread was multiplied in the very act of breaking, sufficient to feed five thousand. It was when Mary broke her beautiful alabaster box, rendering it henceforth useless, that the pent-up perfume filled the house. It was when Jesus allowed His precious body to be broken to pieces by thorns and nails and spear, that His inner life was poured out, like a crystal ocean, for thirsty sinners to drink and live.

It is when a beautiful grain of corn is broken up in the earth by DEATH, that its inner heart sprouts forth and bears hundreds of other grains. And thus, on and on, through all history, and all biography, and all vegetation, and all spiritual life, God must have **BROKEN THINGS**.

Those who are broken in wealth, and broken in self-will, and broken in their ambitions, and broken in their beautiful ideals, and broken in worldly reputation, and broken in their affections, and broken oftentimes in health ; those who are despised and seem utterly forlorn and helpless, the Holy Ghost is seizing upon, and using for God's glory. “The lame take the prey,” Isaiah tells us.

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