

**A WITNESS  
AND  
A TESTIMONY.**

1946

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

# "A Witness and Testimony"

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JANUARY-FEBRUARY, 1946

NO. I, VOL. 24

## Overcomer Testimony

III

### The Prize of the On-High Calling

READING: II Cor. xii. 1; Phil. iii. 12-14.

#### The Overcomer's Declaration

We are going to gather up what we have already said, and present it in a simple and definite way. In the words which we have read, penned by Paul to the Philippians, we have the Overcomer's declaration, and it is gathered into a very small fragment of words. "One thing I do...". Before we can go further, we have to make a little adjustment, for Paul did not actually say, "One thing I do". You will notice the "I do" is in italics, which means that it is not in the original text. Paul said, "But one thing, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus". The verb "I do" is not there, but there is a verb which has to come in to make this statement intelligible, and the verb is found later—"One thing I pursue". That is the complete statement. "One thing I pursue". "I press on"—'pursue' is the better word. "One thing I pursue". Of course, it is quite right to say, "One thing I do", and I suppose in order to make the sentence simple for English readers the translators put those words in, but the correct, or the exact way of putting it is: "But one thing, forgetting the things which are behind...I pursue..." "One thing I pursue". It brings the object of pursuit as the governing thing: not what I do, but the object. Paul is not saying, What I do is all-important. It is the object that I have in view that is all-important. So we are at once brought in that way face to face with the object.

#### The Object of the Overcomer

When we ask what the object is, he calls it "the

prize of the on-high calling of God in Christ Jesus". You notice he has said, "Not as though I had already attained..."—it is not 'attained'. Properly, it is 'obtained', and you can put in brackets there—"the prize". "But one thing I pursue—the prize of the on-high calling of God in Christ Jesus". The on-high calling has bound up with it the prize.

#### The On-High Calling

Let us weigh our words as we go along. "The on-high calling", the calling in Christ Jesus. Paul often used that word 'calling', and it is not what we mean when we say that someone called us. 'You called me', as you are called in the morning; or someone calls you across the road. That is not the idea of the word at all. It is what we mean when we speak of a calling or a vocation. 'This is my calling'. Paul used the two words in I Cor. vii. 20. "Let each man abide in that calling wherein he was called". They are two different Greek words. One is being called, the other is that to which a man is called. This latter word can be seen in Eph. i. 18; II Thess. i. 11; II Tim. i. 9; Heb. iii. 1; II Pet. i. 10. What he is saying is, Are you in this vocation or that? Do not seek to get out of it; abide in the calling wherein ye were called. The on-high calling, therefore, is a vocation which has to do with glory. It is that for which we have been apprehended or possessed. He says, "...that I may possess that for which I have become possessed by Christ Jesus"; and that possession is the prize of the on-high calling in Christ Jesus.

#### "In Christ Jesus"

Now we must go to the end of the statement again, to that well-known and yet still-so-little understood formula—"In Christ Jesus". "The on-high calling in Christ Jesus". Our thought about that is usually as of the sphere which Christ represents, that Christ is a sphere; a certain specified and well-defined limit or circle. Well, that is quite true, but that is only half of

it. That defines a bound and sets forth or indicates the exclusiveness of Christ. That is a realm, and you are either in that realm or out of that realm; you are in Christ or you are out of Christ, and it makes Christ a self-contained, settled, fixed realm of things, and there is no overlapping; it is either in or out.

But the other half is that it is the inclusiveness of Christ. It is what is inside that sphere. "In Christ Jesus" means that God has put everything of His thought and intention within Christ, it is all found there. All that God has designed is in Christ Jesus. It is a mighty fulness, inclusive and exclusive. You have none of it outside, but all of it in, and it is what is in Christ by the summing up of God the Father that is indicated by this—"the prize of the on-high calling in Christ Jesus". That is why I just took that little fragment from II Cor. xii. 1—"visions and revelations" of Christ. That is what we want to see—what is in Christ, visions and revelations. Have you ever for a moment paused to ask the question—How did Paul get to know all that he talks about? I pick up the letter to the Romans and I read through near to the end of the 8th chapter, and I hear Paul talking about things that happened before ever this world had an existence, going back into the very presence of God and hearing the Godhead talking between themselves, so to speak, and arranging things and saying what They were going to do. How did Paul get to know all that? Is this imagination? Paul has got it from heaven. You notice what he says, in II Cor. xii. "I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not; God knoweth), such a one caught up even to the third heaven. And I know such a man (whether in the body, or apart from the body, I know not; God knoweth), how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter". "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord". If they were not lawful for him to utter, they are not in the New Testament, but what is here is enough to get on with, and he intimates vast things, immense things, things altogether beyond our comprehension, things which will take eternity and the vast concourse of a countless host to understand, to enter into. "Visions and revelations of the Lord".

Amongst these visions and revelations, he has seen the on-high calling of God in Christ Jesus, he is intimating that there is such a thing, and he is telling us about his own attitude toward that thing, he is seeking with all his heart to get all believers to take the same attitude and to be of the same spirit and mind as himself. "I labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily" to "present every man complete in Christ" (Col. i. 28-29). It is the same thing. He has seen what is in Christ as the on-high calling of believers, and that object is before him. It is an immense thing represented by Christ in the purpose of God from eternity to eternity, and he sees that that thing, that immense thing in Christ, is the inheritance of the sons of God. "...bringing many sons unto glory" (Heb. ii. 10). It is the inheritance

of sonship, and, as you so well know, sonship, according to the New Testament, is something more than spiritual childhood. It is the full-grown man spiritually, and this is the inheritance of the full-grown sons.

### Two Aspects of our Inheritance in Christ

#### (a) Conformity to the Image of Christ

"The on-high calling". I could not, even if I stayed and if I tried, speak to my own satisfaction or yours of what that on-high calling is, because I do not know. I can only come with this tremendous impact that it is something very great, very glorious, and say that this is the object which makes Overcomers and will make the Overcomer company of which we have been speaking. It is this object, and it is this attitude which will do it. This is only an appeal, with a feeble presentation of the ground of appeal. It is what God has revealed in visions and revelations to Paul as to our inheritance in Christ, and it has two sides or two aspects.

Firstly, it has to do with His nature. God has wrought out in the Person of His Son in human manhood right through to completion His thought for the new race, the new creation: taking it to the depths where "He who knew no sin was made sin for us" (in our place), and raising it to the highest heights, placing it at His own right hand, glorifying it with His own glory, filling it with His own fulness, and so expressing Himself in that glorified humanity, telling us that that is the pattern to which He would conform us and has predestined us. "Foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. viii. 29). The Church is called to that and every part of it in its own measure to share that termed 'the fulness of him that filleth all in all' (Eph. i. 23) as to nature. This Church, of which we are parts, this Body of which we are members, is called to be so changed, firstly inwardly and finally outwardly, as to have the very glory that now fills Christ resting upon it. "A glorious church"; "having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious" (Rev. xxi. 11); "called unto his eternal glory" (I. Pet. v. 10).

"I will come to visions and revelations", and the first one of those is what Paul saw on the way to Damascus and called "the heavenly vision". "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts xxvi. 19). He came to see by instruction of the Holy Spirit and by Divine revelation, heaven-given vision, that that which he saw on the Damascus road was the thing unto which he was called—to share that glory, to be glorified like that in Christ Jesus, and he says, That is the prize of the on-high calling! It has to do with our nature being conformed to the nature of Christ, sinless, therefore capable of being endowed with Divine glory.

#### (b) Service in Christ Jesus

But the other half is that it has to do with service, the service that is in Christ Jesus, His work. "The on-high calling of God in Christ Jesus"—the work as well as the nature of Christ in glory. The New Testa-

ment has not a few intimations as to what the work of Christ is and is destined to be throughout the ages of the ages. It is to minister God to the creation, to fill the creation with God, to keep everything fed by God. God is life, God is love, God is everything that is glorious, and to be the agency, the vehicle, the vessel of ministering God to the creation is the consummate vision of the book of the Revelation, in the form of the city, in the form of that which is right at the centre of the city, upon which the city lives, from which it derives its life; the tree of life, the river of water of life, and then the leaves of the tree for the health of the nations. It is all a symbolic intimation that here is a great ministry centred in the Church in Christ Jesus; the Church, one with Christ Jesus, to minister life, health, glory and all that God is, beyond itself. "The on-high calling of God in Christ Jesus". It is what is in Christ Jesus as to nature and purpose. We must not think that the glorification of the Lord Jesus is the end, an end in itself. Our glorification is not going to be an end in itself. God does not believe in ends: there is no end to Him and He does not believe in having ends. "Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end" (Isa. ix. 7). That is not only a matter of time limit; that is a matter of expansion, dimension, increase. It does not mean that the increase of His Kingdom will not cease at a certain *time*, it means the increase itself will go on and on, fulness so boundless. The high calling in Christ Jesus is to maintain that eternal increase. You may think that this is extravagant language and very high talking, but I will come back to the practical thing in a moment, to now, to ourselves.

#### Hindrances to the Pursuit of the Prize

We have already said in our previous meditations that the Church being gathered out of the nations in this dispensation, and being slowly formed into a vessel, and inwardly changed, and spiritually developed, is being prepared to receive the resurrection glory of Christ with a view to ministering that glory being the agency of that glory in the Kingdom which is coming, the everlasting Kingdom, when the kingdom of this world shall become the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ, invested with His glory. Now Paul by revelation had come to see what Christ risen and glorified signified as God's thought and intention for the Church which is His Body, and he says, That is our calling, that is our destined vocation. Then, if that is the object that He has in view and presents to us, the Christian life is something very much more than getting converted, however much that may be—and it is a great thing. Never let us be content with that. The good can be the enemy of the best in that respect if we are not very careful. That being the object, there has got to be an attitude, and Paul say, As to the object, this is my attitude: one thing I pursue, I am a man of one object, and upon that object I bring everything to bear, to converge, so that one thing in all things becomes the only thing that matters. As to the past—forgetting. In this chapter of his own history, he refers to two things in the past, things

which he deliberately forgets. They are two forms of things that could very much interfere with this pursuit to rob of this prize. In the first place he mentions the prizes of this world, the other prizes. The prize of inheritance; look at the chapter—what he inherited as a Hebrew of the Hebrews! What an inheritance! The prize of inheritance, the prize of status—a Pharisee. If you really get a thoroughbred Pharisee, you have the embodiment and personification of status. Then there was attainment, he was a scholar of the best school. And so much more in that realm of prizes here. He says in effect, if I rest upon anything of worldly prizes, worldly status, anything at all that I have or am as to this world, it will interfere with this quest and get in the way of that prize, so I forget it, deliberately forget it, I banish it from my mind!

Beware, young people. The enemy can offer you prizes in order to steal *the* prize from you, he can substitute for the prize—and I am not saying that there are not prizes so far as this world goes. There *are* prizes, there are things for which men barter their souls and when they have got them, they find them wholly empty at the end. Beware of the counter-prizes. If you are going to be an Overcomer, you have got to be like this Overcomer and say, These things do not count so far as this one thing is concerned, those things must take a subservient place. You may say, I am successful! Do not say you are successful until you can say you have got the prize of the on-high calling. It is an attitude—forgetting those things for the one thing. This does not mean that you should accept a low or meagre level of life and work, and be second or third-rate people. It only means that the chief *end* should overshadow all else.

Then he refers to another side which he deliberately forgets, which can equally retard the progress and arrest the advance and slow the step. "Persecuting the church"—he speaks of that to this church. The blind folly of yesterday, the blindness and ignorance of the past and what I did in it. Oh, Satan is so ready to bring up our past to paralyse us. The foolishness, the weakness, the mistakes, the blunders, the sins—yes, he is always bringing those up and saying, This disqualifies you, puts you out of the running, this prize is not for you! Look at yourself, look what kind of history you have! And Paul says, I put that out of the way, I am not going to be discouraged by past failures. An Overcomer must not be discouraged by past failure, though that has been repeated. If ever there was one who should have felt himself disqualified for this prize, it was this man. I persecuted the Church, I consented to Stephen's death, I held the clothes of the witnesses: I pursued the saints into distant cities, I cast into prison both men and women; I can never hope to be awarded that prize! Ah no! "Forgetting the things which are behind". "But one thing".

I have often said that I think Paul really did have a hand in the writing of Hebrews; whether he actually wrote it or not, he is there, and you remember—"Let us...lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race

that is set before us, looking off unto Jesus" (Heb. xii. 1-2). The weights that impede, hold back, the sin so easily besetting—what is it? There is no chapter division in Paul's letter, we have to run straight on. "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for the proving of things not seen...By faith...By faith... Let us lay aside...the sin which doth so easily beset us". If we are going to run, all unbelief, all doubt, all questioning must go: the easily besetting sin of doubt unfaith, must be stripped and laid aside to run this race unto this prize. "I forget". The Lord would have us forget in that sense anything that would get in the way of this attitude. As to the past, I forget. As to the present, I gird myself, I press, I pursue. I may be a doctor, a teacher, a nurse or anything, but in and through all things, I have one object and my earthly calling, earthly vocation, earthly business, must be made the sphere in which this end is pursued. It must not be the thing in itself and the end in itself, but my occasion, my opportunity and my means of learning Christ. There is plenty in everyday life to make a real knowledge of Christ necessary, and so we should turn everyday life to use, in its adversities, its trials, its difficulties, to gain Christ, to know Christ. It is a present thing, it is not all in the future. It is a present thing, this movement to the great consummation.

Let us get this word—I pursue. In Phil. iii, that word occurs twice. You will not find it in the translation. Paul says he persecuted the Church. That is exactly the same word as he uses here—I Pursue. It sounds strange to say, I persecute the prize of the on-high calling, but you can see the meaning. How did Paul persecute the Church? Well, he did it very thoroughly and he stood at nothing, he let nothing get in his way. He went the whole way in persecution and not only men, but women; this thing related to Jesus of Nazareth and had to go, lock, stock and barrel, and he would not spare himself until this was done! That is the spirit of Saul of Tarsus. He says, I bring that spirit right over in relation to Christ. He uses the same word. That is the spirit of the Overcomer, nothing less than that will do.

#### The Present Practical Value

I must close here by coming to that which I suggested just now would come back to us before we finished—the present practical value of this. It all looks so future, so heavenly, so beyond, but it is not. Dear friends, we should be very, very much the poorer if all this in the New Testament through and by the Apostle Paul was not there. I mean, how impoverished we should be had we not got what Paul brought, what the Lord has given us through that dear man. He

never knew it was going to be like that. He wrote some letters out of his heart for some immediate local or localised situations and needs, to help certain people in certain places over certain present difficulties and problems. He never knew they were going to be "The Epistles of Paul", lasting two thousand years, read the world over, fed upon and building up the Church for which he had such a concern, and bringing multitudes into greater fulnesses of Christ. There it is, and it is all due to this attitude and what he was prepared to pay in taking this attitude, of being of this mind and this spirit. That is where the practical thing is. If you are going to be an Overcomer of this sort, if you are going with the Lord wholly and utterly, to persecute in this thorough-going way God's full end, to pursue it like this and pay the price—do not do it with this motive and object—there is undoubtedly going to be tremendous enrichment of others, and the fact is, and it is a settled law, that the enrichment of others can only come in this way. Those who will not pay the price forfeit the fruitfulness. The real values of Christ have come all the way through the centuries through men after this sort, men of this mind. You may say that you are not a Paul, you are not a great person in the Church. No, but greatness is not measured by what you are in yourself. Your greatness and your value and your fruitfulness will be according to the utterness of your abandonment to God's full thought. He will see to the rest, and many will thank God that you paid the price, that you suffered for an utter way for the Lord, that you counted not the cost too great. That is the way of fruitfulness, and that is how it is that Paul has been such an enriching factor, simply because of his attitude, his spirit, because he carried this out. "One thing...". Not a man of divided interest, an iron in every fire. "I pursue the prize of the on-high calling of God in Christ Jesus". Because he so pursued, saints have been enriched and helped, strengthened and made full in every age since. That is possible, it is true. If you go the whole way and suffer with the Lord for His full purpose, that in itself will be the way of the enrichment of others, and that is where the thing is so practical. It comes down out of the ethereal, the merely visionary. You be out and out for the Lord and many will get the benefit. And so, as we have been saying, by a remnant the whole Church comes into blessing. The remnant satisfies God and then the whole is benefitted because God is satisfied.

The Lord make us of this spirit, of this kind. "One thing I pursue".

T.A.S.

# “The Word of God and the Testimony of Jesus”

(completed)

## The Testimony of Jesus

The Word of God is a revelation which becomes embodied in a people, and that leads us immediately to the second part of the phrase—'the testimony of Jesus'. What is the testimony of Jesus? Well, it is Christ in a people. It is not a people who talk about Christ, but it is a people in whom Christ really is their life; and the amazing thing is that the world round about us knows it. Many of them can read us like books. We need to be careful what they read. Paul says to the Corinthians "Ye are an epistle of Christ". What others read is Christ. They do not read us, they read Someone else; it is Christ. It does not mean that people really think that or explain it, but they are meeting something that is not just ourselves. "We are a sweet savour of Christ unto God, in them that are being saved, and in them that are perishing; to the one a savour from death unto death; to the other a savour from life unto life" (II Cor. ii. 15-16). Oh, what a need to have a savour, to have an effect, to cause a situation wherever you go! The pathetic thing is that so many Christians move about and there is no effect, nobody is interested. I do not mean that our effect will be by what we do outwardly. It will be the nature of our inward life. Am I living by the Lord Jesus or myself? If by myself, then all the time I am doing it there is no impact. If we are wrecked upon Him—Lord, you must see me through; it is not I that live but Christ liveth in me—if we simply trust and count on Him for that, there is something happening. The meaning of abiding in Him is somewhere near this point. Where is your life? in Him? And now I live in Him. Christ our life. The testimony of Jesus is the embodiment in a people of the life of Jesus.

### (a) The Testimony Inwrought by the Word of God

Now we come back for a few minutes to the explanation of how that happens. The Word of God is very closely linked with this. It is no good our just trying to be a testimony, or wishing we were. It will happen by our response to the Word of God, what the Lord says to us primarily through His Word. Oh, that there were a ministry of the Word of God, that the Lord really spoke more in these days, that when we went and heard the word, we really heard God speaking and knew the Lord had spoken to us, and there were issues arising. How easy to go and hear what is called the word of God and mentally sum it up and say, That was good, or, I do not like it. If the Lord Himself stood in the midst we could not talk like that. Everything hangs on what the Lord speaks to us. We will never be in the testimony of Jesus without the Word of God inwrought in our lives, obeyed, yielded to.

### (b) The Testimony Manifested by the Life of Jesus

That leads me to this very urgent point—not only

as to salvation, but the Word of God will press with us the matter of His Lordship. Only if we capitulate to Him as absolute Lord shall we have any testimony, and when up to the light that we have we obey His Lordship, He will bring us to that other crisis of the Cross where it is from henceforth going to be only Christ; and if He brings us through that and we say, Yes, Lord, from now I want it to be you and not myself, there will be terrific tests to turn us back. No one can fight that battle for us; we have all to go through alone over that. In your inner life, the acid test is coming. Do you go on with the Lord? Well, when we have got through and have said, Lord, whatever it means, all right! something breaks and something is done in us, perhaps unconsciously to ourselves; but there begins to be a release through us of His life, and that is the beginning of the testimony of Jesus. It is in a people in whom His life is released, and if you want to know how His life is released, the Word of God is very clear—"always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body" (II Cor. iv. 10). What is the life of Jesus? Notice the word 'Jesus'. It is the name of His humanity, the name of His humility, the Lamb of God. The life manifested will primarily and essentially be that life. It will not be something terrific and terrifying. It will be the gentleness, the meekness, the letting go of the Lord Jesus. "Behold the Lamb of God". It will be something not aggressive. "As a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearer is dumb; yea, he opened not his mouth" (Isa. liii. 7). "When he was reviled, he reviled not again" (I Pet. ii. 23). Does not that test us out? That is the acid test. The testimony of Jesus is the one thing that smashes the power of Satan. Satan has no hold whatever where that is. They were beheaded, they went out, they died, but "they lived and reigned a thousand years... The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished" (Rev. xx. 4, 5). "They lived". Do you want to know how to live? That is the way. The Lord Jesus said, "Because I live, ye shall live" (John xiv. 19); living by Him. So it is a living testimony to a living Lord Who is Jesus; the humanity and the humility of the Lord Jesus being produced in our lives and having its effect. We all know what a tremendous impact there is even on the people of the world if they meet someone who is broken in spirit. Yes, the testimony of Jesus is His life.

### (c) The Testimony Triumphant over Satan

I want to close with this: whether in an individual or in a company the testimony of Jesus arouses all the antagonism of hell. Satan wants to quench a people in whom the Lord Jesus really is, and one reason is this, that the name of Jesus is the name

above every name. It is not only the name of His humiliation, it is the name of His exaltation. " God... gave unto him the name which is above every name ; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow " (Phil. ii 9-10). Where Jesus is in a people, Satan has met his match and been beaten. I think that is what Paul meant when he gave us those triumphant words " Now thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ " (II Cor. ii. 14). Wherever he went, he was in victory. Satan was beaten even before he got there. Paul knew that, as he kept in Christ, it was certain victory in every place. There is no defeat in Christ, there is only defeat when we leave our place in Christ and come down to ourselves. Abiding in Him, it is all victory. Paul had learnt the secret of where his strength lay ; it was in his Lord. Satan knew it ; so before the Apostle came into a place, there was an uproar ready for him. Satan creates a lot of noise and upset, but let us learn to keep hidden and abiding and it is victory all the time. I think the wonderful earthly life of the Lord Jesus is such a tremendous testimony to that. When the storm was raging, He was asleep on a pillow, and when they all got so worked up. He said, " O ye of little faith ". Don't you know that nothing can go wrong when I am here ? I can even afford to be asleep and it is all right. The Lord may seem asleep in your circumstances. He is not careless but He seems to be uninterested, and our soul life begins to get stirred up ; but in Him is our peace and our triumph and our testimony, the testimony of Jesus. The Lord is wanting to produce individuals, and saints together, who are an impact against the power of the enemy all the time because they have learned to receive the Word of God so that it works effectually in them. This wonderful Word of God is useless except as you have found in experience what it means, and it is working in you. We must go very carefully or we shall be those people of whom Paul speaks, who handle the Word of God deceitfully, use it and trade with it. It is for us to say, Lord, make

that word true in me ; then the Lord begins to deal with us to make it true in us. If He dries us up from talking about things for a time, it is very good, because it is far more important for Him to do things in us and make them true than it is for us to be able to talk about them.

#### (d) The Testimony Operative through the Obedience of Faith

That is a brief and inadequate summing up of those tremendous expressions, but I believe that in them is a key to what is God's counter to the days in which we live. It is obedience to the revealed will of God that makes us a testimony. I find so many people saying that so and so may be God's thought but to-day things are so difficult, you cannot have anything like the Word of God now because it is too difficult ; and therein is the difference between an overcomer and one who is not. I remember speaking to a servant of the Lord a few years ago. He said, Brother, it does not matter whether a thing is impossible. Does God say it ? It is all impossible, quite impossible ; if you start looking at winds and waves, you will never get through. It is just that He says it. " Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it ". Lord, if that is what you are after, a people joined to the Lord and to one another in life, I am with You ; with You for Your full thought in a day when all is in a state of collapse. Lord, I do not mind what things look like. I want to be with You for what You want. That is the attitude of the overcomer—" they loved not their life even unto death " : a costly, but a triumphant way. It is those who hold the testimony, who embody the testimony, who reign with Him. May the Lord make us those who, in these difficult days, respond to everything He says to us and are very hungry for more, and who, when He says a thing, yield to it and trust Him to make it true in us ; and then the life will be manifested and the Lord will have in measure, and we trust in increasing measure, that counter to Satan's work in these days. C.J.B.H.

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" As long as Eph. vi. 10-18 remains in the Bible, we must be prepared for serious warfare—' And having done all, to stand '. We must fight through, and then stand victorious on the battle-field.

Is not this another secret of many unanswered prayers—that they are not fought through ? If the result is not seen as soon as expected, Christians are apt to lose heart, and if it is still longer delayed to abandon it altogether. You know the name they give to places in England when the building (or whatever it is) is abandoned when only half completed—So and so's ' Folly '. I wonder whether some of our prayers do not deserve the same stigma. Think of Wembley Tower : I have never examined it closely, but from a distance it looks as if a good beginning had been made. Luke xiv. 28-30 applies to prayers as well as towers. We must count the cost before praying the prayer of faith. We must be willing to pay the price. We must mean business. We must set ourselves to ' see things through ' (Eph. vi. 18, ' In all perseverance '). Our natural strength will fail : and herein lies the necessity for a divinely-given faith. We can then rest back in the Everlasting Arms and renew our strength continually. We can then rest as well as wrestle. In this conflict-prayer, after the definite exercise of faith, there is no need to ask the same thing again and again. It seems to me inconsistent to do so. Under these circumstances, I would say let prayer take the following forms :

- (a) A firm *standing on God-given ground*, and a constant assertion of faith and claiming of victory.
- (b) A definite fighting and *resisting of Satan's host* in the Name of Christ. I like to read passages of Scripture, such as I John iii. 8, or Rev. xii. 11 in prayer, as direct weapons against Satan.
- (c) *Praying through every aspect of the matter in detail*."

FRASER OF LISULAND.

## The Way of Spiritual Growth *R*

Before we can or will consider the laws of spiritual growth, we need to have a real concern for that growth. There must be in us a strong sense of its importance and necessity. We must realise in a living way that

1. The measure of our ultimate satisfaction to the Lord will be the measure of the fulness of Christ.
2. The measure of our value to others will depend entirely upon our own spiritual measure: not merely upon what we believe, or think, or say.
3. The measure of our own joy and satisfaction will be according to what fulness of Christ we know and live in.

Because these three things constitute the whole nature of, and reason for, our being called "into the fellowship of His (God's) Son", the New Testament is ninety per cent. occupied with the growth and maturity of believers.

As there are definite laws of growth in the physical and mental man, so there are in that of the "inward man". Some of these are quite obvious, such as proper and suitable food, pure air, regular exercise, and systematic self-discipline. To violate or neglect any of these laws of body and mind is to arrest development, limit capacity, and open the door to adverse and destructive elements.

There are corresponding laws—the counterpart of the above—in the spiritual life, with similar effects for good or ill in observance or neglect. We are not taking up these particular factors here, but are specifying three other—although related—laws of spiritual growth. The first of these is

### That Unattractive Thing—Obedience.

No one naturally likes that word. It is unpleasant from infancy onward. Its very essence seems to imply the presence of—at least—a peril of disobedience, and the universal natural dislike of it more than implies—it proves—the presence of a wish to be free from any obligation or law. Yes, that primeval revolt, and break from God which was the beginning of actual sin has entered as the Serpent's poison into the very blood-stream of the entire creation, and the very mention of obedience stirs a secret dislike, if not resentment.

It would take too much space to show how, through all time, the one thing which has been God's supreme obstacle to man's relationship with Himself has been this inherent disobedience as the active expression of unbelief. On the other hand, it would take volumes to show fully how every movement into fellowship with God in His great purposes has been based upon a demanded obedience of faith; a test, a challenge and a conflict issuing in a willing capitulation to the Divine will in some general or particular direction. Here, our only intention is to point out and emphasise the fact that there is no possibility of the slightest true and genuine spiritual progress and growth beyond the point where light received, the Lord showing His mind, has not had a definite response in practical

obedience. Time does not change this, and no matter how long we go on or, imagine that the matter is passed over, when at length the real question of approval for particular usefulness arises, we shall be brought right back to the hindrance of that reserved obedience. It is like the presence and secret working of some injury in the physical system which flares up when a particular demand is made years after. God does not live in time. All past and future is present with Him.

But there is a realm of obedience which is not law but love, and love transforms the unlovely to delight. Hence the Apostle Paul, in calling for an obedience which would make possible a spiritual enlargement, puts the matter on the basis of love, and then gives the supreme Example of the obedience of love. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ, who... became obedient" (Phil. ii. 5). It is those whose love for the Lord leads to swift actions in relation to light received, who make swift progress, and are seen to grow up in beauty before the Lord. On the other hand, those who are careless or rebellious when the Lord has spoken, and tardy in response—*practical* response—are marked by repeated defeats, recurrent bouts of spiritual cloudiness, and inability to meet an emergency demand when it arises. Too often this lack of obedience, or positive disobedience, is due to its origin in Satan—Pride.

The second thing to be mentioned here is

### That Unrecognised Thing—Adjustableness

One of the most common causes of spiritual stultification is fixedness. It is peculiarly common in the realm where Christian truth has been reduced to a fixed form, order, system, and creed. The doctrines of Christianity are such and such; so many. The accepted and established ideas of Christian service and methods are so-and-so. Peter had his fixed position as to Jews and Gentiles, and, because of it, came perilously near missing the larger purpose of God, and presented the Lord with a real battleground in his Christianity. It has so very largely resolved itself into a finality of position, which results in a closed door to fuller revelation as to what God *means* by His word. The fact is, that God only gives us enough light to get us to take the next step, but when that step has been taken, we are in the way of being shown that much more was meant by the Lord than He showed then. The first expectations of many servants of the Lord in the Bible, expectations resultant from something said by the Lord to them, were later seen to have been not all that He really meant, but there was something more, and perhaps other than they thought.

Can anyone really dispute that full light very often means a shedding of things and ideas that *we thought* were of God? Is it not true that, as we *go on*, we find that certain leadings of the Lord were tactical, intended to get us to a certain place where alone we could learn of a greater necessity? There is very

much of this kind of thing in relation to both doctrine, practice, and service—its nature and ways, and while Divine principles will never change to all eternity, the clothing of those principles may vary and change with both dispensations and generations and stages of our own lives.

In all this—while *Truth* remains unalterable—the only way to grow is to be adjustable and not static and fixed. Do your religious traditions bind you in such a way that you are not free to move with God? If He sees this to be so, He may not give you the light necessary to enlargement. But if He sees that, although you may be in a *comparatively* false position, your heart is really set on His fulness at any cost, He may present you with light which will test your adjustableness severely. See the case of the disciples of John the Baptist transferring their discipleship to Christ. See the case of Peter and what happened in the home of Cornelius. See also the case of Apollos in Acts xviii. 24-28; as also the disciples mentioned earlier in that chapter.

Our third principle of growth is

#### That Crisis Point of Committal

Very often the whole mounting avalanche of Divine working in our lives—an avalanche built up as silently and slowly as the added snowflakes in the Alps—just waits to move with power and overwhelming for that final—yet all-inclusive—act of committal. We wait; we think, wrestle, contemplate, analyse, go round-and-round; we reason and argue; we recognise that there is nothing else for it, and even say so; we even come to the point when the matter is settled in our conviction and acceptance, and we think

that we are over the hedge, but nothing happens, nothing eventuates. Why is it? The Lord knows more than we do about the deceitfulness of our hearts. A covenant has two sides, and in the Old Testament two sacrifices were connected with a covenant; one representing God, the other the offerer; *both* were killed and the two parties to the covenant were represented as passing between the two (See Abraham in Gen. xv.). There has to be a slaying of something *on our side*! In other words, God is waiting until we have burned our boats behind us. Though we may have approached the shore of His will and way for us, there will be nothing from God's side while our boats are just left on the shore so that, if things don't go quite as we expect, we still can retreat. That boat is an evidence of doubt or reservation. It must be burned, so that—whatever the consequence—we have no alternatives.

The young believer will not grow unless he or she makes a committal in testimony, so letting others know where they stand. The law holds good in every stage of development and progress. If *policy* governs, or fear, or how such a step will affect our prospects, or any consideration which conflicts with what we know in our deepest hearts is the way indicated for us—for us—those things are boats or bridges representing a false "Safety-first" policy. As when the bleating lambs preserved by Saul—the finger of God will point to them and say, What mean those boats? God will wait for the full and final capitulation without a reservation, and to defer is only to be involved in confusion, and either becoming a misfit, having missed God's first best, or losing out altogether.

T. A-S.

**Acknowledgments.**—We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts (other than local) received between October 1st and November 30th, 1945:

Abereynon, 10s.; Aclc. 10s.; Andover, 10s.; Ashford, 6s. 6d.; Ashstead, 10s.; Banstead, 10s.; Barnstaple, 5s. 6d.; Bexhill, 12s. 6d.; Bexley Heath, 2s. 6d.; Birmingham, 5s., 5s.; 3s. 11d., 10s. and 1s. 6d.; Bolton, 4s. 6d.; Bradford, 10s.; Braintree, 5s.; Brechin, £2 10s.; Brighton, 10s.; Bristol, £2 3s.; Burnham, £1; Cairo, 10s.; Cambridge, 7s. 6d.; Capel Bangor, 3s.; Clevedon, 10s.; Clyne, £1; Copenhagen, £5; Crowborough, 4s.; Denholm, 10s.; Derby, 10s.; Dublin, 5s. and 5s.; Eastbourne, 7s. 6d. and £2 2s.; East Grinstead, 5s.; Edinburgh, 6s. and 10s.; Epsom, 10s.; Falmouth, 3s. 6d.; Flushing, N.Y., £1; Forest Hall, £2; Fremantle, 16s. 8d.; Gateshead, 5s.; Glasgow, 2s., £1 and £1; Gt. Malvern, 3s.; Gumligen, £1 17s. 8d.; Heathfield, £1, 10s. and 5s.; Hendon, 2s.; Heronsgate, 7s. 6d.; Higham Ferrers, 10s.; Hove, £1 and 5s.; Ilkley, 5s.; Jarrow-on-Tyne, £1; Joppa, 1s. 9d.; Kansas City, Mo., £1 4s. 8d.; Keswick, £1; Kingston, 2s. 6d.; Kirkcaldy, 1s. 3d.; Lancaster, Pa., 12s. 6d.; Leyland, 2s. 6d.; London, S.E.4, 4s. 6d.; London, S.E.5, 5s.; London, S.E.13, 5s.; London, S.E.22, 3s.; London, S.E.23, 5s.; London, S.W.10, 10s.; London,

S.W.11, £1 17s.; London, S.W.12, 3s.; London, S.W.18; 5s.; London, W.3, 2s.; London, W.12, 10s.; London, W.12, 2s. 6d.; London, W.13, 5s.; Loughborough, 10s.; Manchester, £1; Margate, 16s.; Mill Hill, £1; Newcastle-on-Tyne, £1 and 2s.; New Milton, 5s.; North Berwick 2s. 6d.; Norwich, 5s.; Padstow, 2s.; Perth, £10; Plymouth, 5s.; Port Herald, 10s.; Purley, 1s.; Quinton, 2s. 6d.; St. Albans, 5s. 6d.; St. Austell, 12s. 6d. and £3; St. Davids, 2s. 6d.; Salem, Oregon, £12 6s. 11d. and £5; Schenectady, N.Y., £1 4s. 8d.; Seaton, 6d. and 2s. 6d.; Seattle, Wash., £1; Shippensburg, Pa., 7s. 6d.; Southbourne, £1; Southwick, 10s.; Spennymoor, 5s.; Stillorgan, 3s.; Swansea, 5s. and 2s. 6d.; Sydenham, 8s.; Tadworth, £1; Tanerdy, 5s.; Taranaki, N.Z., 10s.; Theydon Bois, 2s. 6d.; Treherbert, 4s. 6d.; Tunbridge Wells, 10s. and 16s.; Tyne, 3s. 6d.; Venezuela, 9s. 11d.; Waddon, 5s.; Wallington, 10s.; Waltham Abbey, £5; Washington, 10s.; Welney, 5s.; Whitstable, 10s.; Woking, 5s.; Worthing, 5s. and £2; Derby, £5.

Money Orders received: Switzerland, 4381, 11s. 5d. and 9086, 11s. 5d. Total, £109 15s. 9d.

Aleppo, \$2.00; Cincinnati, \$1.00; Hastings, Minn., \$1.00; Kansas City, Mo., \$3.00; Louisville, Ky., \$15.00; Lowell, Mich., \$5.00; Vancouver, \$1.00. Total, \$28.00.

## Revelation and Faith

"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast *revealed* them unto babes"—Matt. xi: 25.

"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood hath not *revealed* it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."—Matt. xvi: 17.

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself: but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will *shew* you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall *shew* it unto you."—John xvi: 13, 14.

### Revelation

It is clear from the Scriptures quoted (and many others which are to be found in the Word of God) that revelation by the Spirit of God is the means and method by which Divine Purposes are brought within the sphere of man's activities. Revelation is a making known; unfolding; shewing or bringing into view hidden spiritual things. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have 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, 10).

In that well-known passage of Scripture in the sixteenth chapter of St. Matthew already quoted, we have the method demonstrated in a four-fold aspect, and which is basic to every Divine operation of the Godhead with man.

- (a) *Source of Revelation* (God the Father).  
"My Father . . ." v. 17.
- (b) *Subject of Revelation* (God the Son).  
"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." v. 16.
- (c) *Agent of Revelation* (God the Holy Spirit).  
"Flesh and blood hath not revealed it . . ."  
v. 17.  
"He (Spirit) will shew you things." John 16: 13.
- (d) *Channel of Revelation* (Believers).  
"And Simon Peter said . . ." v. 16.  
"God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." 1 Cor. ii: 10.

### Impartation

It is clear from what has been briefly said, that we should first of all praise God for His grace and mercy in condescending to reveal Himself to man at all. "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Whatever degree of Divine blessing and understanding we may be enjoying to-day, we cannot even boast in "our faith" as the root cause of participation. "For by *grace* are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest

any man should boast" (Eph. ii: 8, 9). It is one of the subtle tactics of Satan to get believers to speak of "their" faith as being the cause of knowledge and experience, and thus be led into spiritual pride and ultimate downfall. Constant recognition that all we have and are is based upon the matchless Grace of God, will preserve us in humility and bring glory to the Lord. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. i: 31).

For us, to-day, the *Inspired Word of God* is the completed Container of Divine Revelation of Truth from which the Holy Spirit takes the manifold aspects of truth, and makes them known to the seeking soul, thus revealing Christ *Himself*, who is Truth. "The holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. ii: 15). "He (the Spirit) will guide you into all truth" (John xvi: 13). "Thy word is truth" (John xvii: 17). "I am the truth" (John xiv: 6). "Whereof I am made a minister . . . to fulfil (complete) the word of God" (Col. i: 25).

Beloved, being very conscious of the spiritual darkness and ignorance all around us in these last days, how we desire to emphasise the need of continually seeking for, and then testifying to, the revelation of truth in Christ, so that men and women may not only be saved, but that we, as the Lord's people, may be led into deeper experiences of holiness and love together, and be brought into a fuller revelation of our place in the corporate eternal purpose of God. "Making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints . . ." (Eph. i: 16-18). "Seek, and ye shall find" (Luke xi: 9).

### Identification

Although God in His love and grace may unfold from the Word, by His Spirit, some aspect of His purpose towards us, either individually or corporately as a body, there must of necessity be an identification with it on our part through the "obedience of faith" (Rom. xvi: 26).

The REVELATION OF TRUTH ITSELF CREATES FAITH IN US TO BELIEVE IT. In the love, grace, mercy and creative power of Almighty God, the very life and understanding of what is contained in that particular revelation of truth in Christ, is placed right in our waiting hearts and spirits by the Holy Spirit. It is only left to the *responsiveness* of our heart and will in obedience, no matter what the cost, for the life, nature and character of that truth to be conceived within us and bring us, through faith's identification, right into participation of all its blessing and power. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for" (Heb. xi: 1).

(continued inside front cover)

(continued from page 8)

### Expression

We must not forget that faith is also "the evidence of things not seen." It is not sufficient for us to enter into personal, happy experiences on the ground of truth faithfully received and enjoyed. Such faith must produce works in harmony to the truth it is identified with. If it is salvation, the effect will be a clean-cut separation from the world. If holiness,

there will be the evidence of Christian love towards all and that absence of the self-life. If it is our calling on high, unity in spirit and in truth will be the keynote of our every endeavour.

The need of the hour is—revelation! At the same time, may our prayer be, "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke xvii: 5). Amen.

C. H. M.

## Editor's Letter

13, Honor Oak Road,  
London, S.E.23.

### BELOVED OF GOD,

As we move into another year we do so on a note of hope and assurance. It is wonderful how the words given us from year to year, as our message for each, have proved to be just what the year needed. For instance, how very true to experience, far beyond the usual, has been the word for 1945. "Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the skies". With the end of the major wars and the steady reopening of communications, we have heard from so many long-cut-off brothers and sisters of the unfailing faithfulness of the Lord through years of very great suffering. Not only so, but those who have returned to us from captivity and exile have been able to tell the story so much more fully; and what a story it is! Truly the six years can be crowned with this testimony; but we did not know, when the word for that year was given in the later months of 1944, that 1945 would see the suspending of the war.

And now we inscribe on our banner for 1946

"I WILL DO BETTER...THAN AT YOUR BEGINNINGS"  
"A LATTER END AND A HOPE"

and we believe that this also is a God-given word. How it will be fulfilled we do not know, but what it says to our hearts is, that the faithfulness of the Lord over these past years, and over all the years of our relationship with Him, means that the end will not be disappointment. The end will be glory, not shame; fulfilment, not frustration; triumph, not defeat. Our God is so often called "The God of Hope"; as such, He never despairs, never gives up; He never accepts a verdict of hopelessness. He always has a way of reaching His end; and so long as any heart will trust Him, no situation is impossible. It is the end which governs all; and we must not talk of ends until God says it is the end. "Hope at thy latter end" or "An end and a hope", is His word to us. We shall often be sorely tempted to believe that an apparently hopeless situation is the end, but we shall have to lay hold of the God of Hope and simply say—This cannot be the end while God still remains! Paul once said that he despaired of life and had the sentence of death in himself; but he added, "that we should trust...in God who raiseth the dead". What a lot hangs upon that "that"; it speaks of definite intention and purpose; and it indicates the result of investigation of the object of suffering. The end with God is not death, but life. The history, and, indeed, the very purpose of the Church in this dispensation, is that of manifesting the fact of Christ's conquest of death; and when we speak of the Church, we mean the individuals who vitally constitute it. Death is not alone a physical matter, but a spirit and a spiritual power which brings about a discontinuance of vital activity and useful service. It can fill the atmosphere and come down like a cloud, stifling prayer and praise, and paralysing the soul. It can make the body heavy and listless without any ailment being present, giving the symptoms of illness when no illness exists. But, of course, there can be a real spiritual issue bound up with actual sickness and assault upon the body. The New Testament is full of definite statements and clear indications that the object of the great Adversary is in some way to kill and bring what is of Christ to an end. But we have the fact of Christ's resurrection to count upon as an abiding spiritual power for the very purpose of securing a triumphant issue to every assault and onslaught. Thus, in a thousand instances in this life, and in an all-inclusive issue at the end of our course here, that which betokens God is "Some better thing", "An end and a hope", "Better than at your beginnings".

Well, those are our words for 1946. As we have said, we do not now know all that the Lord means by them, but we shall see. In the meantime, beloved, let us ask for faith to reach through to God's "end". May the year be one of enlargement upward, and victory all along. This is my prayer for you.

Yours in the bonds of His love and service,

*J. Austin Sparks*

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

# "A Witness and Testimony"

Maintained  
by the offerings of  
those who are helped by it.

MARCH-APRIL, 1946

NO. 2, VOL. 24

## "One New Man" R

I

### The Revelation of Christ

READING: Gal. i. 15-16; Eph. ii. 15-16; iv. 15-16, 24; Col. iii. 10.

The phrase which I feel is to engage us at this time is that in Eph. ii. 15—"one new man". But before we speak about that specifically, there is a word which must lead to it.

The question that is exercising many hearts to-day is that which relates to the need, the great need, for a recovery of the original freshness, vitality and power of Christianity. Many are concerned with this matter. How can that original freshness, vitality and power be recovered amongst the Lord's people? It is in seeking to answer that question, at least in part, that I think we should find some profit. But we must, of course, ask why it is that that freshness and vitality is lacking. What is the reason for its absence? What is it that accounts for the present state of things which is so different from what it was at the beginning? Do you not think, dear friends, that, while the answer may be a very much wider one, it can be answered in this way, that the present vitiated state of things spiritually in Christianity is so largely due to the fact that Christianity has become almost entirely a tradition, a fixed system, a system of doctrine and of practice crystallized and formed and presented as something from the outside to be accepted, adopted, and conformed to. Christianity has taken a fixed shape. It is an "it", and you are called upon to accept that "it" which is Christianity. When we have recognized that, I think we have got really to the heart of the matter, because in the beginning and in principle throughout the New Testament everything was a matter of a living inward revelation of a Person; for whenever God has moved to take some fresh step in relation to His purpose, His comprehensive purpose, He has always done so by giving a new revelation in an inward way.

### A Revelation of the Lord the Way of Progress

It was a great step in that purpose of God when He brought Abraham into fellowship with Himself. "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham" (Acts vii. 2), and that is only saying in other words, "it pleased God to reveal..." In principle it was a revelation that came to Abraham of the God of glory. It was that revelation of the God of glory that emancipated Abraham and resulted in all that came in and through Abraham as a link in the chain of God's eternal purpose.

It was true of Moses; and Moses represents another step on the part of God, a fresh movement in His purpose. God appeared unto Moses in the burning bush. He saw the Lord; he had a vision of the Lord; that meant everything to him. I think we should not be wrong in saying that many times in the life of Moses when pressed hard, under stress, in temptation, trial, suffering and adversity, in the difficulties of the way, he called back that original vision. He called to mind that day when he saw the Lord in the flame of the bush. The Lord appeared unto him. It was something which remained in his history as basic. He would say, On that day I saw the Lord, I came into living touch with the Lord, it pleased God to reveal Himself to me!

So we might go on with one after another and find it true in every case. Isaiah will say, "I saw the Lord high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple" (Isa. vi. 1).

It was true in the New Testament. The disciples had to base everything upon the forty days after the resurrection—"We have seen the Lord". That is what the Lord meant by it. He appeared after His resurrection by the space of forty days and they saw, but in another way, in a spiritual way, in a way in which they had never seen Him before. It was in a living way.

Paul certainly based his whole history upon this; "it pleased God to reveal his Son in me". He could say, I saw the Lord.

And that was not only true as one tremendous thing at the beginning of the life of each of these. It was something which in principle was repeated again and again in order to get fresh developments, fresh advances. Peter had seen Him alive after the Cross by the space of forty days. He had seen Him in that way, but there was still need for Peter to move on, and so he saw the Lord again, in connection with Cornelius and the inclusion of the Gentiles. He saw the Lord again, and that fresh seeing of the Lord emancipated him some more from the old traditional position, the old legal bondage, from the earthly and the merely historical, from knowing after the flesh. He saw; and we know what happened. When he saw he could not help himself. It was no use arguing. He went up to Jerusalem and they contended with him, they disputed with him, they called him to question over this matter of going in to the Gentiles. He, in effect, says, I have seen, I cannot help myself; I saw and what am I to do? When a man sees, he cannot help himself. He is simply emancipated by what he sees, if he sees in the right way.

When the Lord would make that fresh tremendous movement with the Gospel into Europe, He did it by showing something. Paul saw a man of Macedonia, and that man said, "Come over into Macedonia and help us", and although Paul had essayed to go into Bithynia and sought to preach the Word in Asia, the Lord said, No, and then showed him a man of Macedonia (Acts. xvi. 6-10). Paul could have summed it all up in this way—The mighty movement of God into Europe with the Gospel was by a new divinely given vision; I saw and I went. The way of advance was the way of the heavenly vision; the way of development was the way of new revelation; the way on in the purpose of God was by having the inner eye opened to see. Not once nor twice, but whenever God wants to move on, He opens the eye anew. "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me"—that is the principle all the way along. It has ever been so; a living revelation, the eyes of the heart being enlightened, but a revelation of Christ. "It pleased God to reveal..." That is the opening of the inner eye, the eye of the heart, the understanding.

#### Not Things, hut Christ

"It pleased God to reveal *His Son*"—that is the comprehensive object. In Him all the purposes and ways and intentions of God are gathered up. God does not show *things* to His people, He shows *His Son*. He does not show truths; with God no one truth is an abstract thing. It is personal. Christianity has become a system of abstract truths, the truths of the Gospel. God ever presents His Son, and the truths in relation to a living Person, never out of such relation. If we see the Lord by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, we have seen everything related to our salvation, related to our sanctification, related to our vocation, and related to our glorification. It is all in seeing Christ. The recovery of the original spiritual vitality and freshness and power will only come along

this line—a new revelation in an inward way, in a living way, of the significance of the Lord Jesus. That means much more than it sounds in a statement, because there is nothing of significance beside Him. The very significance of this universe is centred in God's Son. "All things have been created through him and unto him" (Col. i. 16); He is the significance of all things. All time has its significance in Him—"He is before all things" (Col. i. 17). To see the meaning of the Lord Jesus is to be out of everything earthbound, timebound, fleshbound. You cannot see the Lord Jesus and be limited to any of the things of this old creation.

We have mentioned some of those who saw, and you observe what happened. When they saw, they were soon out; out with God, free with God. Nothing in this world would have extricated Saul of Tarsus from his Jewish history, his Pharisaical bondage, his legal strait-jacket, from his very blood as of a son of Israel; nothing! But he saw Christ, God's Son, and that did it. It is a mistake to talk to people about this and that and the other thing from which they should escape and "come out", and so on. You can get things done like that and just get a Christianity of a systematised order imposed. People embrace *it* and become adherents to *it* and believe in *it* in a way, but you do not get the freshness, the vitality and the power that was there at the beginning. That comes when people are in a position to say, I see; it pleased God to reveal His Son in me, I have seen, I cannot help myself; I am bound to take such and such a course because I have seen!

You can see how hidebound Peter was—"Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath ever entered into my mouth" (Acts xi. 8). Not so, Lord! If you and I see Christ, the things which are religiously impossible with us will become actualities, and religious impossibilities are much stronger than human impossibilities.

To-day the need is not primarily for the recovery of doctrine and truth. There may be a need in a large area for the restoration of fundamental truth and doctrine to its right place, but when you have it, when you have exact doctrine, you have no assurance of having life. It is possible to be exact and correct in your doctrine and to be perfectly dead. Whatever may be the need of the recovery of lost truth, the need over all, greater than all, is the recovery of spiritual revelation as to the Lord Jesus, to see Him anew.

#### A Revelation of Christ Corporate

That can lead on to what is bound up with the fragment of the Word which is before us—"one new man". You can see from these Scriptures that there is a double, two-sided, major revelation of Christ comprehended by the New Testament; it came by revelation. Firstly, there is the revelation of Him personally, Christ personally, the Son of God; and then following that, by revelation again, Christ corporately, not as two things but two sides of one, so much so that the second is spoken of as "the Christ"

(I Cor. xii. 12 Gr.). This word 'man' is a collective term and is gathered up into the one Christ. Here is the statement—"have put on the new man...where there cannot be "this and that and the other thing" but Christ is all, and in all" (Col. iii. 10-11). The new man where Christ is all and in all.

You notice the significance of Eph. iv. 20: it is worth looking at closely. "Ye did not so learn Christ." It does not say learn about Christ, but learn Christ. "If so be that ye heard him, and were taught in him, even as truth is in Jesus: that ye put away... the old man...and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man." So learn Christ that ye put off the old man and put on the new man, being renewed in the spirit of your mind. That is worth thinking about—to learn Christ is to do something, is to result in something, and that something is that if you have learned Christ, you have put off the old man. If you have learned Christ, you have put on the new man. To learn Christ is to see and embrace an entirely new order of man. That is the significance of Christ. It is this—a new and different kind of man has been introduced by God into this universe, and He is the object of all spiritual education. "So learned Christ". It is a practical thing, it is not an academic thing, it is not a thing at all; it is a Person, and your way of learning that Person is not observation and imitation. Your way of learning is the exchange of something for Him, an old man for a new.

Have we seen that new man? Have we really seen Christ and the tremendous difference that there is between Him and every other creation? Is that being brought home to us in an inward way, that we are altogether different naturally from Christ, that He is utterly different from ourselves? "Renewed in the spirit of your mind"; that we "should walk in newness of life" (Rom. vi. 4); that we should "serve in newness of the spirit" (Rom. vii. 6). It is all newness and all different, all other. To see that difference is the way of recovering the vitality, freshness, and power of seeing with ever-growing vision what Christ is. He is the first and type of a new family. The Holy Spirit has come to generate after the order of Christ a new type. The life in the Spirit is the progressive conformity to the image of God's Son, and the consummation of that life is the revelation of the sons of God, a different order altogether.

Dear friends, if we could recognize it, the explanation of everything in this world is bound up with that. What is the explanation of the present world upheaval and travail? Well of course, this is only a development of things that have been going on all the way through the centuries, but what is the explanation? There is no doubt that this world is plagued; it is plagued by war, it is plagued by tumult, it is plagued, plagued all the way through. And who has plagued it? God has plagued it. And why has God plagued it? Because it is the kingdom of Satan and as God continually plagued Egypt until Egypt disgorged His son, so God has plagued this great kingdom of Satan until the sons of God are secured. Then

"the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption" (Rom. viii. 21). An explanation of this world's trouble and travail is this, that there is a corporate sonship within this kingdom, and until this Pharaoh's overthrow is made good this world will be plagued. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain waiting for the manifestation, (the apocalypse, the revelation) of the sons of God." (Rom. viii. 22, 19). Yes, this is the explanation.

Well, how does that affect us? It brings us right back here. Our primary concern is not to get better conditions in this world, to get peace and a new order here on this earth. God knows we long for wars to cease and conditions to be changed, but that is not our primary concern. Our primary concern is this question of sonship, this question of getting out of the nations the people for His Name, getting out of this kingdom that new family, getting that Christ-order completed. That relates to ourselves. We have to see to it that we are bent upon this matter, that this Christ-order, this Christ-kind, this Christ-nature, this Christ-species into which we have been brought by regeneration by the Holy Spirit is brought to perfection in ourselves, that we are being conformed to the image of that Son, that we are growing up into Him in all things Who is the Head, even Christ, that we are making increase spiritually after that order. But it is a corporate thing. Our business is the completing of the Christ order in a corporate way in the Church which is His Body, and beyond that the bringing in from the nations of those who are eventually to make full that Body and be the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

You see, dear friends, that the New Testament has one object in view, only one object, and that is the completion of this Body and its ultimate emancipation. It begins with evangelism, but evangelism is not a thing in itself. When the gifts are given by the ascended Lord—apostles and prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, they are all related to one thing, they are all centred in one thing. They are not things in themselves. "Unto the building up of the body of Christ". That is the issue of all and of each, but evangelism has been made something in itself, detached and unrelated. Those who are taken up with it very often have no interest beyond that. It is something in itself. Evangelize, evangelize, get souls saved, that is all that matters! But it is related to a centre. There are those who are teachers and their whole interest is in teaching, and it becomes a thing in itself, teaching, teaching, teaching. The poor people are fed and taught, taught and fed, but it is something going round in a circle. Teaching is to the building up of the Body. The teacher, the evangelist, the prophet, are all centred in one thing—the building up of the Body. That Body is God's end. The evangelist to bring in, the teacher to build up, instruct; everything is to one end, and that is the Christ corporately expressed and ultimately universally manifested in that Body. Let me say again how needful it is for us to get this in the way of a living revelation, otherwise these

things become technical and ecclesiastical ; you make them something in themselves and very earthly. But to see the full vision by revelation of what God is after does mean deliverance from little ends in themselves, little circles constantly going round earthly things, ecclesiastical orders, religious systems, mere doctrines and teachings ; all these things in themselves. Oh, see God's one great end and it is enlargement, it is life !

Of course, here is the difficulty: If you have not had some real experience of what I am talking about, then I am saying to the blind, See ! That is always the difficulty. If you know in a little way what I mean, if you have seen, though it be a little, something has come to you at some time with all the force and power of the opening of the inward eye and you have been able to see, and you say, I see now! You know what a power that seeing has become in your life, what a release has taken place with that, what a new prospect has loomed up before you. There is tremendous strength in really seeing like that. Well, if you see, you know what I am talking about.

But what I am saying is this, that there is a full, mighty end that God has in view, a tremendous thing, an immense thing, and the way by which He is going to reach it is the continual opening of eyes. We shall come to a standstill, we shall just be stuck, if we have reached the end of revelation. There are many who have reached the end of all revelation. You understand that I am not talking about something extra to what is in the Scriptures, I am not going outside of the Word of God. I am saying this, that here is the Book and the Book can be comprehended and mastered and you may be, like Apollos, mighty in the Scriptures and know nothing whatever about the mighty vitality of the Holy Ghost. Paul came on the heels of Apollos of whom it was said that he was mighty in the Scriptures, and those to whom he had been ministering at Ephesus knew not that the Holy Spirit was. Aquila and Priscilla took him and expounded unto him the way more perfectly. You may be mighty in the Scriptures. There is the Book, the letter, and we may be letter perfect, Book perfect, masters of what is written and yet there be no life about it, no energy

about it, no power, no freshness. The one cannot dispense with the other. We must have the Scriptures, but oh, to have the Holy Spirit opening, revealing in a living way so that with the inner eye we are seeing more and more through those Scriptures the significance of Christ, the fulness of Christ ever breaking upon us. That makes Christianity a living, fresh, powerful thing. That is the way of revival. I think that is the revival we need—to see the Lord again and things will happen; to see the Lord in ever-growing fulness so far as our seeing is concerned, and things will happen when it is like that.

Now I have just presented to you the object and stated the realm of revelation. What it requires is for the Lord to reveal Christ to us, breaking in upon us, but there is no doubt about it that it is going to be a costly thing. There never has yet been true revelation without tremendous responsibility and cost. Those who have seen have been involved in a costly way. It cost Abraham a lot to see the God of glory ; it cost Moses a lot to see the Lord ; it cost Isaiah a lot to see the Lord ; it cost Paul everything when he saw the Lord. But, having seen the Lord, who would exchange that revelation for a tradition, for something earthly, of time, in religious things ? [No, you cannot go back upon that. It is the most precious thing to have seen, and to see. It is life, and I take it that you and I desire more than anything else that our Christianity should be living. We do not want just to be brought up in something, having been told something, instructed in something in an outward way, so that that has become our religion. No, we want it every day to be something that works, something that is real ; no matter what it means of finding us out, of making demands, we want it to be real, to be living. That is what the people of God need—living, real Christianity that is a constant challenge to them and through them to others, and the secret of such a Christianity is seeing the Lord and seeing more and yet more of the significance of Christ. It is along the line of living revelation that power comes. May the Lord explain to our hearts what this means and interpret His Word.

T. A-S.

## The Unity of the Spirit

### A Message to All Believers

To each believer who would fully yield himself to the leading of the Spirit, as well as to the Church as a whole, in its longings for the experience in power of all that the indwelling of the Spirit implies, the *unity of the Spirit* is a truth fraught with rich spiritual blessing. In previous writings I have more than once made use of the expression of Pastor Stockmayer : "Have a deep reverence for the work of the Holy Spirit within thee." That injunction needs as its complement a second one : Have a deep reverence for the work of the Holy Spirit in *thy brother*. This is no

easy thing : even Christians, in other respects advanced, often fail here. The cause is not difficult to discover. In our books on education we are taught that the faculty of Discrimination, *the observing of differences*, is one of the earliest to be developed in children. The power of combination, *or the observing of harmony that exists amid apparent diversity*, is a higher one, and comes later. The power of Classification, in its highest action, is only found in true genius. The lesson finds most striking exemplification in the Christian life and Church. It needs *little grace to know where we differ* from other Christians or churches, to contend for our views, or to judge their errors in

doctrine or conduct. But *this indeed is grace*—where amid conduct that tries or grieves us, or teaching that appears to us unscriptural or hurtful, we always give the unity of the Spirit the first place, and have faith in the power of love to *maintain the living union amid outward separation*.

**KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT:** such is God's command to every believer. It is the New Commandment, to love one another, in a new shape, tracing the love to the Spirit in which it has its life. If you would obey the command, note carefully that it is the **UNITY OF THE SPIRIT**. There is a unity of creed or custom, of church or choice, in which the bond is more of the flesh than of the Spirit. Would you keep the unity of the Spirit, remember the following things.

Seek to know *that* in thyself in which the unity is to find its power of attachment and of victory. There is much in thee that is of self and of the flesh, and that can take part in a unity that is of this earth, but that will greatly hinder the unity of the Spirit.

Confess that it is in no power or love of thine own that thou canst love; all that is of thyself is selfish, and reaches not to the true unity of the Spirit. Be very humble in the thought that it is only what is of God in thee that can ever unite with what appears displeasing to thyself. Be very joyful in the thought that there is indeed that in thee which can conquer self, and love even what seems unloving.

Study also to know and *prize highly that in thy brother* with which thou art to be united. As in thyself, so there is in him but a little beginning, a hidden seed of the Divine life, surrounded by much that is yet carnal, and often is very trying and displeasing. It needs a heart very humble in the knowledge of how unworthy thou thyself art, and very loving in the readiness to excuse thy brother—for so did Jesus in the last night: "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak"—to look persistently at what there is in the brother of the image and Spirit of the Father.

Estimate him not by what he is in himself, but by what he is in Christ, and as thou feelest how the same life and Spirit, which thou owest to free grace, is in him too, the unity of the Spirit will triumph over the difference and dislike of the flesh. The Spirit in thee, acknowledging and meeting the spirit in thy brother,

will bind thee in the unity of a life that is from above.

Keep this unity of the Spirit in the *active exercise of fellowship*. The bond between the members of my body is most living and real, maintained by the circulation of the blood and the life it carries. "In one Spirit we were all baptised into one body."

Cultivate intercourse not only with those who are of one way of thinking and worshipping with thyself, lest the unity be more in the flesh than the Spirit.

Study in all thy thoughts and judgments of other believers to exercise the love that thinketh no evil.

Never say an unkind word of a child of God, as little as of others.

Love every believer, not for the sake of what in him is in sympathy with thee or pleasing to thee, but for the sake of the Spirit of the Father which there is in him.

Give thyself expressly and of *set purpose* to love and labour for God's children within thy reach, who through ignorance or feebleness, or waywardness, know not that they have the Spirit, or are grieving Him. The work of the Spirit is to *build up an habitation for God*: yield thyself to the Spirit in thee to do the work.

Recognise thy *dependence* upon the fellowship of the Spirit in thy brother, and his dependence upon thee, and seek thy growth and his in the unity of love.

Take thy part in the united intercession that rises up to God for the unity of His Church. Take up and continue the intercession of the Great High Priest for all who believe, "that they may be one." The Church is *one in the life of Christ and the love of the Spirit*. It is, alas! not one in the manifested unity of the Spirit. Hence the need of the command: Keep the unity.

Plead with God for the mighty workings of His Spirit in all lands and churches and circles of believers. When the tide is low, each little pool along the shore with its inhabitants is separated from the other by a rocky barrier. As the tide rises, the barriers are flooded over, and all meet in one great ocean. So it will be with the Church of Christ. As the Spirit of God comes, according to the promise, as floods upon the dry ground, each will know the power in himself and others, and self disappear as the Spirit is known and honoured.

ANDREW MURRAY.

## What is True Unity of the Spirit

This unity is that which is resultant from the indwelling and dominating control of the Holy Spirit. The illustration is that of the head and the body. Every limb or member or faculty of the body is controlled by the nerve system, and this nerve system works from and to the head, where it has its base.

In the Body of Christ, the Holy Spirit is the great nerve system, and only as there is an immediate response to every intimation of the will of the Head, and the life is unbrokenly in correspondence with His mind, can there be the unity of which the New Testament speaks.

Three things must be clearly noticed. (1) *We cannot "keep" what does not exist*. The admonition presupposes our having received the Holy Spirit into our lives in a vital way, and having surrendered ourselves entirely to His control and direction. (2) *We cannot create this unity*. It is essentially spiritual. Creeds, organizations, the social spirit, compromise on matters of interpretation, can never achieve it. (3) There is the paradox of unity. "Peace" in the Scriptures means harmony. But while Christ is called "the Prince of Peace," and while that harmony has been created in many lives and spheres where He has been

enthroned, He clearly said that one result of His coming would be, not peace, but the sword.

It is clear that, wherever His Cross has been fully presented, there has been trouble and upheaval. All the things against which His Cross stands have at once created a state of war. The world and the flesh, in all their forms and expressions, make spiritual unity impossible, and *to the extent that Christians are influenced* in their judgments, their standards of reckoning, their conceptions, as well as their methods and means and motives, by the world spirit or the "Adam" nature, true spiritual unity is so far impossible.

The fuller the presentation of the Cross, the greater the arousing of the fallen nature elements, and therefore on the one hand the greater the peril and possibility of discord, and on the other hand, the call for a more complete capitulation to the life of the Spirit as against the life in the flesh.

This work of separating will be carried out in our selves personally, in our homes, in our local churches and in Christendom at large. On the basis of "flesh and spirit," the "house divided against itself" will fall.

True unity has its birth at Calvary, where the world, the flesh—with the devil working through both to maintain his discord in the universe—were dealt with and for ever ruled out of the New Creation.

It is this unity, which Calvary creates, which is the call for our diligence for its maintenance. This diligence must take the form of an earnest watch on the part of every member of Christ's Body against discordant elements, and a stolid refusal to be disaffected towards another member by anything short of a positive and persistent resistance of the purposes of Calvary.

T.A.S.

## The Way to God's End

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. xxiv. 14).

"And when they shall have finished their testimony..." (Rev. xi. 7).

"For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. xix. 10).

(Other references: Matt. xvi. 18; xviii. 18-20; John xvii. 22; I Pet. ii. 9; Eph. i. 23; iii. 10; Rom. viii. 19; Col. iii. 3-4; Rom. viii. 28-29; Gal. ii. 20; iv. 19; Eph. iv. 13).

There are two questions which may well be asked in these days, the answer to which is of the greatest importance to every one of us. These questions, which, after all, are only two parts of one enquiry, are first, "What is God doing to-day?" and secondly, "How is God's end going to be reached?"

Men are doing and seeking to do many things in these days, there is no question about that. And Christians too are doing and purposing and planning to do many things, all of which in their way and degree are good and helpful. But our question is this: What is it that God is really set upon and is bending all His energies and resources to bring about as swiftly and surely as possible? What is the *supreme* issue of the days in which we live? Surely that is a relevant question, for some of us at any rate want to be doing what God is doing in the fullest sense, and not to be wasting our time and strength on something secondary, however good—something that not being the main issue is either going to prove an ineffectual cul de sac, or at any rate will not be speeding the Day of God.

The answer, or one way of giving the answer, to the first question is that God is constituting a testimony to His Son, or more accurately the Testimony of His Son.

And the second part of the question: "how is God's end going to be reached?" is answered in this—"By a completed Testimony". There is something which the Lord is set upon having, as truly representing Him in the earth, and until He has secured that, the end cannot be reached. For the dispensation to be closed before God has secured in actual realisation and expression on this earth, that for which He gave His only-begotten Son, and for which the Son "gave Himself up", would represent nothing less than His defeat, and His capitulation to Satan's age-long effort to thwart the realisation of that purpose. Such a thought is an impossibility, and such a thing can never be. God's intention is to have that on this very sin-stricken earth which truly represents His thought, and manifests that thought not only before men but "unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places". In one sense God has always had upon the earth that which has represented Him; in that sense He has never left Himself "without witness", but the matter of "witness" or "representative" has its full fruition and completion at the end, and is a governing factor in the bringing of the end.

Nothing less, then, will satisfy God than having His full thought and desire and purpose brought to fruition, and as we have so often been reminded, God's full intention is nothing less than Christ, His beloved Son, seen in actual living terms embodied in a people—the bringing to fulness of Christ in a corporate way, by the Spirit in the saints, the Church which is His Body really formed as a living Christ-filled organism, that thereby God's manifold wisdom may be demonstrated to all intelligences in the universe. What a tremendous thought! But the Lord will have that before He has finished, even though He may secure it only in a very small, insignificant, suffering nucleus. This is implicit in the Lord's Word in Matt. xviii about the "two or three" who are really in the good of all

that *He* is—for that is the meaning of His *Name*. The Book of Revelation strongly emphasises this in the record of those spoken of as holding "the testimony of Jesus"; or embodying that testimony. Whatever be the historical interpretation of Rev. xi, the two witnesses, whom the Lord calls "My two witnesses", represent the principle of testimony—two who are one, a great miracle—and "when they shall have finished their testimony" mighty things happen and the end is swiftly reached.

Now the real issue, and the thing round which the battle rages unceasingly, is not so much the bearing of the testimony—that part may be short and sharp—but *the process of the constituting or formation of a true testimony*. This process is the key to everything that is happening to us now, and its progress or delay is the key to all that lies ahead.

### The Testimony that God is Constituting

The eternal purpose of God as revealed throughout the Scriptures, and then fully "made known" as never before in such fulness as to His servant Paul, is bound up with the Person of His beloved Son, in Whom everything in God's thought centres and has its realisation and outworking. This is given to us in no uncertain terms in the Epistle to the Ephesians, and then in that to the Colossians. The heart of this purpose is that Christ, in Whom dwells all the fulness of God, should be embodied and fully expressed as to His infinite and "unsearchable" glories and characteristics, in a company of the redeemed children of God, so that they are in actual fact and constitution "His Body". "This is a great mystery...Christ and the Church". Such is God's thought and intent, and herein lies the meaning of so much with which, as Scripture, we are familiar; surely it is this that the Lord Jesus foresees as He says to Peter "On this rock I will build My Church", and when He prays "that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me". Thus, putting all this very simply, the Lord has one supreme concern, and that is that Christ should be formed in His people, as their very life, so that they are together in an ever increasing measure an expression of Him; "Christ, who is our Life"—"that Christ may be magnified in my body"—"that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh". And then the end will be reached along this very line, for "when Christ, who is our life shall appear (be manifested) then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory"—"the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation (revealing) of the sons of God". In other words, the end is going to be reached when Christ Who has been formed within can be shewn forth, no longer under the limitation of earthly and human experience, but "in glory", "at His appearing". So then God is securing *Christ* in His people, and it is by that process only that His end will be reached.

### The Securing of Christ a Spiritual Process

Now the process by which God is forming the nature and character of His Son in us, is essentially *spiritual process*. That is, it is a work begun by the Spirit of God deep down in us, and it is *there* that the real work is done, and must be done. Perhaps it will be helpful to notice three things about this process, which may explain a good deal of what is happening to us, if we are really seeking to go on with the Lord.

1. *An inward process*. A lot of things may happen to us outwardly in circumstance, and we may do a great many things, even in our desire to serve the Lord and to be well-pleasing to Him—there is nothing necessarily wrong about that—but actually, however much may seem to be going on, what really matters, and what the Lord is far more concerned about, is *what is happening in us*. Are we becoming 'different'? In our whole make up, our thoughts and outlook, our words and our actions, is a change really taking place, so that we are steadily and surely beginning to see things and people more as He sees them, not because we are trying to do so, but because we are becoming different ourselves—in fact *Christ* is being formed in us? Are our reactions under test and pressure less self-pitying, less self-defensive than they used to be, is there a rest, a joy, a steadiness there that was lacking before? We could enlarge on this, but *that* is what matters. So often has it been said "It is what we *are* that counts"—that is true, but it only counts if what we *are* is not really us at all, but *Christ* living in us! Need we say here *how* that transforming process takes place? It is of course the working out in our experience and inward life of what the Cross really means, namely that in the death of the Lord Jesus, God has put away and forever judged all that *we* are by nature—He has finished with the whole make-up, the kind of person, that we are—and is concerned only with 'the new man', what we are in Christ. If we have seen and recognised this fact, and have committed ourselves to it and to the Lord to make it true in our lives, then it is an absolute certainty that we shall find ourselves being dealt with and handled in the most unexpected ways, all with this one end in view—reducing and 'getting rid' of *us*, in order that Christ may be really known and seen as the very source of our life. The basis of everything is always Galatians ii. 20, "I have been crucified...no longer I... Christ liveth in me". On that basis, as a faith position, God works *in* us by His Spirit to make it increasingly true in experience.

2. *A Sovereign Process*. "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose. For whom he foreknew, he also fore-ordained to be conformed to the image of his Son".

"Them that are called (or 'the called') according to purpose". Behind all the happenings and through the course of things in experience, we shall come to recognize the great governing factor of the sovereignty of God, that unaccountable ruling, overruling, choosing, placing, ordering Hand that turns every-

thing to account—even evil things—to reach that end which He purposes to reach. Once we really deliberately and consciously come into line with this full purpose of God, and respond to it in a full heart committal, we find ourselves involved in something much greater than ourselves or our own affairs. *God* is in things in a very real way. First of all we are amazed that He should have chosen us at all. Why us and not others? There is something inscrutable in all this; and we have to admit our inability to understand, and can only say with the Apostle—"How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out!"

But once we are committed to His full way with us, and even before that time, we find that our circumstances in their countless details, the places we find ourselves in, the people we are brought into association with, our sufferings and trials, losses, sorrows, as well as all the timing of these things, are all being made the means of this one end, Christ being constituted as our life. It is a serious thing to take ourselves out of any particular set of circumstances, because of their difficulty and awkwardness, or because we prefer something else. The sovereignty of God is ordering things and in the first instance we do well to accept as *His* will and wise ordering the very conditions under which we find ourselves. These trying, difficult places and people *are* the sovereign ordering of God to do the work in us that could never be done in any other way. So He takes us out of our depths, and there is often a mystery about the way He takes, and this life in the purpose of God is found to be very much a life of *faith*. Faith in His wisdom, His love, His faithfulness—that is being tested out, but along the line of acceptance and submissiveness to what He chooses for us, this deep work is being done.

Before leaving this matter of how sovereignly God works to secure this true manifestation of His Son in a people, it is of the greatest importance to recognise that not only in the detailed circumstances of our own lives, but in the sphere of the world's course and history, it is God Who is sovereignly ruling "the affairs of men". National and international events, wars, and the rise and fall of kingdoms and nations, all these are being timed and ordered, and their issue—through and out of all the tangle—will be the spiritual ends of God being reached. We cannot enlarge upon this here, but it is a great fact and one that explains a great deal. There are movements of the Spirit of God in different parts of the earth, frequently as the immediate outcome of desperate situations, and doors are open to the Gospel in hitherto closed lands. What is God doing? He is securing that 'royal seed' of His children, His sons, out of all the nations, not simply for the salvation of so many souls, though that is a great thing and matters greatly, but in order that the Body of Christ may be completed and brought to fulness of measure "in Christ", that there may be in the earth a true testimony to what Christ is.

3. *A Related Process*. This brings us to the third thing about the spiritual process by which God's

supreme purpose is fulfilled. As the Lord really begins to deal with us and lead us on, we very soon find that we are in something that is not just affecting ourselves. We are no longer isolated units, but are involved with *one another* very much when it comes to having a greater measure of Christ. The testimony to Christ in fulness which God is set upon requires all the Body for its adequate expression. Each one of us is at the most only one 'member' of the Body, and perhaps a very insignificant member at that—so that the degree in which any individual shows forth Christ is only something very partial. This is made very clear in the Epistle to the Ephesians, where we read that the Church is "the fulness of him that filleth all in all"—that we can only comprehend "with all saints" what is the length and breadth and depth and height of the love of Christ—that it is *together* that we grow up into Him in all things—that it is "by the Church" that "now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies" is made known "the manifold wisdom of God". Yes, each of us only has capacity for a certain, though increasing, measure of Christ, and for the increase of that measure in each and in all, the only way is *a corporate and related life in Christ*, not an individual or isolated one. This is made very clear in the whole of the New Testament, but its spiritual significance needs to be realised. The vital nature of the Church, as the corporate and related life of God's people, is the key to the realisation of the full testimony to what Christ is, which God requires before His end is reached.

We might say much about this, but it may suffice for us to see that there are certain things about the true Christ life that cannot develop or find expression except in a close relationship with one another.

1. *Love*. The very proof of our being children of God is in a new family consciousness, so that the Apostle John says that "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren". Others too can only see Christ in true expression "if ye have love one to another" (I John iii. 14, John xiii. 31).

2. *Submission*. The meekness and selflessness of the Lord Jesus is the greatest wonder of His Person—He is above all else the Lamb of God. The Lamb-spirit, meekness, true humility and submissiveness, is something which can only be secured in us in the terribly testing experiences of learning to let go to one another when our own temperaments and ways are all so utterly different. We have to come into "the House of God" in a very practical way, into close relatedness in life and fellowship with 'our own company' of God's children, before we begin to discover in any full degree how much pride and self-importance and self-opinion is lurking in our hearts. "Submit yourselves one to another, in the fear of God"; "Let each esteem other better than himself"; "By love serve one another". This brokenness of spirit which is the very essence of Him Who is "meek and lowly in heart" can never be true of us except as it is wrought out in the fires of life together.

3. *Function.* But the fulness of life in Christ, the expression of which is so supremely important, requires not only a manifestation of the characteristics, the "excellencies" of His Person, but also the activities and accomplishments in the purpose of God which require the Church as their vehicle and instrument. In other words 'the Body' must be a healthy and fully functioning body, and not one that is in varying degrees diseased, or dislocated, or paralysed. This brings us to the vital matter of 'function' in the Body of Christ. One of the greatest needs is for each one of us to discover what our personal and individual function is, as a member of Christ. The Lord knowing exactly the meaning to *Him* of each one of us—for in His mind there is no uncertainty as to what each one of us is intended for—it is very necessary to know what we really *are* in His thought. The trouble is that we nearly always begin with a false idea altogether of what we are—generally we have an exalted idea of ourselves, though in some it may be just the opposite. You may have been thinking that your function is that of a 'right hand' or a 'right leg' in the body, whereas you may really only be a 'little finger' in God's mind. How then are we to discover our true function and therefore our true calling in God's purpose? The answer is that we shall only discover it in the 'House of God', in the corporate life in Christ where in the light of the Sanctuary true spiritual condition is found out. When we come into the midst of the people of God in a living way and discover the practical meaning of the Church in expression, the process in our experience is one of an ever *diminishing* estimate of ourselves, till we discover we really are nothing! It is only from that point that by the unerring operation of the Spirit in the mutual life of God's children our true *spiritual* function begins to be manifest. This is a very wonderful thing, and when it takes place we have no more illusions about ourselves and are saved many disappointments and much unfruitfulness. Nothing but such a rightly related life together, each in his or her right place in the Divine pattern, so that there is a living, functioning and therefore *effectual* showing forth of Christ, will satisfy the Lord. "Now hath God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased him." May we each one discover in our life together where He has set us.

4. *Resource.* The fact that fulness of resource in Christ can only be known in a corporate way is familiar to many of us, but how vital to recognise this. Very simply it comes to this, *we cannot get on alone.* For spiritual resource even the Apostle Paul constantly counted upon the fellowship and prayers of the saints. The fulness of the Holy Spirit is not primarily a personal thing but a corporate matter; the Anointing upon the Head flows down to every part of the Body. But the fulness is only in relationship to one another. We need not say more on this great fact of the fulness of resource being a matter in which we need one another: the whole of God's Word bears testimony to it, and we very soon find in our experience

how real it is.

5. *Authority.* The last matter that we need mention in examining the reasons why the full testimony of Christ is essentially a related or corporate thing, is the matter of authority. There is a great deal in the New Testament which reveals the necessity in the spiritual realm of authority, or having the position and 'right' that cannot be challenged, when dealing with situations which in their essence are spiritual. This touches the whole question of "authority" over the enemy, which is the secret of all "power" over the enemy. Without turning to the many passages of Scripture bearing upon this, we cannot but remember the tremendous place this has in the earthly life of the Lord Jesus, and then in the experience of the early Church. There are spiritual, antagonistic forces at work, "principalities and powers in the heavenlies" are behind so much that is being met of evil in men and conditions. But we find the Lord Jesus and the saints *superior* to that realm and constantly able to deal with it. Very briefly—if we are to be effectual in the realm that counts, we must know the authority that is in the Name of Jesus and which is superior to every other authority. Now in its full effectiveness that authority is vested not in individuals but in the Church: this is the essence of the passages in Matthew xviii about the two or three in His Name and the tremendous promise about binding and loosing things in heaven and on earth. One pre-eminent mark of Christ is His triumph over all His foes, and this too must be embodied in a people on this earth, "for a testimony". A defeated Christian or a Church that knows nothing of prevailing with God, will never satisfy Him, and the testimony in this matter too must needs be secured before the end is reached.

#### The Testimony Borne

Such then are some of the essentials of the full expression of His Son that God is securing and set upon constituting, so that He may be once and for all truly represented upon this earth. The Word of God indicates very clearly that such a testimony—Christ formed in likeness, in relatedness and in mighty authority and power—will only be secured in a nucleus, a representative company of the redeemed. "Many are called, but few chosen"—"To him that overcometh will I grant..."—"If we suffer, we shall reign..." are all indications, and there are many others, that the Lord must have some who go right through with Him at the cost of everything, and thus give Him the opportunity to do in them all His good pleasure. That all believers do *not* go right on with the Lord is true to the Word of God and to our experience, but the fault is not with Him Who longs for *all* His own to share with Him His full inheritance and glory. Israel's history is a type of the spiritual history of the people of God in this dispensation, and we need to be warned by the failure of a whole generation, with two exceptions, to enter into God's purpose for them. But  
(concluded on front cover).

the Lord is securing His full thought; and will secure it in a remnant of His own, and may it be our deepest desire, as it was that of His servant Paul, to apprehend that for which we have been apprehended of Christ Jesus.

In closing we return to our opening Scriptures. In the measure that Christ really is the life of His people and His triumph is demonstrated in them, there is a testimony which the Lord would bring into every place and situation: The testimony to His Sovereignty and Lordship therefore, embodied in His own, is the Divine pre-requisite to its being *preached* or *proclaimed* "in all the world...unto all the nations". The preparation of the Divine instrument precedes its thrusting forth into the nations, for what goes forth with a Divine commission and mandate must of necessity be a true representation of Christ and not something less. May the Lord of the Harvest swiftly constitute and then thrust out His true representations into all the nations, that the end may be speeded!

"And when they shall have finished their testimony". As soon as the testimony to what Christ is has been brought to bear upon the situation, even for a brief period, and even though that testimony is rejected—as it ultimately is—God is satisfied and the end very swiftly comes. This is the significance of Revelation xi with its reference to Zechariah iv where the prophet's vision of the golden candlestick is now said to be fulfilled in what are spoken of as the "two witnesses". We might call this "the testimony of

Jesus consummated". Our last Scripture is the significant statement that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy". In other words, the very underlying meaning of what the prophets—that is, those who "spake from God" throughout the centuries have said is nothing less than that God has all along been set upon this one thing, the testimony of His Son—those in whom through the infinite work of His Redemption, Christ has been not only planted in 'new birth' but brought to fulness of measure and expression.

Though the constituting of Christ in us does precede the full bearing of testimony, yet, as in all spiritual processes, there is always an "overlapping" of these things. We can never be dogmatic or legalistic, or put things too rigidly into "compartments", therefore the fact is that *in the measure* that Christ is formed in us and there is a true expression of Him, in that measure the testimony is being borne, and the end being speeded.

May the Lord so open our eyes to see the one thing that concerns Him in these vital, perhaps closing days of the dispensation, that we too may give ourselves in full yieldedness to Him to do in us all that He wants to do, and so be true workers together with Him in hastening to the glorious end, even the day of His appearing. "Being confident of this very thing, that He which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ".

C.J.B.H.

**Acknowledgments.**—We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts (other than local) received between 1st December, 1945 and 31st January, 1946:

Abbey Wood, £2; Aberdare, 10s.; Adwick, 5s.; Auckland Park, 5s.; Bath, 5s.; Bexley, 10s.; Bickley, 2s. 6d.; Birmingham, 10s., £1 10s., 5s. and 10s.; Birmingham, Ala., £2 9s. 5d.; Birtley, 4s.; Bognor Regis, 2s. 6d.; Bourne-mouth, £1 and £1; Brechin, £1 1s.; Brynmawr, 6s. 6d.; Cardiff, 12s. 9d.; Carnforth, 3s. 6d.; Catford, 10s.; Caversham, 10s.; Chaddesley Corbett, 2s. 6d.; Chalfont St. Peter, 5s.; Compton Dando, 4s. 6d.; Congleton, 10s.; Copenhagen, £2; Cowplain, 6s.; Crawley, 10s.; Croydon, 3s. and 2s.; Davos-Platz, Swit., £1 3s.; Driffeld, 8s. 6d.; Dublin, 2s. 6d. 2s. 6d., £1 5s., 1s. 6d., 5s., 5s. and 15s.; Eastbourne, 10s. Edinburgh, 5s.; Enfield, 6s.; Epsom, 10s.; Ewell, 2s. 6d.; Gateshead, 5s. and £1 10s.; Geneva, £1 2s. 11d.; Gidea Park, 5s.; Glasgow, 10s., 15s. 8d., £1 and 10s.; Gourrock, 12s. 6d.; Harrogate, £2; Harrow-on-the-Hill, 10s.; Hatch End, £1; Hatfield Heath, 16s. 6d.; Hawick, £1; Herne Hill, 10s.; Hexham, 2s. 6d. and 3s.; Hindhead, £1; Howth, 2s. 6d.; Ilford, 5s.; Kelso, £1; Kirkeudbright, 15s.; Learnington Spa, 3s.; Lee, £1; Leicester, 10s.; Leigh on Sea, 5s.; Leiston, 3s. 6d.; Lewisham, 4s. and 2s. 6d.; Lincoln, 5s.; Lisburn, £1 10s.; Liverpool, 3s.; Llandrindod Wells, 5s.; London, E.12, £1, London, N.2, 5s. 6d.; London, N.14, 5s.; London, N.15, 6s.; London, N.16, 5s.; London, N.W.10, 2s. 8d.; London, S.E.5, 10s.; London, S.E.6,

3s. 6d.; London, S.E.15, 4s.; London, S.E.15, 2s. 6d.; London, S.E.15, 5s.; London, S.E.19, 5s.; London, S.E.23, 5s.; London, S.E.23, 10s.; London, S.E.23, 5s.; London, S.W.16, 2s.; Manchester, 5s. 4d.; Matlock, 10s. and 10s.; Mexboro, 5s.; Milford-on-Sea, 2s. 6d.; Neath, £3; Neuchatel, 10s.; Newcastle, £3 7s. 9d.; New Mills, £1 1s. 6d.; Northampton, 10s.; Northolt Park, £5; Nova Scotia, 9s. and 9s.; Oldham, 5s.; Otley, 4s.; Paisley, 4s. and £1 10s., Parkstone, 10s.; Penistone, 10s.; Plymouth, 10s.; Portsoy, 19s.; Purley, 7s. 10d.; Romford, 3s.; Rufforth, £1; St. Keverne, 8s.; Salem, Oregon, 9s. 11d.; Sanderstead, 2s. 6d.; Sandown, £1; Sawbridgeworth, 2s. 6d. and 5s.; Sevenoaks, 5s.; Sheringham, 7s. 6d.; Sherman Station, Maine, 9s. 8d., Slough, 5s.; Southampton, 5s.; Southwick, 2s. 6d.; Stirling, 5s.; Stroud, 5s.; Swalecliffe, 5s.; Tankerton, 10s.; Taunton, 10s.; Terenure, £1; Tetuan, N. Africa, 5s.; Toronto, 4s. 6d.; Tunbridge Wells, 7s.; Uplands, 10s.; Vancouver, B.C., £1; Wallington, 9s.; Wallsend, 10s.; Wandsworth, £1; Watertown, Mass., £2 5s.; Watford, 5s.; Wembley, 1s. and £1; West Hartlepool, 10s.; Wirral, 10s.; Wolverhampton, 5s. and 10s.; Worthing, 3s., £2 and 5s. Total, £90 19s. 5d.

Birmingham, Ala., \$5.00; Boston, \$4.50; Liberty, Miss., \$1.00; Minna, Nigeria, \$2.50; Minneapolis, Minn., \$7.50; Plainfield, N.J., \$1.00; St. Paul, Minn., \$2.00; Wayland, Mass., \$4.00; Westfield, N.J., \$10.00. Total, \$37.50. Toronto, \$1.

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MAY-JUNE, 1946

NO. 3, VOL. 24

## Editor's Letter

BELOVED OF GOD,

In this letter I am yielding to the strong appeal of trusted and highly esteemed friends, and am doing something that I have deliberately refused to do for years ; that is, I am going to deal with some misapprehensions and wrong reports as to our position regarding certain particular matters. I am well aware of these mistaken ideas, but have felt that nothing should be done by myself in the nature of vindication or self-justification. It has been my principle that the message should just go out and be its own vindication. There is very much to show that this has been quite a sound and safe course, and from all parts of the world we receive a continuous stream of letters which bear testimony to the value of this ministry. But as the work has grown, so have the difficulties and the number of enemies. One of our main griefs and causes of suffering is that so many real and devoted children and servants of God are among those who oppose themselves, and have never, either been to our conferences, talked with us personally, or made it their business to make direct enquiries of us as to the truth or otherwise of the things which have caused their disaffection. In writing as I am doing now, several weighty arguments have influenced me. Among them is the primary one that this is no merely personal matter, but one which greatly involves the Lord's interests. I am also assured that there are many who are really not antagonistic but only perplexed, and a bit afraid because of what they hear. Then again, I am told that much of the harm is done by those who are supposed to be our friends, because they claim relatedness and are always trying to force our position on to others, and are very indiscreet or unbalanced. I suppose that there never has been a work or ministry of spiritual value which has not suffered in these and many other ways. This is true in many of the great world benefactions, and the Prophets have had to meet the bitter—and often the universal—persecution of their own countrymen and the world. But, taking such as Lord Lister and antiseptics as an outstanding instance, we know that they were not as wrong as was so widely and violently proclaimed. We take comfort from this thought, and, although seeking to walk closely to the Lord so that He may check us when we would err, we will go quietly on to fulfil the trust which has been laid upon us, by His grace. Now for some of the difficulties referred to.

Firstly, it is said that we have no message or *active* concern for the unsaved. It would take many pages to answer this with the evidence available to prove how false such a charge is. Let us at once say that we never did feel that God had called us to fulfil—in the first place—a direct evangelisation work. He only knows how much our hearts would have responded to such a commission if He had given it to us. But we have no doubt that *our* first mission is to the people of God and especially a ministry to God's servants. Amongst the numerous letters above mentioned a great many come from "Ministers" or "Missionaries" and "Christian Workers" in many lands, denominations, and missions telling us of how their ministry is enriched by the food in this little paper and the other literature. But even so, what a story there is of souls gloriously saved through the instrumentality of those who have gone out to many parts of the world from our midst ! Yes, it is a great and wonderful story. Only recently have we listened with worship to the accounts given by some who have returned from internment camps in the Far East, and from amongst the Forces and Services abroad during war years. There is a large company of converts of no mean character resultant from faithful ministry in these realms alone, but much more also. Let it not be concluded that, because we do not write up and publish accounts of this work, or make it known other than in prayer gatherings, we are not stretched out for the salvation of the unsaved. In this matter our concern is as deep as that of any, and deeper than most.

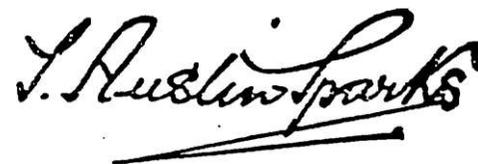
Then there seems to be a very mistaken apprehension as to what our real object is. On this matter we

have, from time to time, tried to make ourselves clear. Let us state it again, and without reservations: firstly negatively. We are not, have no desire to be, and do all that we can to avoid being, a distinct, crystallised, or systematised "Movement". We are not favourable to the idea of a particular "Fellowship" as related to any place, people, or teaching. "Fellowship" with us means the fellowship of *all* believers. We are positively not out to set up or form "churches" or "assemblies" in various places. We do not feel that God has called us to constitute a new sect or body of Christians. All such suggestions only hurt and grieve us. These things would have been not only possible, but easy, all too easy, and we have had every facility for something very extensive in all these directions. Once more, it is not our aim or wish to detach people from the relationship and work in which they are at present, that is, the Christian connections. Ours is not a "come out" call to Christians and workers. The fact that some have done so, has to be considered on its own particular ground. Some have acted without understanding and in unwisdom. Some have done so on the perfectly legitimate grounds of erroneous teaching or spiritual starvation. Some have done so on a definite crisis between themselves and the Lord and apart from any urge or counsel from men. In some cases it has been a matter of the ultimate issue of the unmistakable will of God. The fact also that in several places there are little companies of such people meeting together does not contradict what we have said as to our object, but is only a collective expression of these latter reasons. But, even there, we do no more than minister the Word of the Lord to them *from time to time*.

Now as to the positive aspect. We are quite sure that the Lord has called us to a ministry to *all* His people, and He has dealt with us very deeply in relation thereto. This ministry is inclusively related to "the Fulness of Christ" and God's Eternal Purpose in Him. Included in this is the tremendous significance of the Cross, both objectively and subjectively, *for* us and *in* us. Further; if "the Church which is His Body" is "the fulness of him", then it is essential to recognise the nature of that Church; that is, its essentially spiritual, heavenly, and universal nature, and the spiritual laws of its functioning. These three things comprehend all else, and everything with us has its explanation by them. When we really saw them, we felt unable to stand on any but this ground, and so we left that which is sectarian and distinguished by name or title as here on earth. From that day onward we have only met people on the ground of "In Christ", and have made Him the basic Factor in union and fellowship. In taking this course, our motive was entirely misrepresented and said to be a schismatic one. It is strange that a great convention like "Keswick" can be said by so many to be "a time of heaven on earth" because it is "All one in Christ Jesus", and yet those who seek to remain permanently on that ground—super-denominational and super-national—can be called schismatics! Our message and our position is bound to clash with very much that is secondary to God's thought, and there would be no justification for our existence as a vessel of ministry if the Lord had no need to give greater emphasis to the things which are more essential.

I have no more space in this issue of the paper, but we may say more subsequently. In the meantime may I ask that, where there is failure to understand, a patient, open-hearted and honest effort will be made to really know the facts, and not to judge by misrepresentations either in reports or people. God is doing a great and vital thing through this ministry, which is bringing no glory to anyone but Himself. But there are many adversaries.

With love and greetings in Christ,  
Yours only for that glory.



## Summer Bible Conferences

Following our recent announcement as to vacation Bible Conferences, we can now say that we are definitely arranging for these in each month from June to September, at Kilcreggan, Scotland. Will all those who are interested please write us at once saying what dates are most suitable to them, so that we can arrange the periods to suit the largest number at one time.

Write to Mr. Austin-Sparks,  
13, Honor Oak Road, London, S.E.23.  
and mark the envelope "Bible Conferences".

## “The Voice of the Son of God”

- “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live...Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice*” (John v. 25, 28).
- “*And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth*” (John xi. 43).
- “*It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life...And he said, For this cause have I said unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it be given unto him of the Father*” (John vi. 63, 65).
- “*Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word*” (John viii. 43).
- “*When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers*” (John x. 4, 5).
- “*And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd*” (John x. 16).

It is well known that with John xi a transition has taken place. Up to chapter x a series of spiritual truths and principles has been very largely enunciated and made practical in relation to a number of individuals. With chapter x those truths are taken up in a collective way, and from there onward the Lord Jesus is found more particularly occupied with a special company. Chapter xi stands exactly half-way, with ten chapters on either side. In this position it gathers up all that has gone before, and represents what will be the ultimate issue. Lazarus is central in both position and meaning, so far as Christ's glory is concerned. The company which is found together at the table, occasioned by the raising of Lazarus, sets forth two things (and we must always bear in mind the double aspect of things in the Scriptures, the earthly and the heavenly, the temporal and the spiritual). Those two things here are Israel and the Church. Israel's history will be exactly that of Lazarus. A sickness in which Christ will not intervene. He will deliberately remain away from Israel (as such)—although greatly loved—until no hope remains along any line but a miraculous intervention. Israel will “stink” in the nostrils of the world, and, rather than a remedying, only by a resurrection as from the dead, by the voice of the *Son of God—Jesus Christ*, will they have a Divine future.

The other thing here is that the Church comes right into view typically and in principle with the resurrection of Lazarus and the company as gathered. The Church is the company of those who have their very being only and solely by reason of the resurrection miracle. This is quite clearly and finally stated

in the most “Church” part of the Bible, the letter to the Ephesians. “And you did he quicken, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins...and made us to sit with him in the heavenlies” (ii. 1, 6). (“Lazarus was one of them that sat at meat with him” John xii. 2). But, when we have said that, we have not touched the deepest note in the matter. The very heart of this position is found in the words in John v. 25, “The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God”.

Firstly, it is obvious that something more than a physical faculty of hearing is in mind. The dead have no such faculty, there must be a hearing which is not natural, which is deeper and more inward than the natural. Nor is it just that by God speaking some actual result occurs. There is a *hearing* which has that result. Briefly then, a living relationship with Christ and its corporate expression in what is called His “Body”—the Church—is the result of a hearing of His voice which, while it may come through spoken and audible words, is more than they. It is possible to hear the verbal statement of truth, and that many times and over many years, but not to have heard His *voice*. It is possible, after having heard the truths often and long, suddenly to hear the voice, and the result to be as though we had never before heard at all, all is so new and wonderful. Living relationship with Christ is not an emotional or intellectual or volitional reaction to a presentation of Gospel truths; it is not by an influenced and persuaded signing of a card or “deciding for Christ”; it is not the effect of hot air evangelistic effort in which the soul is played upon, and all sorts of superficial and theatrical elements are brought into play. All this may have an apparent success on a large scale, but—always allowing for the sovereignty of God to reach some hearts through His Word—much of this may only be adding to the great tragedy with which the Church is confronted as one of its most difficult problems, namely a cheap regard for the Christian life, a mass of people who “have tried it and found it disappointing”, and a great number of “Christians” who have no real living and growing knowledge of the Lord. The fact that there is so much indifference to Christianity to-day and so little taking of it seriously is largely due to its having been vitiated and cheapened. No, the basis of everything in the New Testament is that, beyond anything audible, vocal, natural, temporal, earthly, the voice of the Son of God was heard deep down in the human spirit. This may or it may not be a voice of actual words, but when it happens the one concerned is truly able to say “The Lord has spoken to me”, or “I know that the Lord has made me aware of His will”. It is a voice—a power—*through* words, or without them, but not just words alone.

I said that everything depends upon this. “They that hear shall live”. Our very life—in the Divine

sense—depends upon it. Our salvation issues from it. But what is true initially is true in principle continuously. For all the major decisions in life (*obvious and unmistakable duties excepted*) it must be on this wise. Paul based his whole ministry, and its specific aspects, upon this principle. When God speaks in *this way*, something is done, not only said. We know that something has happened to us or in us. Such a knowledge or work in us is absolutely essential to stability. We know of those who have radically and thoroughly changed their strongest positions more than once in the course of a few years. After taking up truth and affirming that it was the greatest thing that God had shown them, they subsequently repudiated it, and changed their attitude to it. When this happens there is only one thing to be said, apart from wilful and deliberate disobedience, and that is that they never received it in the first place from heaven, but from men. It came by mental and emotional acceptance, either by hearing or reading and study. So strong was the impact, so seeming to answer a need or provide a way of self-realisation, that it was taken up in the soul with zest. And those concerned were not really broken in soul and emptied to the dust. Thus, not being a hearing in the spirit, beyond nature, of the voice of the Son of God, it could not last, and the life has become characterised by lack of permanence. Of course this is quite a different matter from the changes which mark true development and growth. Very big changes may take place here, but not in our basic revelation. It is most important that, as to the basic knowledge of the will of God and the revelation of Himself to us, we are at the end where we were at the beginning, although enlarged and perhaps with a change of merely outward features.

Further. In the moment when God speaks thus to us in Christ, eternity has broken through time; the super-temporal has been registered upon us. All that belongs merely to time and earth has been suspended, and in that moment that which was in God's mind "before the world was", and that which is His thought unto the ages of the ages yet to be is brought to our lives. Our very existence is bound up with it. I do not mean that our continuity is involved and that there is the peril of annihilation; but the very fact of our existence, of our having a being at all, is now to have its meaning for us, or has drawn near. Yes, it is, for all Divine intention, an eternal moment. "Upon this moment hangs eternity".

Then again, and closely related to what we have just said, it is most solemnly important to recognise that this hearing of the voice of the Son of God is a sovereign act of God. That is, it is when and as He alone chooses. Unless God speaks, all men's speaking is dead. Neither those who are in view nor those who are concerned for them can choose the time. That sovereign decision is most clearly seen in Christ's attitude over Lazarus. There were many human factors at work, and He was involved in misunderstanding by His behaviour; but, nevertheless, He would not move until the time of God had come.

The point for the moment is this: when that voice is heard it is God's time, and we can never say if or when that time will be again. In the passages at the head of this message, we have included that strange one—"Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word" (John viii. 43). God had spoken, and they had not responded, and now they *cannot* hear, even when He speaks. On the Damascus road only Saul heard the voice. Those that travelled with him only heard the sound (Acts ix. 7. marg., xxvi. 14). There is a recorded instance of the same thing in the life of Christ (John xii. 28, 29).

Then, a question arises. What is the first and immediate effect of God speaking to us? It will not necessarily be exhilaration. Mere exhilaration may mean something false. Usually there will be no *natural* gratification resulting. Our natural interests and likes will have little or no place. Exhilaration is not necessarily *life*. If it is only exhilaration we should pause and examine ourselves. There is a great difference between rest, peace, and quiet joy, and mere exhilaration. It may more likely be a solemn awe and fearfulness, but with quiet reassurance.

The first effect of hearing the voice of the Son of God is the gift of faith. What could not before be contemplated now becomes possible. What was hopeless—and we knew it—is now a living prospect. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..." (I Pet. i. 3). It is a resurrection hope. How hopeless and impossible the situation was with Lazarus until he heard the voice of the Son of God! Now, Paul says, "by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. ii. 8). He also says, "Faith cometh by hearing" (Rom. x. 17). But it is the kind of hearing of which we have spoken. The strain goes out of life when faith in God enters, and the impossible mountains are no longer impossible.

We are nearing the end, but two things remain to be mentioned. If the dead are to hear the voice of the Son of God and live, it will only be the dead who do so. We have seen that the Lord Jesus was very deliberate in His determination that Lazarus should really be dead before He came on the scene. He first used figurative language. "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth", but His disciples did not know His meaning, wherefore He said emphatically, "Lazarus is dead". The sisters knew what the state would be ordinarily after four days in an Eastern clime and tomb. Was Lazarus dead? Indeed he was! This was essential to the Divine principle. We are too much alive, in our own efforts, interests, struggles, ambitions, activities, works, etc. to stand a chance of hearing this voice of the Son of God. Therefore our works are so much "dead works". There is the life of nature, but not the life of God. So many voices fill our ears, religious as well as worldly, and a mixture of both. If the greatest thing that can happen to mortals is to happen to us, we, like Paul, will have to be smitten to the

ground and hear a voice (Acts ix. 4). How often, under the hand of God, has it been that the end has been the beginning. We have been brought to a place of despair and utter helplessness, so that, like Paul, we have "despaired of life", not only or necessarily physically, but spiritually. But afterward we have found that this was sovereignty at work in relation to an entirely new thing. There really is no hope until we are dead.

"I lay in dust life's glory dead,  
And from the ground there blossoms red  
Life that shall endless be".

Finally. What is the nature of your relationship with Christ? You may believe in the Christian doctrine of the Deity of Christ, and believe in it very intensely. But if it is only doctrine, a tenet of the

Creed, an objective fact concerning Christ, it will not carry you through the terrific experiences which lie in the path of true Christians. John said that the object of his writing his Gospel was that we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing we might have life in His name. But he took pains to show that those who did so believe had an experimental basis for their faith. How and why do you believe? Can you say truly—"because something has happened in me for which there is no accounting apart from God Himself. Emotions, reasonings, persuasions, cannot account for it. Human personalities, psychology, or any human or natural factor cannot account for it. It required God Almighty, and I found Him in Jesus Christ. It was the voice of the *Son of God*, and I lived, and live".

T.A.S.

## Power from on High

### II. Kings iv.

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

"*And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me; what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil.*"

As I have been thinking of this chapter as a specimen of the characteristic page of the life and ministry of that wonderful servant of God, Elisha, I have been thinking of his ministry, which is doubtless familiar to you in its general character, and it seems to me that in the four incidents that we have recorded in this fourth chapter of the second book of Kings we have his whole life and ministry in representation.

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

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

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

The third incident is that there are conditions of general famine, a dearth in the land, and the prophets—God's representatives in the land—seeking food, gathering food and finding the food that they gathered to be poison.

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

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

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

### Death and Bankruptcy

The first incident deals with the question of prophetic ministry, the ministry of the prophet in a time of great and dire national need. Oh, the need to-day for a prophetic ministry in the Christian Church! What is a prophetic ministry? The prophet is the man who uncompromisingly stands for the revealed purpose of God in all its purity and in all its fulness; and a prophetic ministry is a ministry which reveals the purpose of God to the people of God, and calls them into that purpose in the Name of God. Can you name a deeper, greater need than the need of pro-

the ascended Lord, "because I go to the Father". That is the secret of it.

"But ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses". The risen, ascended, glorified, enthroned Lord, Whose Spirit is given to us as the power for effective ministry is the secret of everything. No paralysis there, no bankruptcy there, but everything fruitful and flourishing. Whatsoever our experience may be, it is as

true as God's Word is true that if we move in the power of the great fact that Christ is there at the Father's right hand, and His Spirit is in us, we shall be able to fulfil an Elisha ministry, and in the end the great testimony for which Jesus went to Calvary will be complete, His Church will be called out, brought together and matured, so that He can come and take it to Himself as the instrument of the administration of the Kingdom of God. S.A.

## Life and Death

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because 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 who for their sakes died and rose again. Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more. Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new. But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation" (II Cor. v. 14-18).

### The Invasion of Death

I want to try and put the meaning of that portion of Scripture into a simple, concise form of explanation. You see that its main theme is life and death. Now, the Bible teaches that death was not natural, it did not belong to the constitution of things. It was not a law which God put into man and nature, that after a certain time he and it should die. Death is not a natural law originally. It is something altogether unnatural from God's standpoint. Death was an invasion like the invasion of an enemy, and is always regarded in the Bible as an enemy which has invaded, has no right, and ought not to be. You know that, deep down in your very being, you revolt against death. There is that which says, This is wrong, death is wrong, death ought not to be! Yes, the Bible teaches that death is an invading enemy who has got in and really should not be there; he is an intruder into God's creation.

But the Bible just as definitely and fully reveals that there is such a thing as a deathless condition or state, a state out of which the very sting of death, which is sin, has been rooted, extricated; a state free from death, a deathless life. In the New Testament, in our translation, it is so often called 'eternal life'—not a very complete and perfect explanation of what it is, for that phrase always conveys the idea of duration rather than kind. We come to that again. The Bible, we are saying, equally reveals a condition of deathless life which is not only continuation indefinitely but is glorious life, or a life of glory. There is no glory about death as death. You may see glory triumphing in the presence of death as in the passing

of a saint triumphantly, but death itself has no glory in it. Glory is only found in deathlessness, and this deathless life of which the Bible speaks is a glorious life in its essence, in its nature; that is, it has all the power of glory and glorification in it.

There are two sides of the Bible about this matter, but we have to return for the moment to the former. God, so to speak, had to make a grave; He had to make a grave for what had been invaded by death. Graves have always signified the end of a certain order, a certain form, a certain creation. You have to say over every grave, That is the end of something, and it is the end of that in which death has its root, its place, its grip. So we find that graves came in right at the beginning. Sometimes, and usually or more often, they are the graves of individuals. You have the monotonous repetition—So-and-so died and was buried; So-and-so died and was buried. But you also find very big graves into which vast multitudes were cast at one time. The flood in the days of Noah was one of God's graves. It stands as a great type and symbol of this truth, that sin works death and death must have a grave. There must be the burying of something, the putting away forever of something.

But let us remember that death does not begin with the body, death is not first of all physical. Death is first spiritual. The bodily or physical side of it is only just the final outworking so far as our being here on this earth is concerned; it is the final stage of death's working in us here. But death started long before that. It is firstly spiritual, and the nature of death is simply, but terribly, severance from God, a rupture in the Divine relationship. When that takes place, there is death. When we become *conscious* of that, we know something very, very much more terrible than physical death. Indeed, many have sought most eagerly to bring about physical death in the hope that they might quench this full consciousness of their separation from God as it has broken upon them. To become alive to the *fact*, which *fact* exists in the case of every one of us outside of Christ, to become *alive* to the fact that we are severed from God, are without God in our natural state and therefore without hope, is the meaning of death, and it is an awful thing.

Now, apart from an *intervention* of God, the whole situation is desperate and hopeless. There is nothing

for it but eternal separation and somewhere becoming conscious of it, becoming conscious that that separation is a fixed thing—that is awful. A hopeless and desperate situation exists unless God intervenes. It requires God to intervene: only God can meet this situation. You know quite well that in the physical realm, with all inventions and devices, there is no power of man in existence to ultimately frustrate death. When the time for death has really come, nothing can change that. We are all compelled to bow, to surrender. It will take Almighty God in a direct intervention to change the situation and bring in hope.

#### God's Intervention

Well, that brings us to the other side. God *has* intervened. That is the Gospel. So familiar is the word to us that it has lost its real meaning and impact and force: it is just thought to be some kind of preaching, something that preachers talk about. They call it 'the Gospel', and it is a word despised by many. Ah, but originally it carried a different sense—God's Spell, God's good news, and you have to be in a desperate situation in order to appreciate good news. If we recognise how desperate the situation is, we are ready for good news. God's Gospel is this, that He has intervened in a hopeless situation. He has Himself intervened in this very matter, this desperate state of things. God has not sent an angel, not even an archangel. He has come Himself, incarnated in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ, and so has intervened in this scene and state of desperate hopelessness.

Well, now we are keeping very close to what we read. "One died for all". One stepped into the place that all were in. He, sinless, Who knew no sin, He in Whom there was no sting of death at all, which is sin: He over Whom death had no right or power whatsoever, He Who in His own right and prerogative of His very nature of sinlessness could not be touched, let alone holden, of death, He came into the scene. He Who knew no sin, was made sin on our behalf (II Cor. v. 21), and by His being made sin the sting of death was there, and so He suffered the death of sin in our place. He died as in our room and stead, as a sinner upon Whom were laid our transgressions, our sins. He died our death, bore judgment in our place, and the point at which He touched our state far beyond our consciousness was this, that there was given to Him in an eternal moment the awful consciousness of what death is—abandonment by God—when He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark xv. 34). He entered thus into the full and consummate meaning of death, and to have that for a moment is to touch eternity. In that moment, He entered into the full consciousness of separation from God. We have never had that and need never have it, thank God! That is where He went instead of us.

"...that they which live..." That clearly indicates life beyond death; that clearly indicates resurrection

from the dead. Postpone the physical side of that, that is in the future. The spiritual side of this is *now*, resurrection from the dead *now*. God "raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand" (Eph. i. 20). That setting means that God placed Him, positioned Him in the sense and with the meaning that here is One installed Who is an inclusive representation of many others. He is the type, the firstborn, the firstfruits, the forerunner of many others who will and can come into that blessed position of deliverance from the power of death because of deliverance from the condemnation of sin. He is installed, He is placed, He is set as the representative One, "that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes (or in their place) died and rose again". The intervention of God in Christ, the raising of Him from the dead and setting Him at His own right hand, has brought hope, eternal hope, into the place of that awful despair and hopelessness in which we are.

Dear friends, do recognise the infinite grace of God in this present time. God declares facts to us: He does not, He could not possibly, bring those facts home to us in any fulness whatsoever. If we were to have the fact of our condition outside of Christ brought fully home to us, we should disintegrate, we should go raving mad, something would happen, we should commit suicide, do something desperate, we could not bear it. In His mercy, God is not doing that. But He is saying that we *need* not know that. When He speaks of a darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matt. xiii. 42. etc), He knows what He is talking about. There is a consciousness of hopelessness, full and complete. But that is the dark side. In His mercy, He says that that is not necessary because He has intervened to save us from it, and not only to save us from that awfulness of doom and despair, of darkness and hell, but to save us unto glory, deathless life which in its full outworking is glory for spirit *and for body*—a glorified body in the power of this deathless life. He has intervened to secure for us that which was the inheritance He meant us to have at the beginning, but which was lost to us through Adam's sin, and this invasion of death. He has dealt with the whole condition, cleared it up and made possible a full realisation of all that glorious hope. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (I Pet. i. 3-4). "A living hope". That is what this passage of Scripture that we have read amounts to.

But what is the practical thing between the two? There is the awful grave, and here are we, and that grave is in our path, it lies across our way: not just the grave of Mother Earth, but that awful grave, the grave which God has had to dig for a creation, the grave of that awful death, that grave which is after all

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spiritually only a passage through into an awakening which it is impossible to contemplate. Here we are, and in our path lies that grave, but between us and that grave stands a cross—"two arms outstretched to save, like a watchman set to guard the way from that eternal grave"—a cross on which the Prince of glory died, a cross where He, as us, suffered the consequences of sin right to their full and most awful realisation in God-forsakenness, and full consciousness of it. That cross for us—that is the Gospel.

#### The Need of a Declaration on our Part

But the practical point for us—it is simple, so simple that so many stumble at it, do not come to it, and the great enemy who would hold in that grasp of sin and death sets himself with all his power and his cunning to keep from that act—what is it? A declaration on our part—that is all. This is the way from death to life, this is the way from that awfulness to that glory—a declaration on our part that His death was our death, the sin laid on Him was our sin, the separation from God which He experienced was our separation from God. We were there in God's thought and mind. When Christ died, we were there. He died in the place of all—that is God's declaration. In that death, our sin as the very sting of death was plucked out and destroyed. In His resurrection, sinless, no longer bearing sin, sin done away, buried forever from God's sight, in His resurrection our sins are gone. We are no longer under death because we are no longer under the penalty of sin. We stand justified in His resurrection. He lives for our justification, and in His resurrection we are accepted by God and are given by God that deathless life—"the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. vi. 23)—we are given that deathless life and possess it, the germ of all that glory which is to be, and "though

after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job xix. 26). Not in *this* flesh—in a glorified body I shall see God. The body of this humiliation shall be changed and made like unto the body of His glory (Phil. iii. 21). Then it shall be said, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?...Thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. xv. 55, 57). We make a declaration on both sides, the death side and the resurrection side, and in taking that position and expressing our faith like that, we come into the place where we are no longer under condemnation but justified, no longer in death but in life, no longer in hopelessness of prospect but now in the prospect of eternal glory.

#### A Practical Expression

In the New Testament there is seen the way by which that declaration is made practical. It is baptism. The means does not effect the result, it does not bring it about. The means does not pass us from death to life, from despair to hope, but it is God's given way of helping us to put our faith into a very practical expression. As we go into the water, we declare that we have passed through; that, on the one hand, we have recognised ourselves as in that doomed, judged, crucified, slain Son of Man. On the other hand, we see that One in the glory there for us, nay, He is there as us, and we shall be there with Him in due course. That is the declaration that this form of expression, baptism, holds. God always asks that we should put our faith into a practical expression. A practical expression does not save, but if the Lord has prescribed, there is something about it which carries a blessing, and we who have gone that way do know that it does carry a blessing. It is a glorious Gospel, changing despairing darkness to light, shame to glory, hopelessness to the most blessed prospect conceivable. T.A.S.

**Acknowledgments.**—We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts (other than local) received between 1st February and 31st March, 1946:

Anon, 15s.; Aylesbury, £1; Balaka, £2; Belfast, 5s.; Biggar, £1; Birmingham, 1s. 6d. and 2s.; Bournemouth, £1; Bradford, 5s.; Bristol, 10s.; Brynmawr, 10s.; Bunloit, 3s.; Chester, 13s. 6d.; Christchurch, 2s. 6d.; Clyde, 3s.; Coonoor, 5s. and 5s.; Crawley, 2s. 6d.; Cuddington, 9s.; Damanhur, Egypt, £2; Darby, Pa., 15s.; Dublin, £7, £1, 5s., 10s., 2s. 6d. and 2s. 6d.; Edinburgh, 2s. 6d. and £1; Exmouth, 5s.; Glasgow, £1 10s.; Goring-by-Sea, 5s.; Hampstead, £2; Hongkong, £4 10s.; Ilkley, 2s. 6d.; India, £3; Kenton, 10s.; Kirkcaldy, 4s.; Leicester, £1 1s. and 5s.; London, E.7, 5s.; London, N.11, 10s.; London, N.W.3, £1 1s. 6d.; London, N.W.9, 5s.; London, N.W.10, 5s.; London, S.E.23, £1; London, S.E.23, £1; London, S.E.23, £1; London, S.E.23, 10s.; London, S.E.23, 2s. 6d.; London, S.E.25, £2; London, S.E.26, 2s. 6d.; London, S.W.15, 2s.; London, S.W.4, £1; London, W.13, 10s.; London, W.C.1, 2s. 6d.; Louisville, Ky., £5; Lugano, £5; Madras, 10s.; Manhattan Beach, Cal., 5s.; Mansfield, 7s. 6d. and 8s.;

Marlborough, 6s.; Monkseaton, 4s.; Newcastle-on-Tyne, £1 and £1; New Milton, 2s. 6d.; North Wembley, 5s. and 10s.; Norwich, 3s.; Oslo, £1 and 10s.; Parbold, 2s. 6d.; Pinner, 15s.; Pudsey, 4s. 6d.; Purton, 3s. 6d.; Reading, £1; Ryde, 2s. 6d.; St. Ives, 1s.; St. Keverne, 2s. 9d. and £2; Salem, Oregon, £1; Sandown, 10s.; Shepherd's Bush, 2s. 6d.; Smethwick, 2s. 6d.; South Pasadena, Cal., 15s.; Southport, 5s.; Southsea, 5s.; Springfield, Oregon, 17s. 5d.; Stanmore, 10s.; Sunderland, 5s.; Surbiton, 5s.; Theydon Bois, 5s.; Tunbridge Wells, 1s.; Upper Gornal, 10s.; Ventnor, 1s. 3d.; Wallington, 9s.; Watertown, Wis., £2 4s. 5d.; West End, 5s.; West Wickham, 10s.; Wolhusen, Swit., £3; Wolverhampton, £2; Worthing, 2s. 6d., 2s. and £2; Wroxham, £1; Yonkers, N.Y., 9s. 11d.;

Money Orders: U.S.A. 26704, £1, 144868, £2 and 48733, 9s. 11d.; Switzerland, 12100, 11s. 5d., 5666, 11s. 5d. and 5323, 11s. 5d. Total, £90 2s. 5d.

Switzerland, 50 fr., 20 fr., and 10 fr. Total, 80 fr.

Montreal, \$2.00; Toronto, \$2.00. Total, \$4.00.

Atlanta, Ga., \$2.00; Birnbaum, \$1.50; Glendale, Cal., \$5.00; Los Angeles, Cal., \$5.00; New York City, \$9.50; Portland, Maine, \$1.00. Total, \$24.00.

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# "A Witness and Testimony"

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JULY-AUGUST, 1946

NO. 4, VOL. 24

## Editor's Letter

BELONGED OF GOD,

Before I proceed, let me thank all those friends who have written in such an appreciative way regarding my letter in the last issue. If I had any questions as to the advisability of writing as I did, these are certainly being weakened by the expressions of definite help and value coming from so many directions. Some friends have even gone so far as to express a wish that the letter might be printed separately and made available for wider use. Well, we shall see. I hinted then that I might say more later, and with that sense of more needing to be said, I am proceeding here with the matter. I have dealt with some misapprehensions as to what our position is, and what we are seeking. It was not difficult to deal with the matters already mentioned, but as we go on it does become less easy because the whole question of spiritual understanding begins to be involved. We can say concerning certain precise matters that it is or is not such and such; but on other matters explanation is necessary, and, unless there is a certain spiritual capacity or position, it is like asking the blind to see.

To begin with, there is so often brought against us the charge of exclusiveness. We are said to be, either actually, or in danger of becoming, an exclusive body. What I said earlier does partly answer this charge, but not fully. If by exclusiveness it is meant that for fellowship it is necessary to subscribe to certain teachings, truths, doctrines, forms of procedure, practices, or anything whatever extra to the basic and essential principles or laws of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ resulting in new birth and living union with Him, then we most fervently refute the charge, and say that it is simply not true! If it is thought or believed that there is some form of membership and a membership roll which means that people are or are not of a company constituted thus; again the idea is false. We have no membership roll, either of a wider or a local company. Further, we most earnestly seek to urge that Truth as such shall never be a basis of fellowship, but only Life, and if we frown on anything or any one at all, it is *not* on those who do not see just as we see, but on those who—even amongst our intended friends—make Light a pinnacle from which they look down on those whom they think have less.

But there is another side to this question. The idea of exclusivism has arisen partly or largely from the fact that the ministry at our Conferences and in general is not shared by all and sundry who are earnest and devoted servants of God of evangelical faith. Well, if that is the ground of the charge, we must plead guilty, if it is guilt. But here is where understanding is called for. You see, dear friends, we should never have come to be fulfilling the particular ministry to the Lord's people which we are engaged in, with all that it has come to mean of greater spiritual fulness to so many through these years—a ministry reaching to almost every country of the world—if the Lord had not dealt with us in a way peculiarly relevant and essential thereto. It has been a deep and costly way, and still is so, for it is not just certain themes that we are proclaiming, but a life, an experience of the Lord, a powerful and dynamic reality which has to be wrought into the very being of those concerned. Leaving aside altogether the question of measure and comparative value, it is a matter of the specific object which the Lord has with and through us as an instrument for His purpose in Christ. However much we may value all other ministries with their specific contribution to the whole—and we do so value them—we cannot but preserve the distinctiveness of our responsibility and trust. We once tried an "open platform" with the sincere object of avoiding the above charge, but the very meaning of our existence began to disappear. Whether you agree with our message or not, you surely must agree that a particular ministry requires those who have not just mentally agreed with it, but have gone through discipline in relation to it.

Now, there is another matter which has caused many much misunderstanding and misapprehension. It also is one of the contributing factors to the charge of exclusiveness. It is fairly generally known that in our local assembly life, when believers have testified by baptism to their union with Christ, some who represent

the Church gather round these believers and, laying their hands upon their heads, pray for them, and so testify to the fact that "the Body is one" as by one Spirit. The fuller meaning of this is set out in one of the books published by us, and it is not my intention to discuss it here. Let me say, as to this matter, and with emphasis, that

- a. There is no association with "tongues" or any other "manifestations" in this simple testimony. I personally, after many years of knowing *about* such things, have never yet once heard anyone speak in tongues anywhere.
- b. It is our very earnest wish that this matter of "the laying-on-of-hands" should never be one for propagation in itself. This would be contrary to anything in the New Testament, for, while it is there as something recognised, it is never—like baptism and other things—in itself apart a matter of commandment or exhortation. So, if you know of anyone who singles this out and makes it a matter of challenge, please do understand that we do not favour such a course.
- c. Then, finally, this is no sign or token of special relatedness to ourselves. The matter is never preached among us for acceptance or decision, it is only explained, and that only as related to the whole body of truth, not something in itself. Nevertheless there is blessing in *all* that the Lord has indicated as expressing spiritual principles.

Having said these things, and the letter has almost become a "treatise", and not by any means covering the ground of all the opposition, I shall conclude for the present by touching upon a note of a more general and superficial character. It is very often asked, especially by younger and inexperienced Christians, why it is that, if we are not all wrong, so many godly, devoted, and much-used servants of God are unsympathetic and against us. There is a sense in which this is also *our* problem, and much could be said about it. The answer in general is that it has been so again and again, both in and from New Testament times. But I will give my own case as representative. Years ago I was unquestionably stretched out to the full for God's best, (as I trust I am now), and there was no doubt whatever as to my devotion to the Lord. I was right in the full tide of every kind of evangelical activity, and especially in conventions everywhere for the deepening of spiritual life. I was a member of many Missionary Boards and Committees, and was greatly in demand because it was believed that I was a man with a message. This is putting into very few words an immense amount of truly devoted activity and concern for the Lord's interests. Being a man of prayer I was open to the Lord for all His will, I believed. But there was a certain realm of things against which I was deeply prejudiced. It was really the very essence of the *original* "Keswick" teaching, but I would not have it at any price. I fought it and those who taught it. To make a long story short, the Lord took me seriously in hand along another line, and brought me into great spiritual distress. The very thing that proved my emancipation was that which I would not formerly have touched for anything. That proved the key to a fuller life and a world-wide ministry. I came to see that my judgment had been wholly wrong, and that I was blinded by prejudice. I believed that I was honest and right, and seemed to have evidence of it; but, no, I was, in my ignorance, shutting out something which was of great value to the Lord and to myself. Thank God for the grace to be perfectly honest when the fact of prejudice was brought home to my heart. Perhaps this helps a little in answering the question. No man is infallible, and no one has yet "apprehended", nor is "yet perfect". Many godly men have had to adjust in the presence of fuller light given when a *sense of need* made such necessary.

In writing thus, my hope is that it will provide a ground for the undoing of some of that persistent and devoted work of Satan in weakening the Testimony of Jesus by dividing the Lord's people.

With love, and warmest greetings to you all,

Yours, as ever only for Him,



Acknowledgments.—We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts (other than local) received between 1st April and 31st May, 1946:

Anon., 10s., 10s. and £1; Aalborg, Denmark, £1; Belfast, 10s., 5s. and 3s.; Bexhill, 12s. 6d.; Birmingham, 10s. and 10s.; Bridgend, 6s. 9d.; Bromley, 5s. and 4s.; Brundall, 10s.; Calgary, Alta., 12s.; Cambridge, 9s.; Cambuslang, 10s.; Cape Province, 5s.; Carshalton, 5s.; Chirk, 5s.; Colbury, 6s. 6d.; Croydon, 10s.; Cuddington, 2s. 6d.; Cullompton, 10s.; Dublin, £1, 2s. 6d. and 10s.; Eastbourne, 10s.; Glasgow, £1 and 5s.; Gravesend, 10s.; Greenock, £1 14s. 6d.; Hayes, 10s. 6d.; Hereford, 2s. 6d.; Hove, 10s. and 2s.; Hull, 2s. 6d.; Kilcreggan, 7s. 6d. and 10s.; Lewis, 14s.; Leyland, 5s.; Little Madeley, 10s.; London, S.W.11, 10s.; London, N.1, 3s.; London, S.E.19, £1; London, W.5, 5s.; London,

N.16, £1; London, W.15, 5s.; London, S.E.23, 10s. and 10s.; Lostock, £4; Loughton, 6s.; Manchester, 3s.; Mottingham, 5s.; Newcastle-on-Tyne, £1; Old Hill, 2s. 6d.; Parkstone, 10s.; Peterboro', Ont., £1; Purley, 4s. 6d.; Ranchi, £2 10s.; Reading, £2; Ringmer, 10s.; Rockford, 11l., 14s. 10d.; St. Leonards-on-Sea, 5s.; Salfords, 10s.; Seaton, 8s.; Sheffield, £1 10s.; Sidcup, 10s.; Southbourne, 10s. and 10s.; Southend-on-Sea, 5s.; Sutton, 3s.; Tunbridge, 10s.; Tyrley, £2; Ventnor, 3s. 6d.; Verdun, Quebec, £1; Wallington, 10s.; Whitstable, 5s.; Worthing, 10s. Total £46 15s. 7d.

Atlantic City, N.J., \$2; Birmingham, Ala., \$5; Cambridge, Mass., \$10; Des Moines, Iowa., \$2; Flushing, L.I., \$2; Louisville, Ky., \$3; Philadelphia, Pa., \$2; Roswell, Ga., \$1; Swarthmore, Pa., \$20; Tampa, Fla., \$5; W. Somerville, Mass., \$5; Winchester, Mass., \$2. Total, \$59.

# The Meaning of Christ

## I

### The Bringing in of a Man

"The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor. xv. 45).

### A Lost Impact

We are going to be occupied with the meaning of Christ. Before we come immediately into touch with that matter, there are a few preliminary words that I want to say, and they have to do with something of which we are all conscious, a matter which is troubling, I think I can say, the majority of real Christians. It is the matter of the lost impact of Christ, of the Gospel, of Christianity. We are suffering from a handicap, and that handicap is tradition. Christianity has become that—a tradition so largely, something handed down from generation to generation. It has become a theology, a set of doctrines, of statements about God, about Christ, about the Holy Spirit, and many other things, and as such it has passed very largely into the mental realm—a thing to be worked out in thought, a matter of reason. It has also become a great mystical cult. It has passed into the realm of art, and music, so that you can accept Christianity on that basis and be a Christian along that line, and yet that it shall stand completely out of relation to your inner life. Think of all that goes to make up Christianity as it is known to-day, of the external, the soulish appreciation; and it has no impact. *There* is the great need, surely,—and this is what we are seeking to come to at this time.

The great need is to get back to the real meaning of Christ, so that a new impact may come upon ourselves, and there shall come a new impact upon the world through us.

### The Peril of Specific Teachings

Before I go on to that, let me point out another peril. It is the peril of specific teachings and specific movements. So often, specific teachings, although they may be right, become something in themselves, turn in upon themselves, and before long, run to seed, and have no positive impact. For a time they go on by their own momentum, the enthusiasm of those who are in them. They are carried on, and then they fade, they lose out. Now, the point is this, that everything must be a direct emanation from Christ and a directive to Christ, and not something in itself. It must come out of Him, it must be a living expression of Him, and it must draw back, lead back, to Him. It must be Christ as source, and Christ as goal, Christ Himself. We have to ask ourselves the question—*How* do we teach this or that? Are we teaching it or talking about it as an 'it', as some *thing*; or is it always kept immediately and directly related to Him, that this is but an expression of Christ, this is but a part of Him as the whole? When we detach something and begin

to talk about *it*, whatever it might be, and begin to make a teaching around it, it is going to run to seed, it is going to lose impact sooner or later, the thing is going to come to an end; we are simply going to box the compass of truth, and then we shall have difficulty in finding something fresh to say in a living way. No, that will not do. It is Christ and only Christ Who is the power of God to effect the purpose of God, and we must see how everything is but Christ in expression. In a word, we must see the meaning of Christ. So much for this preliminary word as to the need of recovering impact, and the nature of our present limitation and weakness.

### Man, the Climax of Creation

Let us come right to this matter for a little while—the meaning of Christ. In the verse which we read, the first half of the statement takes us back to the first chapters of the book of Genesis, to the bringing in of man. God made man, created man, and it is said of that man that he became a living soul. And when that was done it says "there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day". I am not going to discuss any of the old questions about time periods and so on, but in an order and arrangement of this world's history, we are now in the sixth day (a thousand years being as one day), and in this sixth day the supreme thing is the bringing in of a man in this Divine sense, the last Adam, the second Man, the bringing in of Him personally in the Person of Jesus Christ, and the bringing in of Him corporately in the person of His Body, the Church. That lies in the background; and thinking of the original bringing in of man in Genesis i, how crisis that was in the whole course of Divine activity! What an immense point of arrival that was, how tremendously significant it was! We can say that it was *the* thing supreme in the Divine thought, and the bringing in of this second Man, firstly Christ Himself and then the Church which is His Body—called definitely and positively the "new man" (Eph. ii. 15)—is as climactic as was the bringing in of Adam on that sixth day.

### Man in the Divine Scheme of Things

#### (a) The Answer and Explanation of All Things

What did the first Adam mean in the whole scheme of things? Firstly, he was the explanation of all, and the answer to the question of the universe. Why the creation of this universe, heaven and earth and all things therein? Why all this Divine activity and labour, this expenditure of power and wisdom? Why this projecting of Divine energy? Go through the whole account fragment by fragment and ask why? The universe waits for an answer; it is full of questions on Day Five. Day by day the question has been growing: every fresh touch of the Divine hand, every fresh exercise of the Divine energy,

wisdom and power, is intensifying the question—What is it for? The universe is one big question when it is said, "And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day". When it comes to "And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day", the question is answered, the explanation is given—man is here! "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet" (Psa. viii. 6). So Adam One was the explanation of all things, and the answer to the question of the universe.

So also is the Christ, but infinitely more so. The last Adam, the second Man, is the explanation of all things. John tells us that quite clearly. "All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made" (John i. 3); and Paul says, "All things have been created through him, and unto him" (Col. i. 16). That is the meaning of Christ, to begin with.

But remember there is this one new man, the Church which is His Body of which He is Head. It, in the larger, corporate, spiritual sense, is Christ in expression. It is unnecessary here for me to remind you that the article is very often used in relation to the Church: it is called "the Christ". "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is the Christ" (I Cor. xii. 12 Gr.). One body, many members. That does not rule out His separate personality, but in this Divine thought He has joined Himself to, or constituted by Himself, a Body of many members, which is the answer to the questions of the universe and the explanation of all things; and there are more than hints in the Scriptures that in the end it will be manifested that Christ, the Son, with the sons, in unveiling, is the answer and explanation of all things. "The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 19), and in that day of the manifestation of the sons of God the declaration is that the creation itself shall be delivered. Why is this creation always so abortive, getting so far and stopping short, not going through? Why, with all its tremendous potentialities and resources and abilities—why, with all this, does it turn in upon itself to destroy itself, not deliver itself? Why even to-day when secrets are being unearthed, divulged, when men have reached such a point of knowledge and understanding, why not an emergence into Utopia, instead of a degenerating into barbarism and self-destruction? With everything so wonderful it is all toward more suffering, more evil, more destruction. However far it goes, the creation cannot get through, cannot break away, cannot emerge to be a glorious creation; but here is the definite statement that the creation itself shall be delivered from bondage and from corruption in the hour of the manifestation of the sons of God. What is the answer to the question of the universe?—and there is a big question. Why this universe, why even this part of it, this fragment of it, this world? What is the explanation? Give us the answer! My soul, the

answer is here. As in that smaller, limited realm Adam was the answer to, and the explanation of, that first creation, so in a far larger way, Christ is the answer to, and the explanation of, all things.

#### (b) The Terminal Point Between Purpose and Fulfilment

But that is only the beginning. What did Adam mean in the scheme of things? He was the terminal point between purpose and fulfilment. I hope that is not too difficult. We are let into this by the Word of God, that before ever that Divine hand set to work to constitute this creation, this present world order, there were counsels purposing the eternal purpose. A great Divine thought was worked out, and it was projected, put into operation, and it reached a terminus when man, Adam, was created, because it was unto him and then to be through him for realisation. There are the simple indications in the story that God worked up to man, put things into man. 'I have made you custodian of My purposes and intentions; upon you rests the great responsibility for My purpose'. He was the terminal point at which the purpose arrived, and from which its fulfilment was intended to begin. We know, of course, his tragedy, and how the purpose stopped short with him in realisation, but God has never abandoned His purpose, and immediately Adam broke down, the last Adam was mentioned, intimated, the "Seed".

As with Adam in that limited way, that intended way, so with Christ. He is the terminal point of all Divine counsels and purposes and thoughts and intentions. They are all unto Him. For Adam, we are told, was, after all, but a figure of Him that was to come. (Rom. v. 14). In Christ, all that ever was in the purposes of God found its point of arrival, and blessed be God, through Him and by Him all those Divine purposes are worked out and perfected and realised without any breakdown. The meaning of Christ is that He is the terminal point of all the thoughts of God from eternity to eternity, as to purpose and fulfilment.

In the corporate, we, "chosen in Him," "called according to (the eternal) purpose", are to be instrumental in the working out of the purpose to its final realisation, and, as a centre to the universe, the Church will be the embodiment and representation and expression of all those Divine intentions and purposes, as we are in Christ Jesus.

#### (c) The Climax of Divine Energies

Again, Adam was the climax of Divine energies. God had worked, and worked steadily, developing, increasing, moving up period by period, day by day—whatever that might mean, there is room for quite a lot in it, it does not matter—He had been progressively putting forth His energies in an ever-growing way, and phase by phase, step by step, there had been added and added increase, measure by measure, enlargement upon enlargement; and man was the climax of those Divine energies. When you come to Day Seven, there is no evening or morning

mentioned. It is eternal in principle, the climax of Divine energy.

We are not just thinking about material and temporal things, we are talking about the last Adam, a life-giving Spirit; we are talking about things spiritual and things eternal now. In this far greater realm, which will doubtless involve the lesser—it will involve the material creation, it will involve our very physical bodies at length—but in that which is above all and over all, supreme to all, that is, the spiritual, Christ is the climax of all Divine energies, for in Him God finishes His work and comes to rest. God finds His final satisfaction in His Son, the Lord Jesus, and the fact that He has raised Him and glorified Him—and remember that it is a part of apostolic attestation that God glorified the Son, clothed Him with glory; and what they saw by the Spirit, and what Saul of Tarsus met even in the flesh, was the glorified Son of Man—the fact that He glorified Him was God's way of attesting Him as His complete satisfaction; and the Church is ultimately seen as coming down out of heaven, having the glory of God, which means that God has found His satisfaction, not only in an individual, but in a Body, the one new man, the climax of Divine energies. God is working now. That very word in our New Testament translation—'work' or 'working' or 'worketh'—is in the original, the word from which we get 'energy'. It is *energeo*: "It is God who worketh (energizeth) in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 13). Again Paul says, "Working in us (energizing in us) that which is well-pleasing in his sight" (Heb. xiii. 21). So we might go on. The Divine energies are at work. What for? To bring about the climax in the Body, as it has been brought about in the Head—the climax of glory. So was Adam in his realm; so is Christ in His far more transcendent realm.

#### (d) The Instrument for Answering the Iniquity of the Universe

Again, Adam was the intended instrument for answering on earth the evil that had broken out in heaven. An evil thing had occurred. One occupying a place of very great influence and glory, the "Covering Cherub," had said, "I will be like the Most High" (Isa. xiv. 14). Iniquity was found in him. "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven" (Luke x. 18). "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" (Isa. xiv. 12). "And angels which kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). An evil conspiracy, an iniquitous thing somewhere in heaven, had broken out, and evidently multitudes of angels were implicated and were cast out of that realm, and they turned to the earth; and Adam had this great opportunity and great responsibility of answering that thing, so far as this earth was concerned. It was given to him in faith, in loyalty, to shut the door of this world to that iniquity, to keep it outside. We know he became the open door to it. "As through

one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin" (Rom. v. 12); the door was opened. We are not speaking now of the issue, we are speaking of what Adam was in the scheme of things. He was intended to be the answer on this earth to that iniquity which had broken out in the universe: he failed.

Ah, but how easy it is to see this in all that we know now about the Lord Jesus. He has shut the door of a new creation so that that iniquity will never get in, so that that death will never have a place. "There shall be no more curse" (Rev. xxii. 3); there shall be no more sin; "there shall be no more death" (Rev. xxi. 4). He is a door; but a closed door to that, and an open door only to life. He has answered that iniquity so far as the creation is concerned; He has met the full force of that very same evil power. The devil and all his angels, with all the evil that they bring in their train, all the spiritual evil that surrounds them like an atmosphere, He has felt it, He has registered it, He has known its impact upon Him; He has known conflict even unto a bloody sweat. He has known it, and He has answered it. "To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might nullify" (that is the word) "the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8); and in Himself it is done. The meaning of Christ, the last Adam, is that He answers the iniquity of this universe, He has answered it by His Cross, and He has answered the instigator of it all; the prince of this world He has cast out (John xii. 31).

#### (e) The Channel of Life to a World Race

Adam was the intended life channel to a world race. We do not know by definite statement, we can only conclude by deduction, what would have happened if they had chosen another tree instead of the one which they did choose. If they had refused the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and had chosen the tree of life, our deduction is, from fairly good intimation, that the tree of life signified, symbolised, Divine life, uncreated life; what, in the New Testament we know as eternal life; for when Adam sinned, the Lord said, "...lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever—" (Gen. iii. 22). He put that tree out of their way and put them out of the way of that tree. Talking about spiritual principles, (you can forget the symbolism if you like), if Adam had chosen the alternative and repudiated the forbidden, he would undoubtedly have produced after his kind, and have been the door and the channel of life to a world race. On the other side, our other deduction—and it is more of a definite statement this time—is that through him death came upon all, through him, the one man; and through this other One Man—life. "The last Adam" then does really mean that He is the channel of life to a world race. That is the meaning of Christ.

But His Body is a channel also of His life, life to be transmitted from Him. How much we would like

to say about that! We are simply indicating things at the moment.

### (1) Spiritual Head in Terms of Life

Finally, for the moment, Adam was, in the scheme of things in the Divine thought, the spiritual head of creation and of the race in terms of life through faith and righteousness; head in terms of life. The key to everything with God is life. You begin with life, you end the Bible with life, and the whole history of things is, the battle for life, life and death locked in this terrific conflict. Christ in the higher spiritual realm than the first Adam is God's appointed Head of the creation and of the race in terms of life. It is not official, ecclesiastical, it is life. We must realise that Christ's ascendancy, supremacy, power, ability and all that goes with Headship, is in terms of His prerogative of life. He is the Son, vested with life; He has the right given Him of God to give life to as many as believe. That is why He is Head. You can set up people in office and make Popes of them and they may make great claims, but what does it amount to? When you come up against death, what can they do? But bring in one who has the power of life over death, be he never so humble on this earth, he is head, he is master, he is lord. You may bring all the greatest physicians that the world knows into the presence of death, and when death takes charge, they are helpless. But supposing you bring in a little, insignificant person who is nobody, with no capabilities whatever in this world, no training, and that one be invested with the power of life over death, he rules out all these others, they are as nothing in his presence, he is lord of the situation.

Christ is Head, not just by appointment, but in terms of life. We may be very insignificant people on this earth, nothing at all to be taken account of by the world, but if only we have Christ in fulness of life we are in a supreme position, we make all the great organisations and institutions as nothing. It is a spiritual thing, the impact of Christ; not tradition, not history, not theology, but the spiritual power of His presence in terms of life through faith and righteousness.

### • Through Faith and Righteousness

Life through faith—I expect you have fought that battle out. You know as well as I do that the sooner we settle it, the better. Immediately doubt comes in, death comes in. It does not matter how difficult the situation is and how real and genuine may seem to be the problem, as soon as we give way to doubt we are encompassed by death, and, although the situation may seem to be an utterly impossible one, if only faith can hold, death is kept at bay, there is life through faith.

Let us look at the first Adam in this matter. The whole thing pivoted upon faith. It was through unbelief of God that death came in through the first Adam. We substitute another word for faith, in order to get nearer to it. Suppose we use the word

'loyalty', for, after all, that was the issue—loyalty to God. Loyalty is good faith. Oh, how much of death and limitation and defeat the Church is suffering to-day because of this disloyalty of its own people, not only to the Lord, but to one another; and the enemy has an immeasurable degree of advantage because of this disloyalty. It may seem to be coming down to a lower level, but I do think that we have to learn very much more of this lesson of mutual loyalty, standing by one another, being true to one another: even though there may be doubts and reasons for questions, nevertheless, being loyal, finding a ground of loyalty. Loyalty is a grand thing. Adam failed in loyalty to God. He listened to the Evil One; he accepted the insinuation about God; he took on the unholy inference that the devil made; he allowed it to get in and gave an assent to it instead of standing true to God, being loyal to God, saying, Well, I do not understand, I cannot explain, but I believe God! Faith and loyalty are really one in essence, and it is the only way of life.

The Lord Jesus fought that battle. Note the utter loyalty of Christ to the Father. Yes, there was plenty for the enemy to play with. He was hungry and weak from His long fast, yet He was not going to be disloyal to the Father at the suggestion of the enemy. Yes, He was suffering, and was going to suffer, ostracism, discount and persecution in this world, and it was a hard way of deprivation. That pinnacle-of-the-temple way might have been a quick road to fame and popularity, but at the expense of loyalty to the Father, and He was having none of it. "It is written"; "it is written"; "it is written". And all the way through, it was that, His solid loyalty of faith to the Father, that made Him Head in terms of life. It is a big lesson and a very difficult one. We are probably all in that hard school, but we are learning that it does not do to let in doubt, to cede any ground to the suggestions of the enemy. We know that we are involved in spiritual death immediately we begin to question the Lord. Something comes over our spirits, and we know we are paralysed until we take that ground back again, get that cleared up and recover a position of faith.

Righteousness; for our present purpose, all we will say is that righteousness means bringing everything unto God—His rights. That is where Satan sinned; he sought to draw from God to himself, to get God's worship transferred to him. That is where Adam failed; to take out of God and have it in himself. "Ye shall be..."; "ye shall know" (Gen. iii. 1-5). And that is where the Lord Jesus overcame. He held everything for God and unto God; He drew everything to the Father. He attributed everything to the Father. 'The words that I speak'; 'the works that I do' (John xiv. 10); everything to the Father. He lived worshipping, and thus He became Head over the creation and the race that was to be, in terms of life, for worship is life, and life is because of righteousness. So says Paul.

We must stop there for the time being. Are you

beginning to see something of the meaning of Christ? If we can really see the Lord anew, and come back into a more living, utter oneness with Him, there will be a recovery of the lost impact, there will be a

living testimony—not just teaching and not just a movement—there will be the impact of Christ Himself. May the Lord accomplish it soon!

T.A.S.

## “In Thy Light Shall We See Light”

READING: Gen. i. 3-5; Psa. xxxvi. 9; Psa. xliii. 3; cxxxix. 1, 23-4; Matt. vi. 21-24; John i. 4; Eph. v. 13; I John i. 5-7; I Cor. xi. 28, 31; II Cor. xiii. 5.

If one does not set out to serve God wholeheartedly one does not feel the necessity for light. It is only when one has been touched by God, apprehended by God, and one seeks to go forward with God, then one finds how necessary light is. There is a fundamental need for light to know the mind of God; to know what is of the Spirit and what is of the soul; to know what is Divine and what is human, merely out of man; to know what is really heavenly, and what is only earthly; the difference between the things which are spiritual and the things which are carnal; to know whether God is really leading one, or whether one is walking by one's feelings, senses or imaginations. It is when we have been put to a position where we would like to follow God fully that we find the light is a necessary thing in the Christian life.

### Illumination does not come from Introspection

For the past few days I have been talking with a number of brothers and sisters, and the same question has come up again and again. The question is, How can I know that I am walking by the Spirit? How do I know that I am not walking by myself? How do I distinguish which prompting in me is from the Spirit and which prompting is from self? How do I know that this is natural and the other spiritual? It seems as if they are quite alike. Some have even gone further. They try to look within, to differentiate, to discriminate, to analyse; and they bring themselves into deep bondage. They think by looking within, by analysing their own feelings, they can find out what is of God and what is not of God. Not only so, some have been asking me the question, How do I know that I have no will of my own? I do not want to do anything out from myself, I try to follow God, and I have got no knowledge whether what I have been thinking or desiring is of God or myself—even that I do not know. So they try to look within and ask if this is from God or if this is from self.

Now, this is a situation which is really serious to Christian life, for no looking within will bring us inward knowledge; and looking within, or, using another word, self-examination has been used by Christians as the means of acquiring knowledge, whereas self-examination is not stated in the Word of God to be the way for us to know ourselves or to know anything. We have to be careful; we have to have self-knowledge, we have to know what is going

on within, we do not want to live in a fools' paradise because we have altogether gone wrong and yet we do not know we are wrong. But how does that knowledge come about? It is not coming about by my turning within, analysing my own feelings, motives, everything that is going on within, and then trying to pronounce whether I am walking by the Spirit or from myself. This is the crucial point to-day in the lives of many.

We have read two passages, one in I Cor. xi. and one in II Cor. xiii. Both these passages can easily be made to teach that Christians should examine themselves, which is not true. In I Cor. xi. the Lord did say we have to discern ourselves or we have to judge ourselves, but please remember in that particular connection it is associated with the Table, and that knowledge is to discern whether we recognize the Body or not, and that has nothing to do with self-knowledge, as such. The whole question is that I should discern myself, judge myself as to my relation to the Body. The question is not that I should try to discern myself, examine myself, to find out which feeling in me is of God and which feeling is not of God, which is the right kind of movement in me and which is the wrong kind. It is nothing to do with that. It is a question of my relationship with the Body.

Then another passage which has been very often quoted is II Cor. xiii. 5. You have a very strong command from Paul that you should examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith or not. It is not to discover whether you are living by the Spirit or whether you are living from yourself, that you should try to examine yourself. It is nothing to do with anything in yourself, it is an examination of yourself to know whether you are in the faith or not. Are you a Christian? The question is, Examine yourself to find whether you are a Christian or not. That is all. Do you really believe in the Lord Jesus? Have you got that fundamental faith? It is nothing to do with self-knowledge or the knowledge of the will of God. So we put away these two passages which have been used to prove what the Word of God does not teach.

### Illumination can come from God Alone

Now we will go back to the Word of God to find out what is the thing which God has given us or which He is going to give us, for us to know ourselves and to know His mind. Let us remember that verse in the Psalms, Psalm xxxvi. 9. "In thy light shall we see light". I think that is one of the best verses in the Old Testament. There are two lights there; the

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first light is "Thy light", and then, if we have that, we shall see light.

Now, these two lights are different. The first light is objective, the second light is subjective. The first light is the light which belongs to God, but is given to us. The second light is the knowledge imparted by that light given. "In thy light shall we see light." We will know something, we will be clear about something. We shall see. That is the second light. How can we come to the point of saying, Praise the Lord, I know it! How do we come there? In Thy light. How different it is from our theories! We think we have to look within to find out what is the light, that is, what is the true condition inside. We try to find it by thinking, by analysing, by those introspective ways of turning within to put everything in its order, to find out which is which; but no man has ever got to know God that way, and no man has ever got to know himself that way. It is not the Divinely appointed way for self-knowledge; self-examination is utterly useless there. It can only leave you in doubt, in bewilderment, in everything being hazy. I would like to emphasize this as strongly as possible. That is not the path by which God is leading us. No, the path is, "In thy light shall we see light". When there is the light coming from God, we will see something. No sight has ever come by feeling or by analysing. Sight only comes by the light of God coming in. That is the Divinely appointed way.

You remember in Psalm cxxxix, the Psalmist said, "Search me and know my heart". You know what it means to say, Search me. It does not mean that I search myself. "Search me" means "You search me". You search me and know my heart. That is the way. It is for God to come in and search, not for me to search. I do not mean to say we may live in a careless way and just go on as we like. No, that is not the thing. The question here is the knowledge of self as such, where does it come from? It comes from God searching me, not from my searching myself.

Now the point comes, What does it mean that we come into the light? What does it mean, "In thy light shall we see light"? When He searches me, He will know my heart. How? I think we had better cease from the doctrinal side, and come down to practical things. I think some of us have been living quite honestly before God. We believe that we have been quite honest, and we do not think there is much wrong with us; for a number of days we have been making progress, we think, going on; then somehow "the entrance of thy word giveth light". Some brother has given out the Word of God, and that word has made an entrance into us, or we ourselves have been waiting before God, and the Word of God has come in in power. Then we see something which we have never seen before. We are convicted, we know where we are wrong. We look up and confess, Lord, I have sinned, how blind I was; for so many years I have been wrong and yet I did not know it! Light comes in and you see light. The light of God brings you to see the light concerning yourself, and every

knowledge of self comes through that way. It may not be the Word sometimes. Some of us have known saints who really know the Lord, and through praying with them or talking with them, in the light radiated from them, you see something which you have never seen before.

The light of God is the thing that brings us to a knowledge of ourselves. All the rest will not do it. Introspection will never bring us even one step nearer the truth. Some of us are prone to do it more than others, but let us settle it with God. Can I find out my true state by turning within? If I cannot I will not do it any more, I will have to let go.

#### Illumination comes by walking in the Light of God

So we come to the point. What is the light and how can we be brought into the light of God to know ourselves? In I John i. 5, we have that "God is light". "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light..." (I John i. 7). God is in the light and we walk in the light. Walking in the light means always being open to exposure, there is nothing which cannot be touched by light. There is a law about light, it comes in wherever there is a crack; if you let it, it will come in. But the point is that we must be in the light, and walking in the light is one of the most precious things in the world. Do you not admire, or sometimes even envy, those who live really in the light of God, and know what they are doing? There is such a walk with God, such a knowledge of God, such a constantly being under the Divine, searching light, that the slightest spot of darkness will be brought into light immediately. It is a marvellous thing. Life and light are interwoven, you cannot separate the two. Real light from God is something very precious. It is the starting point of the new creation, and it is the starting point of the old creation. "Let there be light: and there was light." Before everything else, the first point is light. God wants to bring us into the reality of it, and show us what it is. Light is the first thing. Some of us mistake our own feelings to be the will of God. To some of us it seems as if the Word of God is most hazy, is something which we do not understand, it is beyond us. But there are those whom you have met, and they have seen the light of God, they know what they are doing. They know that the will of God is that; even in the future, being brought before the *Bema*, even then the whole thing will stand. When God brings everything to light, you will find that there is still something which will stand. There is still something known as gold, silver, precious stones, which will stand not only the burning, but the light before the Judgment Seat. That is greatly to be desired. Living in the light, not living in uncertainty, in analysis of all kinds, but living in the light, knowing that you know. It is walking in the light that produces that.

#### Illumination is known inwardly in terms of Life

The light is something objective. God is light. But Christ is our life, and that life is the light of men. We have that life, have we not? Praise the Lord, the life

is in Him, and He is in us. He is our life, and that life is the light. There is something inside showing you something; there is something in you breaking forth into knowledge. It is not that I try to find out things, it is something shown. I cannot emphasize that word strongly enough, it is *shown*. People may ask you why and how, and you say, I cannot say; I know it, that is all. You know what you have got. If you have seen it, you have seen it, that is all. This is the life that is in us.

So the difference between the carnal man and the spiritual man is a difference of knowledge. We know by life, they know by knowledge. We eat of the fruit of the Tree of Life; they eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. They try to judge, to come to a point where they say, This is good, or, This is evil. Their knowledge of good and evil comes from a finding out, a trying to analyse and come to a conclusion. To us sometimes we do not know, it may appear to be right, but the whole question is Life or death? Our right and wrong, our true pathway is this, Is there life or is there death? Is the Lord rising up in me in life, or is He not rising at all? It is not only a question of good and evil; the question is, life, and the life is the light. When the Lord is rising in us, we know it; all those who have life in them know it. Praise the Lord, that is settled. I do not try to deduce things, to put things together, and then try to come to a conclusion,—that is right or wrong. No, that belongs to another realm. That is the natural man. Our knowledge is this, Christ has risen in me in life and shown me so that I can say, I know it! Oh, the certainty of light is a most precious thing!

#### Illumination is from the Word of God in the Power of the Spirit

So, friends, I would like this, that we should learn in the clearest way, once and for all—I pray God that He will give us light as to this point—I will not analyse myself any more. I will not try to look within and to find out which is the spirit and which is the soul. Some have been asking me this question. How do I know this is the spirit, and how do I know this is the soul? How do I differentiate here? Has God ever told you to differentiate between the soul and spirit in you? I have never read anything like that in the New Testament. God has never asked us to discern what is soul and what is spirit. What does He say? It is when His Word, the Word of God, the two-edged sword, comes in, that soul and spirit are divided. When His Word comes in, you know it. No self-discerning can ever bring us to a true knowledge of self. So, if that is so, do not try to do it. We have to stop altogether. Lord, I will stop trying to differentiate between this and that, I am not able to do it. Show me. Thou art going to do the work; I keep myself open! That is my attitude. I am willing to be shown anything. I am not afraid of the light, I am not afraid to lose my spiritual standing, I am not afraid of what people will think, I do not mind that. I am ready for anything from the Lord, but I will not

do anything by my own efforts by looking within to get something out. Thou must show me! The light of God must shine into our hearts to tell us the truth about ourselves. So no man by searching can find out God, and no man by searching can find out himself. Everything must come from God. He is the light, and He has to say "Let there be light". Then there will be light and then we will have real knowledge.

The only definition of light in the whole Scriptures, I think, is given in Eph. v. 13. Paul made it very clear what the light is, everything, anything, that makes things manifest, that shows: that is light. So what we need is only that God shall come in and bring manifestation. Praise the Lord, that is an essential part of the work of the Spirit. Whenever He comes in, He brings manifestation. I do not know how many of us have experienced the judgment of the Spirit in our hearts. It is a blessed thing when the Spirit comes in and judges, and then there will be no doubt whether we are wrong or not. Nothing comes by analysing, by feeling, by trying to discriminate whether this is that, or that is this. Whatever is of that nature has always the stamp of doubting about it. You are always doubting. You cannot say you know, you are not sure. But praise the Lord, when the Spirit comes in with the light of God manifesting through the life of Christ in us, we find we can only say, I know I was wrong; I know that is of the natural, that is of the Spirit; I have seen it! The fundamental experience of a Christian is, I have seen it! Without that, you cannot get anywhere. Do not trust even in what you think to be right. The keenest power of judgment can never arrive at the same conclusion as a flash of light from God. You may have the keenest sense of right and wrong, and you may utilise that to judge yourself or others, but it will never bring you to that reality, to that manifestation, to that revelation, to that something seen. It cannot. A flash of light from God brings you there. I have seen it! The whole thing is settled. Self-knowledge comes from the light of God alone and from nothing else.

#### Illumination depends upon Singleness of Heart Godward

Then we come to this question. We would like to have this knowledge; we would like to walk in the light; we would like to have the light. What is the attitude that can bring me to the place where I can see? We have read part of Matt. vi. I think that chapter is very precious. I think that is the only place in the New Testament where we have the condition for light. The requirement of God in order that we may see is simply this. "Lay up...treasures in heaven." It begins there, quite a remarkable beginning. Why? Because "where your treasure is, there will your heart be". Then the Lord continues to say that if the eye is single, then the body is full of light. Now, we come to the condition. My eye must be single. If the eyes of the body are wicked, evil, then the body is full of darkness. "If the light that is in thee be darkness; how great is that darkness!"

So the point is, how can one get light? There must be the singleness of heart and the singleness of eye. We read in the Song of Solomon, "Behold...my love...thou hast doves' eyes." Some of us who keep doves know that doves are a kind of bird that can only see one thing at a time. That is a peculiarity about the dove, and the Lord praises the Church that her eyes are like doves' eyes. I think there must be a reference to that. You are going to see one thing at a time, not two objects before you. Singleness of heart will result in singleness of eye, and singleness of eye brings in the light from God. The whole thing is, do I really want God?

I have to confess this; I have met one who is now with the Lord, and I always think of her as a 'lighted' Christian. If I walked into her room, without talking about anything I was simply brought immediately to a sense of God. In those days I was very young, I had been converted about two years. I had got lots of plans, lots of beautiful thoughts, and lots of schemes for the Lord to sanction. With all these things I came to her to try and persuade her, to tell her that is the thing to do. Before I could open my mouth, she just said a few words in a very ordinary way. Light dawned. It simply put me to shame. My doing was all so natural, so full of man. Something happened. I was brought to a place to say, Lord, all I have is full of creaturely activities, but here is someone who is not out for them. There was one thing about her, there was only one motive. The one motive was—God.

We have to learn to say, Lord, do I want anything outside of Thee? There comes the crux. Do I want anything outside of Him? In the Bible of the one of whom I have just spoken, the biggest word written there was this, "Lord, I want nothing for myself". I do not know how many could really say that. The treasure was there and so her heart was there, therefore the eye was single.

After the verses which we read in Matt. vi. we have these words, "No man can serve two masters". That is the immediate context, so the whole question comes to one point, singleness of heart. God cannot keep light from that kind of man. God has to show something to the man who has singleness of heart to Him. The friendship walk with God brings light. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do. ...?" (Gen. xviii. 17). If you are living as Lot in Sodom, you may be a righteous man, but you do not know what is going on. No, you are too occupied with what is going on in Sodom and Gomorrah. But living in a tent, having fellowship with God, light must come.

Oh, may God open our hearts to see, that we can

really say, Lord, beside Thee I want nothing. I live here for Thee alone. I am not here even to work for Thee, no, not even to save souls or to extend the Kingdom. I am here for Thee. Many times the Lord has to bring us to a place to see that there is a vast difference between living unto Him and working for Him. When we come to that point—Lord, I want nothing for myself, I have got nothing to seek, nothing to ask, nothing to grasp, I want Thee alone—we shall find the light will be great. We shall live in the light, and there will be no need, no necessity, for us to analyse ourselves.

In closing, may I say this personally. In my experience I have found that among those who do not mind Divine things, to whom Divine things do not matter, there will be no danger of introspection, because they do not mind whether they are doing the will of God or not—there is no point in looking within. But for those who are really out for God, then the greatest danger is introspection, because if I want to please God, I have to know myself. I have to know God, I have to know His mind, know what is of Him and what is not of Him, what is coming from Him or from myself. The greatest temptation is to look within and find that out for myself. Please remember, the result produced by introspection is only deception. It will only bring you into bewilderment, uncertainty and doubt, and you will not know where you are, nothing will be clear. That is the only result. We must look up at the light. We must tell God, Lord, even if I try to know myself, I cannot. Thou dost know me far better than I do; give me a glimpse; whenever there is anything wrong, show me where it is wrong. If the light does not show anything, I will rest there with the Blood. I may not know there are things which need dealing with, because God has not shown them. Yes; they may need dealing with, but the Blood of His Son cleanses me from every sin. What the light condemns, the Blood will cleanse. What the light has not yet condemned, I trust the Blood just the same. Do not try to turn it up with your own effort and think you can do better. We rest with the Blood. Lord, I am willing, although I do not know whether it is right or wrong, since Thou hast not given me light and it is not my business to try to turn it up. But I trust Thy Blood to cleanse me from sin. Whenever I have need for knowledge of what is wrong, Lord, I trust Thee with all my heart to show me. Then I will make my confession; I will only make my confession then and not before.

May the Lord bless us!

W.N.

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

# "A Witness and Testimony"

Maintained  
by the offerings of  
those who are helped by it.

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 1946

NO. 5, VOL. 24

## Editor's Letter

BELOVED OF GOD,

It is not possible for me to write personally to all the friends who write to me, but I do want to thank them. My two former letters dealing with our position seem to have been a help to many, both for themselves and in their meeting of others. Those letters have, however, been themselves misunderstood in some few directions, but not seriously. A few friends have interpreted them as a moan or lament for ourselves, and have felt that we needed helping over a last ditch. Well, thank you, dear friends, for all your kind encouragement, and we value it much; but our grief is not for ourselves, but solely for the Lord and His interests. We were only trying to clear the field of misunderstanding in order that the Lord might come into His own more fully. Then my remark about "Tongues" has been regarded as an indication of another form or aspect of prejudice in my own case. Let me say at once that prejudice does not come into this matter where I am concerned. If I have any reservations or questions in that connection, they are just the opposite of prejudice. Prejudice is a blind and ignorant thing, which closes the door and bolts it before what is there has been identified or considered. I trust that mine is a fully enlightened and considered position in this matter. "Tongues" or spiritual gifts in abundance have never been the proof of spiritual maturity, as see First Corinthians, i.e. the church in Corinth, and what we are seeking is to lead the Lord's people on to "full growth".

Now, there is more to be said as to what we are seeking to fulfil as our God-given ministry, but I think that it would be set out more usefully than in personal letters if I wrote either a booklet or a series of short, precise, articles. This I am seeking to do. Please pray that it may be given of the Lord. I do want our readers to pray very much with us along one particular line. You know that, with the war, this little paper had to be trimmed to a mere shadow of its former size and quality. So far we have not been granted any paper supplies to increase size, quality or circulation. While there seems to be paper for all sorts of pernicious stuff, the Prince of this world is preventing it from going where the interests of Christ could be furthered. This can be overcome by prayer. We have so very much ministry ready for printing, and there is such a call for it, but this "door of utterance" needs opening. Not only is our own press limited, but printers everywhere are unable to accept the work.

Then, finally, may I ask your prayer concerning personal ministry in coming months. Needs and calls come from many parts of the world, but with many obligations and difficulties it will be necessary for the Lord to give a very clear indication by His witness and His acts if this wider ministry is to be fulfilled. It is a burden upon one's heart. I count on your prayers.

"Now may the God of peace...make you perfect in every good thing...to him be the glory".

Yours in the Bonds of His Son,

*J. Austin Sparks*

## The Meaning of Christ

### II

#### The Incarnation and Life on Earth

"The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam a life-giving spirit" (I Cor. xv. 45).

"The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven" (I Cor. xv. 47).

#### A Perfect Example of the New Creation Man

Now we want to go on to the further phases of the meaning of Christ. The next is the meaning of His incarnation and life on earth. Here again, the study of the doctrine and of the history, while being very inspiring, ennobling, yet needs the Spirit of God to break in on our hearts to make us realise the tremendous significance of this matter. Simply to say that the incarnation and life on earth was a representation of the new creation man from God's standpoint is, after all, but to make a statement. There is a lot in it. But we have to know that, as it was then, so it is now, a tremendous challenge. The question might be asked—Why did the Christ come by way of birth and babyhood and childhood and youth? If He came to be the Redeemer, the Saviour, and His redemptive work was essentially and solely related to His Cross, or fulfilled in His Cross, why were thirty-three years prior to that necessary? If it is God incarnate, God has been known in the Old Testament again and again to manifest Himself along the line of what are called 'the Theophanies', that is, visible manifestation to fulfil some immediate purpose, and then, having fulfilled it, withdrawal. Why should not God manifest in the flesh have been like that, if it were only the work of the Cross that was to be done? It is a legitimate question, because much hangs upon the answer. We shall see that those thirty-three years were necessary because God takes up things right from the beginning to represent His thought in a life that is lived through its stages, its vicissitudes, here on this earth, showing what His mind is about the new creation order of man; and before He can bring that in, in any collective or corporate way, He must have worked it out in One Who is a racial First-born, in a life lived here, in this world; worked it out triumphantly and secured it against every opposing force. So He started right there in babyhood.

The Lord does not want us to be too much occupied with the natural side of this, always romancing about the manger and the stable and the inn. He wants us to get behind that. What I mean is this: anybody can talk about the earthly life of Jesus of Nazareth and make of it a beautiful story and a great example and that sort of thing, and never be affected so far as an inward change and revolution is concerned; and that is the peril of it. You can see that in its grosser and exaggerated forms in some of the systems of Christendom to-day. You can go in certain quarters and see the thing set out in shop windows—the baby,

the manger, the cattle; and you know that the system that does that sort of thing is one that has no relationship to the inner life of people at all; the two are poles asunder. But not only in that realm, but in our own realm, there is always this peril of visualising, getting a mentality and an objectivity in spiritual things, not knowing that God has something to say right into our hearts by bringing His Son here into this world from infancy onward, and having that life here in a world like this for thirty-three years. He is working out something, showing something, is doing something, and He is doing that in the spiritual realm; and He wants to repeat that in the Church and in the members of the Church, the Body of Christ.

#### The Spiritual Value of Christ

One thing is particularly and jealously guarded by God in the case of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus. It is this, that, whatever Christ was, it was spiritual; there was nothing from cradle to grave which made Him anything naturally or temporally. It could have been otherwise, and men were looking for it to be otherwise, and were offended that it was not so. "... born King of the Jews" (Matt. ii. 2), a king born in a stable and cradled in a manger, shut out, excluded, not given room! And from cradle to grave, it was like that; nothing, nothing that could be taken hold of naturally and temporally to credit Him with particular value and importance, but everything to the contrary; and God jealously guarded that, would not allow it to be otherwise, kept Him at that level. Why? For this reason and because of this principle which abides, that whatever Christ is in value, it is spiritual. It is the spiritual value of Christ that God has safeguarded, not allowing men and the world to take Him up and say, Here is some great one; look at this and that and the other thing about him! No, you can say nothing like that about Jesus of Nazareth, nothing at all. He is to the Jews a stumbling-block, to the Greeks foolishness, but to us who believe, Christ, the wisdom of God and the power of God (I Cor. i. 23)—but a hidden wisdom, not of this world nor of the rulers of this world. Do realise that, that it is the spiritual value of Christ that God has so jealously safeguarded by the conditions of the incarnation, and of His life while here on this earth, and that is what we want to seek to work out, to recognise.

Christ has become so much other in Christianity, and thereby He has lost His impact, He has been stripped of His dynamic; embellished with an embellishment that God never countenanced. The only embellishment of Christ, if we dare use that word, the only true glorifying, the only true exalting of Christ is that of the spirit, of the heart, and therefore it is only possible for the redeemed, who know that they are redeemed, to glorify Christ truly. The Lord repudiates all the garlands laid upon Him which are temporal, in this dispensation; He will not have them. What He

wants is a spirit that appreciates and values, a heart that goes out in grateful worship. You notice how, through His life, that was always the thing upon which He put His seal. Any recognition of His spiritual value, and a humble brokenness at His feet—ah, there He found what His heart wanted; and when they would cut down branches and hail Him, He had a big reserve in His heart. He knew men; that was not what really satisfied Him. A heart appreciation of Christ is the only true one.

So we have to see the spiritual value of Christ during those thirty three years, and there is a realm for wonderful unveilings to our hearts by the Holy Spirit. I am not going through it—it would take far too long, for one thing. I am simply declaring facts, principles. But to come to two things about Him which are of abiding meaning, not only in Him personally, but, as John says, "which thing is true in him and in you" (I John ii. 8). [In passing, let us note that that is the right kind of interpretation of the life of the Lord Jesus. It is a spiritual one. John got it very clearly. He will, with the opening of his Gospel, present the Son. "In the beginning was the Word" and so on. But then, when he gets to his Epistle, he starts, "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal, which was with the Father...)" That is the life of Christ, the only really valuable one—it is the spiritual revelation of Christ to the heart.]

#### Constituted by the Spirit for Life

Now, as to these two things about Him which are true in Him and in us, if we are true children of God. One, that He was constituted by the Spirit for life. He was begotten of the Holy Ghost, He was born of the Spirit; the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, was there at birth. You will see what I am after in a moment. We mention the fact that at thirty years of age, the Spirit came upon Him. What is the difference? If He was filled with the Spirit from His birth, if He was born of the Spirit, why should the Spirit come upon Him thirty years later? You have to explain that. To begin with, the answer is this—He was constituted by the Spirit for life, to live His life by the Spirit, "which thing is true in him and in you". We cannot live the life of children of God, much less as sons of God, unless we are constituted to do so by the Holy Spirit. It was for life; and here you are going to have thirty-three years with a mighty climax of what it means to live by the Spirit, and everything in that life for those years is the working out of the Spirit dwelling within. Constituted to live, just to live—that is the point. For thirty years you know very little about Him, and what you do know is that He was not doing specifically and immediately the ultimate thing for which He came. You know that for thirty years He was more or less a private person

living a private life, doing the work which many other men did, an ordinary trade, probably looking after a widowed mother, and helping to look after and support a large family, and learning privation and how to make ends meet, so that later He knew the cost of two sparrows in the market, and if you could buy two farthings' worth you would get an extra bird thrown in. How did He know that? He had probably lived it through. But through all that, He was living His life by the Spirit, and God was causing a man to live on the basis of the new creation by constituting him by the indwelling Spirit. Perhaps my way of saying it may be open to correction, but you see what I am after.

And, dear friends, in this new creation in Christ Jesus, we are called to live here, not romantic lives at all, not lives of great public attraction and interest, but ordinary lives—to do our job, learn our lessons, experience adversities, carry responsibilities, do the thousand and one things which belong to the ordinary person's life, but to live on a higher level than the ordinary person; and that cannot be done unless we are constituted to do it by the Holy Spirit. But it can be if we are. And one aspect or one side of the Holy Spirit's purpose in coming is to enable men and women to live the life of men and women in this world, on this earth, but on another level. Do believe that. So many people think that immediately they become Christians and are interested in the Lord's work, they have to come out of the ordinary realm of daily life and become something special—that the Holy Spirit being within them, of course they must give up their job and go and find some other kind of work for the Lord. Don't you believe it! I do not believe that the Lord does that sort of thing with anybody until He has made them live a life on a higher level in spheres where everybody else has to live. If you cannot do that, give up hope of being sent by the Lord into some other kind of sphere or work. If you try it by direct means or back doors, you will find that the Lord is never got over in that way. We have to be brought back here to live on the new creation level in this old creation world by being so constituted of the Holy Spirit. Is there any impact in that? I am sure there is challenge in it. So face your situation and understand why the Lord holds you in it and does not let you out. You have got to live there by the Holy Spirit before the Lord will make a change. So for thirty years He lived an ordinary life in an extraordinary way. He was constituted from birth by the Holy Spirit to live in the realm of the new creation while still moving in the realm of the old. We are constituted from new birth for that very purpose. That is one thing.

#### Anointed of the Spirit for Specific Work

Then we come to this matter of the anointing at thirty years of age. What is this? Ah, this is a new phase. He was anointed of the Holy Ghost for specific work, for that supreme thing for which He had come and been chosen of God—anointed of God for the remaining three and a half years and all that that

meant. I want to get inside of that. You see, the Lord Jesus had a spirit in Him, His own human spirit, and in His case, His human spirit was sinless, and yet it was necessary that the Spirit of God should utterly dominate that human spirit, and hold entire government over it. When it came to working out the great purpose of God—not only living a life, but now working out something very much more serious and grim than that—the great purpose of God—it was necessary that the Spirit of God should utterly dominate Him for this reason—to hold everything unto God, that everything should be out from God, not even out from His own spirit. This whole work of God had to be held very strongly into God so that it was wholly and utterly of God.

You get back into the Old Testament, you have it in type and representation. You know how, again and again, the Spirit of the Lord came upon this one and that one, men represented as being already consecrated to the Lord. In all the typical sense, they were sanctified people. Bezaleel and Aholiab were consecrated men, separated unto the Lord. In the type, they were sanctified men, but the Spirit of God came upon them. You see, even consecrated men are not to be left to themselves, not to have ability in themselves and act out from themselves. Taking Bezaleel and Aholiab as examples—the Spirit of God came upon them. Why? Because there is a Divine pattern to be meticulously followed and carried out, and it is not going to be left even to people who are most devoted to the Lord to do the Lord's work out from themselves. Only the Spirit of God knows what and how and when, and that is very important to God. Not what we, in most earnest devotion, think should be done for the Lord—He does not accept that; not how we, with all the best motive in the world and the heart most real in its desire for the Lord's glory, think it should be done; and not when or where we, though given to the Lord, think or feel it should be. Not a bit of it!

Paul was a very consecrated man, out and out for God. There is no doubt about him, about his true zeal for God. (I am speaking of his post-conversion zeal.) He is a man who knows the Lord, whose spirit has been quickened, and whose spirit is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and yet he will essay to go into Bithynia, and to preach the word in Asia, but the Spirit of Jesus will suffer him not (Acts xvi. 7). He will be forbidden of the Holy Ghost to go in the way on which he set out. You see the point.

Now, I am not saying that Jesus and Paul are identical, but I am saying that the Lord Jesus is a representation here on this earth of a man living in this world on the new creation basis and principle. I am not leaving out His Deity. I am talking in the realm of God bringing here an example, a perfect example or representation of a new creation man, and the principles of the life of such. To live that new creation life he must be constituted by the Holy Spirit. To fulfil the work of God, he must be anointed, because everything has to be held to God, held for

God, come out from God, and only so can there be the effect and the impact—and it is an impact when the Holy Ghost gets hold of us and moves us in His direction. Was it not so with Paul? He thought to preach the word in Asia, essayed to go into Bithynia and the Spirit of Jesus suffered him not. The Spirit of Jesus took the positive as well as the negative line, and directed him to Philippi. Was there impact at Philippi? All hell felt the impact there, and we know the result of that visit to Philippi, both in the church then and in the product of that church spiritually through all these centuries. That letter to Philippi is the product of the church at Philippi. That little letter touches great ranges. The Anointing is necessary to bring about that kind of thing. It is not only necessary to be born of the Spirit and consecrated to God, but governed by the Lord. The Anointing means that everything in life and service must be held unto God and come out from God. Paul says "If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new. But all things are of God" (II Cor. v. 17-18). All things are 'out from' God.

#### The Impact of Christ

Now this one further thing. Because the Lord Jesus lived on that basis and principle of a life lived in and by the Spirit, and a work carried out under the government of the Spirit, His earthly life here was a constant registration, both amongst men and in the spiritual realm. If there is one thing patent about His life here on earth, it is this, that, wherever He went something started up, nothing just lay dormant. People and demons were stirred; His presence meant that. The presence of the Lord Jesus in the house of Zacchaeus will cause Zacchaeus to confess his miserable, contemptible sin and wrong-doing. That results from the Lord's presence. "To-day I must abide at thy house". You do not learn of anything else the Lord said to him. The story stops with that, and surely, if the Holy Spirit had meant us to know any more, He would have given more details. But the Holy Spirit has been content to say this; the Lord Jesus went into the house and the man began to feel bad and to say so. That is all. You have numerous instances of that sort of thing amongst people. Religious, self-righteous people, begin to excuse or to justify themselves. Have you not met such? They immediately begin to tell you what good people they are—they are not feeling comfortable, they have somehow to put up their fortifications, to protect their position. So it was with the religious people of Christ's day, and with the rest. Yes, He did not move amongst them without something happening. And the very demons cried out, "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God" (Mark i. 24). What is the matter with them? He is there under the Anointing, in the power of the Spirit; something is going to happen, it must happen. And, dear friends, that is just where our need comes—that our lives really

do result in something. I am not saying that you and I should pass down the street and everybody should begin to shout and talk. But I do think that it must be true that our having been on this earth has registered something which means that things cannot just remain dormant as they were. Of course, many of you know this in your own experience as a believer amongst unbelievers. You know, without saying anything to them, how they begin to wriggle, to talk, very often. Praise God if that is so; it is a sign that the Spirit is in you if people are up against you—if you do not ask for it. If you are living there quietly and beautifully by the Spirit of the Lord, and things become ugly around you, be encouraged, that is how it should be. If you are a child of God and no one feels it, there is something wrong. The enemy knows where Christ is. I need not say more along that line. Here is the meaning of Christ's life on the earth—it was to show what a life in the new creation is like, and what its effect is, how it is first constituted and then governed by the Spirit. And, by all the teaching of the New Testament, this is intended to be true of us, true of the Church and of believers. O God, make it more true! That must be our prayer. This is where we must have our response, our reaction. It is not enough merely to accept the tale of the life of Jesus, the story of His birth and of His going about doing good: but what is the effect of this in the realm of things spiritual? What is the abiding value, as far as you and I are concerned, and the Lord's people? It must touch a realm beyond this earthly, and stir to the depths the realm of evil spiritual intelligences. His life was a mighty challenge in every realm, because the Spirit of God was upon Him.

I have not touched in detail that large realm of His life where the Anointing governed His movements. That is quite patent—that He did not move on the ground of His personal devotion to the Father. He moved by intimation and direction of the Spirit of God. You can see why the Church has lost its impact. It is because it has concluded that, once you have consecrated your life to the Lord, you can do anything you like—arrange for the Lord, plan, scheme, do all sorts of things *for the Lord*. The Church has been doing that for a long time, it is doing it now. Their argument is that it is for the Lord. How far is it getting? What is the comparative value of it? I leave you to answer that. It was not like that at the beginning, in the case of the Lord Jesus, in the first days of the Church when the Spirit, by the Anointing, really did govern. In a very short time, far, far more was achieved than was done in a very, very long time afterwards. No, we are consecrated to the Lord, but we have to have the Lord's direction for every movement, and not conclude that, because we are out for the Lord, we must just do all we can. Let us get it from the Lord, and only so will it be effective. It is not easy, perhaps, or it does not seem easy, but it is something to which the Lord calls us, and it is the way back to effectiveness. At any rate, let us put it like this—there is going to be nothing unless it is under the Anointing, and the Anointing means full charge of all life and all activity. Here is the place for repentance—repentance that there has been so much of ourselves and so little of the Lord. Here is the place for submission, that He shall be Lord in the power and reality of the Anointing. The Lord grant it!

T.A-S.

## Accredited Ministry

(AN ABBREVIATED MESSAGE)

I Cor. ii. 3-5; iv. 1.

II Cor. i. 8-9; iv; i, 10-11; iii. 1.

Paul is speaking concerning the ministry being accredited, and links this accrediting with his sufferings. Before writing II Corinthians he went through a very deep experience in Asia: "...weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power...we despaired even of life". God "who raiseth the dead" became his only way out, and from that deep experience this second letter sprang.

Ministry is that of the Church. Apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers were given as gifts for perfecting the saints unto the work of ministering; the ministry, therefore, belongs to all.

Truly *accredited* ministry is through suffering. Accredited ministry represents a tremendous victory, set in a background of great conflict.

A determined effort is made through the age to discredit spiritual ministry, and to do so through the one engaged in that ministry.

In the case of the Lord, there was a persistent effort to discredit Him, and thereby discredit His ministry. It drew forth the words: "No prophet is acceptable in his own country" (Luke iv. 24).

In the case of Paul, the Judaisers sought to discredit him, and thereby discredit his ministry. At Corinth a great battle raged over his position as an Apostle, and II Corinthians is much taken up with the establishment of his own position, and therefore his authority in ministry.

One who counts for the Lord, is a joint of supply, who can be of value in any way to the Lord's people, and stand in His testimony, will know the enemy's effort to render those spiritual values nil by discredit-

ing. The enemy will give a strong sense of unworthiness, unfitness, uselessness to the Lord, or he will cause something to be associated with the vessel for the discrediting of the ministry; he may even patronize in order to compromise, as when the demons cried: "These men are servants of the Most High God, which proclaim unto you the way of salvation". Sometimes he will cause to associate with a pure thing people who are unsaved, to bring discredit.

The Lord's answer to that is to keep the vessel of ministry in weakness, dependence upon Himself, so that all is kept spiritual, and all is of the Lord alone.

The essence of the second letter to the Corinthians is that here there was a wholesale discrediting of the Apostle and his ministry. He will not be accredited by asserting his rights. God will take him into death itself, where there is no way out, and then as from the dead bring him back, and pour through him a new stream of life for the Lord's people. In the realm of spiritual intelligences, where all is known and understood, there is a clear recognition that the effort to discredit has broken down, that this ministry is of God, and cannot be overthrown.

Such ministry may be personal or through those who constitute the assembly, or of a home.

Resurrection becomes the hallmark of that which is accredited of God.

Metal is passed through the crucible and refined; then the stamp is put upon it to show its calibre.

So God brings through the fires of Satanic antagonism, allows the thing to reach a point where He alone is its life, and then brings it up out of the conflict, and puts the stamp of resurrection life on it, so that it has in it the power of an indestructible life—that only comes through death.

All ministry that is to be accredited will be bound up with suffering; a decision we have to make is as to the object of our ministry. A good many things can be taken into consideration, but there comes a point where all other things have to be ranged on one side,

and one thing on the other side—the real spiritual value, without alloy: that which is wholly of God and not at all of man. In the measure in which that is true there will be suffering. To stand utterly for what is spiritual is a costly thing.

There must be a willingness to be dealt with by the Lord, in such a way as to keep the ministry living and pure. All ministry which issues from such suffering is going to count. It may not be welcomed or desired by the mass, but where there is need and a call for that which we have gained through suffering there will be response.

Two tragedies to-day amongst the Lord's people:

(1). So many have no knowledge of the truth in any adequate way, and are therefore spiritually immature.

(2). So many have a great deal of truth, and are dead. The Lord needs a vessel to meet these conditions—a vessel that has gone through the fire, and is living in the power of resurrection.

Such a vessel is going to be a suffering vessel, which has come to the place where God Himself meets the situation.

This may explain much; it may be a challenge; it may be a call.

"Seeing we have this ministry...we obtained mercy"—we have received grace to help—and so "we faint not". But the treasure is in vessels of fragile clay, the vessel is being broken day by day. To stand in the power of God, the revelation of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, represents cost. Are we prepared for that? That is the way of the accredited ministry.

God has accredited the ministry of His Son, yet there was a universal combination to set Him at naught.

God has accredited the ministry of His servant Paul, but he was taken through depths of suffering.

So for us; ministry accredited of God is linked with suffering, but the suffering produces that which is wholly of God and cannot be destroyed.

T.A-S.

## The God Who Is Able To Do

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen" (Eph. iii. 20-21).

"Now unto him that is able to do..."

This marks the end of a long passage comprising the whole of the first three chapters of this letter wherein is set forth one of the most wonderful and glorious and blessed prospects of the Divine purpose of grace in Christ Jesus. So far nothing has been said about doing, at least so far as the children of God are con-

cerned. It has all been occupied with what God has thought, what God has planned, what God has made possible and what God has realized. It is a wonderful prospect, a glorious setting forth of Divine truth, but the reminder comes to us at the close in this verse that there is something to be done about it, that this was never intended merely to interest, to delight the mind or even to warm the heart. It was meant to produce very practical expression in actions, in deeds. Perhaps we all need reminding from time to time—I am sure I do—that the Divine purpose is being realized, not in the measure in which we are understanding it, thinking about it, even asking that it might be. It is

not wrong to ask: "all that we ask" is mentioned here; it is not wrong to think: we must think on these Divine things, and the more the better; but to ask and to think are not enough. There must be the doing, and it is in the measure in which God's revealed will is done that He is satisfied and we are truly entering into it.

Now that, of course, touches a number of very practical and personal points and in the following chapters the Apostle opens them out to impress upon us just how this heavenly calling works out in practical life. It is not my intention to stay with that, but I do feel that we should once again face this larger consideration of Divine truth, that all that God sets forth in His Word as His idea, if you like, His ideal for His Church, is something not merely to be thought about but to be done, something not only for a prospect but for a performance. There are so many dear and devoted men of God who find the greatest delight in this letter and who, with no small ability, have expounded it, but when they have come to verse 20 virtually what they have said is, Now unto Him Who set this out as a beautiful ideal, but which can never be realized here on earth! How to reconcile the ideal with practice, how this Church can find expression in our churches—well, we give it up, it cannot be done!

I want to suggest to you that Eph. iii. 20 is not merely meant to be a little comfort by the way to our faith, that God is able, but a solemn declaration of the fact that what is expressed and set out in the first three chapters of this letter is meant to be done; not only to be thought about, but to be done, to find expression, to work—as people say, Does it work? Well, it must work, it ought to work. Yes, praise God, it does work. That is what the Apostle is saying. Let us just take to our own hearts, if any of us need it, the exhortation to beware of being spectators of Divine things instead of entering into them.

What I mean is this. There are some to whom the Lord's word may be a help and they may be grateful for it. I want to suggest to you that it is a very contradictory position just to enjoy the ministry, just to contemplate the truth, just to have the attitude, as it were, that there is a group of people, a fellowship, a church, a ministry, and I like to go and hear them! Are you saying, not, I am so glad that the truth of the Church is preached in fulness according to Ephesians: but, I am so glad that God is bringing me into the working out of the truth of the Church in the midst of His people according to Ephesians!

Unto Him that is able to *do*... It is the doing that becomes the climax and the fulfilment of all the revelation, and yet it is not our doing after all. "Unto him that is able to do..." We ask, we think—that is all we can do. He is able to do it, praise His Name! One of our modern intellectuals in a witty sort of epigrammatic phrase has said that the trouble with Christianity is not that it has been tried and found wanting but that it has been found hard and never tried. That sounds very clever, very nice, but it is not true. Some of us have tried, tried hard, tried with

all our hearts. But he is quite true in saying that it is hard, it is too hard for us.

Now that is what the Apostle says to you and to me in our failure, not because we have thought it was hard and did not try it, but because we saw it was the Lord's will and we have tried it, we have gone as it were through the first three chapters of Ephesians and said, By God's grace, with His help, I am going to do that: and where are we? Now, the Lord is pleased, He is certainly not displeased with our desire, our intention, but while this setting forth of Divine truth is meant to move our wills and to evoke our determination, it is also meant to lead us to a new attitude of faith toward the Lord. We cannot do it. The more we tried, the less we have succeeded. We cannot do it. He is able to *do*. That is the Lord's message concerning every bit of Divine revelation that has come to us. However impossible it may seem, however much already we have tried and failed, the Lord's word comes afresh to us not to try again but to take a new look at Him. He is able to do it. As I said, all we can do is to ask and think. That is the limit with us, but He is able to do what we ask or think and only He is able to. He is able.

Surely that is what the Apostle meant; after these three chapters have been spread out in all the wonder and superb heavenly glory of them, he is saying, There is only one Person Who can work this out, and that is the Lord Himself; only He is able.

I was impressed anew with that striking phrase the Apostle uses in I Cor. i. when he says that there is a preaching which makes the Cross of Christ of no effect. "Not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void." The Cross, God's greatest instrument of power, can be made useless. How? Well, the Apostle says by wisdom of words. But taking the larger principle behind, what he is meaning to say is that when man's effort is introduced, when man's contribution is brought forward, even the very Cross of Christ loses its power. How true that is! The Cross of Christ, in all its truth, its correctness, its orthodoxy, its fundamental doctrines, the Cross of Christ can be believed, can even be preached, and it can be powerless. When? The Apostle says, When I bring myself into it! That is what Paul says is all the trouble and robs it of its power. And when I try to fulfil Ephesians i, ii or iii, or any part of them, it is powerless, a miserable fiasco. There is only One Who can do it.

#### Faith in the God Who is Able to Do

But let us take the positive side, the attitude of faith. He can do it! Unto him that is able to do all that we ask or think... But it does not say that. This is really the crux of the Lord's word. It does not say, Unto him that is able to do all that we ask or think. It says, Able to do something far beyond, infinitely above. So often we have thought that the Lord would do what we asked and a little bit extra. I do not think it means that. I think that the great emphasis of this verse, perhaps more clearly in the original than in the

English, is on that word *above*. That is where the emphasis lies—above, something bigger, and, praise God, something better than what we ask or think. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isa. lv. 8). Most of us have found that out long ago, but the Lord does not leave it there. He says, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." "It is not only that we are different: it is not that, out of some caprice, I do not do the thing you ask: it is that I do something better. It is not merely that I do not work along the way you think. I have a way as high above your way as heaven is high above the earth!"

Does that explain to some of us how the Lord is answering our prayers when we think He is not responding to the deep desires of our hearts, when He seems to take no notice of them? His performance, His working, His dealings, are different from our conception of how He is going to fulfil His promises. We think; well, the Apostle says the Lord, praise His Name, is able to do, not that that we are thinking, but something infinitely above it! We ask; and if we take our explanation or view of our petition, we say, The Lord did not do it! Ah, there is another side to that. Perhaps you cannot see it now; maybe you will if you look at it this way. The Lord is doing something much bigger than you have asked, much higher than you have thought. Above, above,—that is the word; and while it does not in the original necessarily only mean that, surely we are right in saying that the emphasis is not only that it is beyond, that it is something bigger, but that it is higher, it is above, it is a bigger thing in this sense, that it is a heavenly thing that the Lord is doing.

How full the Bible is of disappointed men, of men whose way did not open up as they expected it to, whose call and whose response to the Divine call did not produce the kind of life they envisaged. Is there one—hardly one—that is an exception to that rule? It is almost a rule that every servant of God who thought he saw a Divine way before him, who committed himself in faith to the Lord for all His will, found it was not that way, after all, it was this way. It did not work out like that, after all; it worked out in an entirely different way. How the Apostle Paul longed to work among the Jews! How he asked the Lord that he might be Christ's witness to Israel, and how equally strong, nay, stronger, was the Lord in a refusal! Well, if the Apostle had that in mind when he wrote that verse, his attitude would be that the Lord did do something better, something bigger, more glorious—and He did indeed, for the Apostle was sent not only to one nation but to all nations with a message not only for time but for eternity. It was something bigger, better. That did not make it any easier for the Apostle at the moment or make him less a disappointed man, and what is true of the whole record of history in the Word of God is only too true in human experience. Among many of the children of God today, from one point of view the way has been one of

disappointment. You say the Lord is able to do what I have thought—He has not done it! You say the Lord is able to do what I have asked—He has not done it! But it is more than likely, He has pledged Himself that it must be, that He is doing something better, above, and it is all expressed in such superlative terms—infininitely above, exceedingly above, far above all that you or I have thought or asked. Is He not wonderful?

Well, that is the way our hearts need to turn to Him—with a new sense of His wonderful ability. He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.

"Able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." What concerns the Lord is always the power that is working in us rather than what He is doing in circumstances round about us. The manner of God's mighty working is an inward power energizing in the hearts of His people.

What, then, is the need that we learn from such a word? Is it not this—more faith? Some people say we need more prayer. I prefer to say we need more faith. That may mean more prayer; for some of us it may mean less prayer and more faith in the living, omnipotent, glorious, sovereign, wise Lord. Able to do! Oh, how our whole carriage and countenance surely should be marked by the glory of the fact that our God is able, in our case and in every phase and aspect of our case, to do exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or think. You notice it says 'all'. There are no exceptions to this rule for the child of God who is pressing on with the Lord. Oh, what a wonderful Lord we have! That brings glory into the life and it is meant to. The end is always glory with the Lord.

The other day I got a blessing even from the punctuation of Eph. i. There is a sentence there that is a tremendous sentence. It begins in the third verse—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ..." The Apostle begins to speak of God's dealings with us and goes on, and from a grammatical point of view it is high time he finished the sentence: he has used enough commas and semi-colons, it is time he used a full-stop. He goes right up to verse 14! What a sentence! What is the end of that verse? Glory! Once you start, once you launch yourself into the Divine purpose of grace and redemption, there is no end until you get to glory! Paul says, Yes, there may be a comma or a semi-colon, rather a longer pause, but we have not come to an end! Thank God, we do not come to an end until we come to glory! And so our glorying is in a Lord Who is able, praise His Name, and able not only to think these wonderful thoughts, but able to do them. "Able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power" that, thank God, whether we feel it or not, is working in us. Then let us say, To Him be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever, Amen.

H.F.

## The Value of Being Pronouncedly the Lord's

READING: Acts xxvii.

"Acts" is a book of principles. This whole story, and a great deal more in the life of Paul, is a commentary upon, and exposition of, verse 23—"God whose I am, whom also I serve". Paul might have been the Lord's on this voyage and kept silent. The power and the value of his being there at that time was due to his being pronouncedly the Lord's, and letting it be known without any uncertainty. That power and value is recognizable in different connections.

### Divine Overruling of Human Mistakes

First of all, it constituted a link with, and made possible the action of, the Divine sovereignty. There were not lacking those things which could have been the ground of some real misgiving in Paul's life at that time, for this whole thing was directly the outcome of his going to Jerusalem, when, in the first instance, the Lord had told him quite plainly that it was no use his going back to the Jews. The Lord had said, "They will not receive of thee testimony concerning me... Depart: for I will send thee forth far hence unto the Gentiles" (Acts xxii. 18, 21). Moreover, his brethren besought him not to go, and warned him in the Lord's Name what would happen to him if he did (see Acts xxi. 11). But Paul went, and when he got there he was caught in a trap, resulting in his being taken prisoner. Then came his appeal to Caesar, and Agrippa said, "This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar" (Acts xxvi. 32). Paul had all that to reflect upon, and the Devil had good ground to try and bring him under condemnation and to say, You disobeyed the Lord, you flouted your brethren, you appealed to Caesar—a carnal thing to do, thinking that you would get your liberty that way. Now the Lord has let you have your own way, and you have got yourself into trouble. The Devil does take up anything he can get of our own mistakes, and builds upon that to paralyse us and make us believe that the trouble that is on us is because the Lord has left us. But with all that, if it was a mistake, Paul was so pronouncedly the Lord's that there really was no personal interest at any point in this going up to Jerusalem. He did not go there for something for himself. It was all a way of suffering and sacrifice, even though there was a certain amount of self-propulsion, not the leading of God. He was so utterly the Lord's that, having no self-interest in view, it linked him with the Divine sovereignty so that even his mistakes could be taken hold of by the Lord and turned to glorious account. When barrenness and disaster come in, it is because there has been some personal interest, something of ourselves, governing. There was none of that with Paul, though he made mistakes.

It is something to remember. We are not going to be faultless or infallible. No, but if the life is the Lord's, and we are not keeping quiet about it—if we are pronouncedly the Lord's, He will look after our

mistakes, take responsibility for our imperfections, and even use them to His own end. That is what happened here. This linked Paul with the Divine sovereignty, and that got the better of all Satan's accusations and all Paul's misgivings and the results of all his mistakes. Is it not something to encourage us? We look back on our lives and say, If I had my time over again, I would not do this and that. But if we are really the Lord's and there is no reservation about it, He is working good even through those mistakes, and will get Divine ends even by means of them.

### Moral Power with Men in an Hour of Crisis

Notice a second thing about the strength and value of being pronouncedly the Lord's—the moral power of this in an hour of crisis. There was no mistake about where Paul stood and what his relationship to the Lord was. For a time the others ignored him. But an hour of crisis came; and now the one man in whom they hoped was this man whom they had rejected. He was the key to the situation.

This is how it often works out to-day—the moral power and value of being pronouncedly the Lord's. You may have to wait for your day, until things have worked up to a crisis, and for the time being you may be ignored; but if you stand there in relation to God, and it is known, the others will be very glad some day that you let it be known, and they will seek your help because they know that you know God. There is a great power in being pronouncedly the Lord's. Sooner or later the day of such will come.

### Divine Sovereignty Acting in Relation to Other Lives

But there is something still more in this story—the tremendous power that lies behind such a position in relation to the mysterious placings of God's representatives by His foreknowledge. God knew, before ever that ship was built, the people who would be on board on that voyage, and He had His eye in foreknowledge upon them for the saving of their lives. From Acts xxvii. 6 we infer that the ship would have set sail for Italy in any case. What would have been the fate of those on board if Paul had not been with them? Would they have been saved from death? The inference is that they might not, for the angel's message to Paul was "God hath granted thee all them that sail with thee" (v. 24). God gave them to Paul. And so it would seem that Paul had to be on that ship and go through that harrowing experience because in the foreknowledge of God there were lives which were to be saved from drowning.

If you think that is an over-statement, go back to your New Testament. Paul came to Corinth and found an awful situation in that city of sin and worldliness. It must have been a terrible situation, because when writing later he said, "I was with you in weakness,

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and in fear, and in much trembling" (I Cor. ii. 3). But the Lord stood by Paul in Corinth and said: "Be not afraid, but speak...for I have much people in this city" (Acts xviii. 9); they are not saved yet, but "I have much people in this city". God knows who in the city will respond to the Gospel. He has got them, in effect, because He lives in the eternal present, and the future is now with Him. With God there is not to be another soul added to the Church; He has the total secured already. And on the ship came a similar message: "Fear not, Paul...God hath granted thee all them that sail with thee". What a wonderful thing that in spite of Paul's failures there is the working of this sovereignty in putting him there on that ship! He was not there by accident but in the foreknowledge of God in relation to an issue in other lives.

Sometimes we may be in a situation like that. We do not know why we are in the place that we are in. Everything seems so difficult, so contrary, and then we see things begin to break up. It looks like calamity, and in the end there is something secured for God. But it necessitates our being there pronouncedly the Lord's to secure it. This does not just happen. We can be there and hide our light, and think it will all work out. No; for this, pronounced proprietorship of the Lord is a necessary factor. There is a great deal bound up with our being unmistakably for God on this earth; the foreknowledge and sovereignty of God operate through us, the moral power of that position operates. The strategic opportunities are put into our hands when we are there for the Lord and people

know it. So from every standpoint it is a position of strength, of value, of possibility.

#### Human Weakness Need Not Limit Utterness for the Lord

But you may say, Paul was a superman; I am not. But look again. Why should the Lord have to say to him such things as: Fear not, Paul? Evidently he was very human after all, capable of being afraid. Most of us are capable of being silenced by fear, or by pride—and pride can be just another form of fear: fear of losing something, fear of losing 'face', reputation, influence. More often than not, it has been those people who are very human, knowing weakness in themselves, who, trusting in the Lord, have been the ones whom He has used most mightily. The secret is just this—they are the Lord's, and they are His a hundred per cent, and everybody knows it. What He is needing is not just that we should belong to Him, but pronouncedly so, and that those around us should know it; and the hour will very likely come when the Lord will put them into our hands, because they know that we are the only ones who have what they then need. It is a matter of being faithful to the Lord unto such a day. He may hold us in a place and not let us go until that testimony is there established, and then perhaps He will give the situation, or those there, into our hands. We may know nothing at present about them or the Lord's designs in their lives, but they will be delivered into our hands for the Lord. Then perhaps that voyage will be over and there will be another phase of things for us. The Lord help us to be faithful.

T.A.S.

**Acknowledgments.**—We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts (other than local) received between 1st June and 31st July, 1946:

Aldwick Bay, £1; Basle, Swit., 11s. 5d.; Bath, 2s. 6d.; Bearsden, £2; Beatenberg, Swit., £1; Bedford, 2s. 6d.; Belfast, 10d. and £1; Birmingham, 5s. and 5s.; Blackpool, £1; Bratton Fleming, 10s.; Bristol, 4s.; Bromley, 7s.; Brynmawr, 10s.; Cabinteely, 4s.; Cardiff, £2 10s.; Carmarthen, 10s.; Christchurch, N.Z., £1; Crowborough, 5s. 6s.; Cuddington, 9s.; Dolton, 5s.; Dublin, 2s. 6d.; Dunedin, £1; Edinburgh, 8s. 6d.; Epsom, 5s.; Ezbet-el-Zeitoun, 5s.; Falmouth, 3s. 6d.; Gateshead-on-Tyne, 10s.; Glasgow, £2 5s., 10s. and £1; Glasnevin, 2s. 6d.; Glendale, Cal., £1; Grangemouth, 10s. and 3s.; Halifax, 2s. 6d.; Hatch End, 10s.; Hazel Grove, £1; Howth, 2s. 6d.; Hull, 8s.; Kew Gardens, 10s.; Killcreggan, £1, 10s. and 5s.; Kitchener, Ont., £1 2s. 5d.; Lon-

don, N.21, 10s.; London, N.W.2, 5s.; London, N.W.11, 5s.; London, S.E.23, 5s.; London, S.E.24, 10s.; London, S.W.8, 5s.; Loughton, 10s.; Maine, £6 3s. 5d.; Manila, P.I., £2 10s.; Napa, Cal., 4s. 11d.; Northwich, 4s.; Norwich, 10s. and £2 2s.; Oldham, 2s. 6d.; Phibsboro', 5s.; Philadelphia, Pa., 4s. 11d.; Plymouth, 2s.; Purley, 8s. 6d.; St. Austell, £3; St. Gallen, Swit., 11s. 5d.; Sawbridgeworth, 2s. 6d.; Shanghai, 5s.; Southbourne, 10s.; South Shields, 5s.; Stockport, £1 10s.; Stroud, 3s.; Sutton, £5; Swalecliffe, 5s.; Taylors Hill, 3s.; Theydon Bois, 2s. 6d.; Thundersley, 5s.; Thurgan, Swit., 11s. 5d.; Toronto, 9s. 11d. and 7s. 9d.; West New York, N.J., £2 9s. 4d.; Willesden, 5s.; Woking, 5s.; Worthing, 2s. 6d., £1, 10s. and 5s.; Zurich, Swit., 11s. 5d. Total, £62 2s. 2d.

Birmingham, Ala., \$10; Newtonville, Mass., \$4; Ragland, Ala., \$12; Treasure Island, Cal., \$10. Total, \$36. Bracken, Sask., \$1.

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NOVEMBER-DECEMBER, 1946

NO. 6, VOL. 24

## The Meaning of Christ

### III

#### His Uniqueness

"So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul; the last Adam...a life-giving spirit. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven" (I Cor. xv. 45, 47).

"Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more. Wherefore if any man is in Christ, there is a new creation" (II Cor. v. 16-17).

I am returning to our previous meditation in relation to the incarnation and life on earth of the Lord Jesus as representative of the new creation. Let us at the outset understand Paul aright. When he said 'Henceforth we know Christ no more after the flesh' he did not dismiss the incarnation and the earthly life as being of no value and meaning. He meant that we no longer take account of Jesus of Nazareth simply as a man, or as a prophet, or (as many believed) as an impostor: as a man who had come into the limelight, made great claims, done many things difficult to understand and said many things which were extraordinary, and then had been taken by the Jews and delivered up and crucified: knowing Christ after the flesh, as we might know any other man. You notice that the immediate connection is with knowing people just as they are naturally on the earth, and Paul says that neither other men nor Christ do we henceforth know on that level. The other, and positive, side is that our knowing now of one another and of Christ is in the new creation, their place and meaning there—that is the realm in which we take note, recognise and appreciate, that is the thing with which we are occupied. I have sought to make that perfectly clear, because, to go back and dwell much upon the incarnation and earthly life of the Lord Jesus might otherwise look like a contradiction. Some might think that

that is knowing Christ after the flesh, and that is the very thing we are seeking not to do, even while we dwell upon His earthly life. What we are really seeking at this time is that knowing of Christ—even in His earthly life—after the Spirit, getting through to the inner significance and meaning of Christ, and by coming into vital contact with the Divine, the heavenly, the spiritual, the eternal meaning, find a registration upon ourselves—what we have called an impact, a challenge, and the setting up of something to which we have to be adjusted and conformed.

But added to that, let me say this, that, when the Apostle speaks in his letter to the Romans about our being predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. viii. 29), he is not referring to some image which Christ entered into when He went into heaven. Perhaps because we have not thought about this carefully, we have a way of thinking of Christ in heaven as altogether different from Christ on earth, and that we are conformed to that Christ in heaven, and not to this Christ on earth. I want to correct that. The Christ in heaven, glorified, is only the glorifying of the Man Who was here, or the glorifying of that which was true of Him here, taking it up into glory and establishing it there in the presence of God, attested and sealed with glory. It is the perfection of what was here. He was perfected through sufferings, and the arriving at a position of fulness (which is the word 'perfection', completeness) brought the seal of God in glory. It is not another Christ in glory, it is the same One—the Man in the glory, perfected and glorified—and it is that nature, that disposition, that conduct of His which were here on the earth, with all their features and characteristics, which are taken up into glory and established there. We are to be conformed to Christ as He was here inwardly, so that we also share His glory when perfected together with Him at the end. We have not to try and study a Christ of a mentality up there, but to get, by the

Spirit, to the inside of the Christ Who was here, and as He was here : not the imitation of Christ according to Thomas à Kempis (that is mysticism, asceticism) but the inward revelation of Christ to our hearts, according to the hymn that we often sing—that which results in extinguishing our tapers because the sun has risen, the discarding of our winter garments because the summer has come, the smashing of our idols because He has filled the heart. That must become the spiritual experience, and progressively so. So we come to all that is recorded about Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Man, and ask the Holy Spirit to teach and to show us Christ from the inside. If the Holy Spirit does give us an insight into the Lord Jesus as He moved on this earth, there will be a tremendous effect upon our lives and a tremendous challenge. It will be the Spirit's method of conforming us to the image of God's Son.

#### A Universal, Collective Person

Therefore we must begin by recognising the uniqueness of the Son of Man ; everything begins there. When we use that word 'unique' we are always tempted to violate the laws of English grammar. You find people saying that a thing is 'absolutely unique'. Here you feel you want some emphasis on that word 'unique', but it will not do. There are no degrees of uniqueness. 'Unique' is complete and final in itself. When a thing is unique there is nothing else in the universe like it, it stands alone. So we must recognise the uniqueness of the Son of Man. There never has been another Son of Man in the sense in which He was Son of Man. His uniqueness is found in this, that all that is in the thought of God, all that is heavenly in thought and conception, value and meaning, all that expansiveness of the universal which God is, is crowded down into this one Person ; and as the Spirit leads you into Christ, you find that you have been led into an utterly boundless ocean, you have been lifted completely out of every kind of limitation into what is universal. More, you have been brought into touch with that which is not of this earth at all. You cannot find its like here, you cannot find anything of its order here. It is another order, a heavenly order, crowded down into this one life. You find that Christ, the Son of Man, is not just a single Person. Yes, here He is, in a sense one, but He is a race crowded in, He is a collective Person, everything is gathered into Him. If you get your feet on the road of the revelation of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit from the inside, you will find as you move along that road that you come into the vision that the Apostle Paul had, that entrancing, enthralling, captivating vision which simply possessed Paul as he saw at length all the scattered, broken fragments of the creation gathered together and made one in Christ, the restitution of all things in Christ, all that which was divided and broken and scattered, gathered together in the new creation in Christ ; and you begin to see how that can be, because here is such a comprehensive, all-embracing Person.

You know how impossible it is to put Christ down into any one of the sections of human life or of this world order and bind Him to that, and make Him the property of that alone. Can you really put Christ down into any one nation and say that He belongs to it? Yes, a Syrian by birth, but He belongs to all the nations, and all the nations have found Him just as much one of themselves, in meeting their need and answering to their hearts and challenging their conditions, as His own nation by birth. All nations shall call Him blessed. He is the desire of all nations. Can you put Him into any quarter of the earth? Take the four quarters. Take the West with its energy, its genius for getting things done. Well, what does Christ say to this active, energetic, Western world? He is not out of place here, and yet He would say something corrective to us about rest and patience. But He would not say, You must slow down in order to know rest. He would say, You can know rest in toil, in activity. Do you see what I am getting at? Christ does not say to us in this Western world, with all the fret and rush and drive and activity, All that must of necessity stop when you come to Me ; but He says, You have to find the secret of rest in the midst of it all : for rest is not ceasing from doing, rest is a matter of the heart, and "you shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. xi. 29). Yes, He comes in, He is not out of place here.

Or go to the East. There you have slow and pensive patience, quiet, everlasting jog-trot—hardly that. What will He do with that? He fits in perfectly. He does not say, You must become energetic, and throw off this sloth, and so on ; but He also has a corrective for that world. There is a lot in the New Testament about being not slothful in business, being fervent in spirit. You do not find a great deal of fervour of spirit on that side of the world. They are very easy-going, taking things as they come ; but He will speak about fervour of spirit. He fits in, He has something to say. He is no stranger.

Go to Northern climes where things are hard and rugged, serious and grim, and you will find the Lord Jesus fits in and relieves the strain and smooths the ruggedness, and you will find beauty brought in there by Him. Go to the South with its passion and heat ; you find saints in the Southern climes, and by the corrective of His presence that passion is changed to true love. The Lord Jesus, you see, comprehends all, and it would be, perhaps, interesting and profitable if we were to pursue that line further.

#### The Divine Answer to Universal Human Need

What I am trying to get at is this, that He brings in the fulness of heaven in His one Person, and we find that He comprehends the race and meets the need of the whole, and challenges the condition of the whole. He is not outside of anyone as a stranger, He is a universal Christ, a heavenly Christ, there is not another like Him. Other prophets belong to certain realms and environments and constitutions, and they are suited to those ; but He, the Son of Man, is unique.

But you can bring that down to smallest details. Here we are, enough to represent a fair variety of dispositions and constitutions and temperaments. There are many differences among us. In medicine, the thing which differentiates people from a certain standard of law is called an idiosyncrasy. Can you find any idiosyncrasy in Christ? You will not find one, He has not got one. He utterly conforms to standard, and yet He meets us in all our variety, in all our differentiations. Not two of us are exactly alike, but we can everyone of us say that the Lord Jesus has exactly met our need, met us not in outward things—we are not talking of temporal things—but met us as we are. Not one of us can say, He may be all right for so-and-so because their make-up and temperament is just what He suits, but He does not fit in with me. We can, if we do not already, know Christ for ourselves as exactly meeting our particular make-up; and that can be spread over millions and millions of different people, all of whom have an idiosyncrasy, something which makes them different from everyone else; the Lord Jesus perfectly meets everyone in their inner life and becomes the answer to their particular need. To know Christ after the Spirit means to know Him in this way, how He meets our particular need and becomes a living reality in our particular make-up.

Take heart, dear friends. You may think that yours is the most difficult nature that God ever had to deal with, and you may have despaired of yourself. Ah, but here is One Who comprehends all. He is not just a single Person to meet some particular kind of man or woman. He is a combination of all and yet outside all in that heavenly distinctiveness. When He was here on earth, the poor were able to say, He is one of us; and yet He was at home as much with the rich as with the poor. There was no strain with Him, whatever circle He moved in. He was perfectly comfortable with the most learned, and with the ignorant. He embraces all. To learn Christ after the Spirit is to learn how He meets our personal need and the need of everyone.

#### The Restorer of True Unity in a New Creation

Then to recognise how He is going to gather up into Himself all the broken fragments. Is not the race a shattered, broken, scattered thing? It is all frag-

ments. How will that new creation man, that new creation race, be one? We begin to see it is one in Christ. It is going to take His likeness, be all-inclusive. It is a mystery, difficult to present, to speak about. Do you glimpse it? There is One Who takes up all these shattered fragments in His own uniting Person on a higher level, and in His own Person makes them one, so that they are all complements of one another instead of at variance with one another. Oh, temperaments are so different, they will never get on together! Christ is of no one temperament. Tabulate the temperaments as we know them and see where you fix Him! He was not temperamental at all, He was above it. Now gather into Him in a spiritual way and partake of His nature, and you can see a single Body fitly framed together, a beautiful harmony. Do you see through the spiritual meaning of Christ? He is going to gather the scattered children of men into one. How? Not geographically, calling them together from the ends of the earth and doing it from the outside. He is going to do it by the revelation of Himself first of all to their hearts, and then the work of His Spirit upon that revelation. When that happened at the beginning, it was a beautiful token of what it will be at the end. You see it in Jerusalem in those days. Oh, the love, the harmony, the selflessness, the self-forgetting!—continuing together, calling nothing that they had their own; just a foretaste of what is going to be—of what Christ means, in fact, when first of all He is seen and then the Holy Spirit acts upon that in the heart. Well, I have only started on that. May that glimpse mean something. What we need, first of all, is to see the Lord, yes, to see Jesus, by the Holy Ghost, and then to have His Spirit at work upon that revelation to conform us to His image. We know Him no longer after the flesh. Oh, to know Him—but to know Him as He really is! The Lord give us that knowledge, and, by even our brief and so stammering attempt at touching upon Him in His reality, stir our hearts to see that here is One in Whom is all the possibility of solving every problem, answering every question, and doing what no armies or organisations or leagues can ever do—gathering together into one: not organised oneness, but organic oneness. The Lord open our eyes!

T.A.S.

## The Rest and the Courage of Faith

READING: Heb. iv. 9; iii. 19; Josh. xiv. 6-14.

I am sure it will sound to many of you like going a long way back and going out into a very broad realm when I say that we Christians are being constantly confronted with and challenged by our Christianity. Many of us have not really entered into Christianity yet. What do I mean? Well, for one thing, the very door into true Christianity is the door of rest, the rest of faith. The very simple way in which the Lord put

it in His appeal was—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28). That was to a multitude, and those words are usually employed in Gospel messages to the unsaved. The meaning of the Lord in using those words is given to us here in the letter to the Hebrews, a very much deeper and fuller meaning than is generally recognised in the usage of the simple invitation "Come unto me and I will give you rest". There is

something that we have to hear, to detect, in the statement—"There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God" (Heb. iv. 9).

#### A Present Entering Into Rest

If you look at the context, the meaning is something into which the people of God had not entered. "They were not able to enter in because of unbelief" (Heb. iii. 19). They could not enter in. Who were they?—the people of God. It is still the people of God for whom the rest remaineth. Do not let us put that into the future, that is not the meaning at all; that afterward, when we get Home to glory, then we will arrive at the Sabbath day rest, we will enter into rest. It is not something for the tombstone—He or she entered into rest. It is something which remains now as a present thing for the people of God, not in death, but in life. The rest remaineth.

You will not think me too elementary, for you know in your heart, as well as I do in mine, that this matter of heart rest, the rest of faith, is a live question continually, it is coming up all the time. One of the things which is lacking in so many of us is this rest, or, to put it the other way, the things which characterize us so much are fret, anxiety, uncertainty, and all those things which are just the opposite of calm assurance, quiet confidence, the spirit and attitude and atmosphere which says all the time, Don't worry, don't fret, it is all right. One thing our great enemy is always trying to do is to disturb that, destroy that, rob us of that, churn us up, fret us, drive us, harass us, anything to rob us of our rest or to prevent us from entering into rest.

It is the rest of *faith*, not just the rest of passivity, indifference, carelessness. There is all the difference between carelessness and carefreeness. There remaineth, there is still to be had, there still obtains, there still exists, there is still preserved a rest for the people of God—for the people of God. We have no right to go to the unsaved and bid them come to Christ and find rest until and unless we ourselves know that rest. Our testimony and our ministry is jeopardized, weakened, limited and discredited if we are not ourselves in rest; and this is the object of the enemy's activity in this matter—to discredit us by taking from us that very birthright of our union with Him Who is never perturbed, never anxious, never in doubt as to the issue, the One Who reigns. You see, rest is the practical outworking of our belief that He is Lord, and the very Lordship of Christ is struck at by the unrest of the people of God.

The rest of faith must be our position; not only in the great matter of justification, though if it is not settled here, it will not be settled anywhere. Oh, the enemy is striking at that, even with the people of God; he is ever seeking to undercut that; in some way to raise again the question of justification, of being just with God in our standing, in our acceptance—not yet fully and finally in our state, only in Christ; that is, not as finally perfect in ourselves, but in that union on the ground of what He is. The enemy never

ceases to try to undercut that, and his methods are countless and very persistent and very forceful. The rest of faith in that, but also in a hundred and one other ways in the practical things of everyday life; things which are not in our power to arrange, secure, settle and bring to pass. Every day brings hundreds of ways in which there is the opportunity to stand into the rest of faith, into that faith in the Lord which brings rest. So subtle are the ways of the enemy that he will even tell us that that is too small a thing with which to trouble the Lord; that is a mere incident, why take that to the Lord? He has bigger and more important things than that on hand! Why try to make the Lord your errand-boy (I say that reverently) just to do all the little things you want done? If in this the testimony is preserved in rest, then it is a big thing to the Lord, not a little thing. If in this matter the Lord's glory stands to suffer, then it is a very big thing. It may be an incident in daily life, yes, in many, many ways every day, you and I can so lose our poise and our rest and our quiet confidence as to lose out spiritually, and the Lord lose much, so that it is proved that somewhere faith has been lacking, and with it the rest has gone. That is one side. It is a challenge to us, a real challenge.

#### The Necessity for Faith

"We see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief". *Not able*—paralysing, disqualifying, incapacitating unbelief. That means that the sooner we face this whole question and, as far as possible, get it settled, the better. For thirty-eight years Israel was simply locked up, held up, and went round and round, so to speak, on this one question as to whether they were going to believe God. It arose, let me say again, on all kinds of matters. It arose on physical matters, for a life in that wilderness was a great proposition physically. The Lord did not change the physical conditions. He called for a change in the people themselves first; the physical conditions were settled when He had got the change inside them. When the matter of faith in Him was settled, then the Lord dealt with the physical. The question arose in the circumstantial, the emotional, the intellectual, the volitional realms; the challenge was made along all those lines in numerous ways. You can take all their experiences and see how each one was a peculiar form of the challenge to faith, and the challenge was changing almost daily in its aspect, its form, but it was the same challenge. It came along every kind of line and the Lord never changed it, never prevented it, never allowed the whole set of conditions to be altered, but always focused on one point. The thing that matters is the inner man, and not until the issue was settled there, did the Lord deal with all the other things.

Well, that is very comprehensive. Do not think that it is necessarily such-and-such things that account for our condition. These may be contributing factors, they may be very testing, may bear upon us very heavily. Physical matters—yes, they do press,

they do make the situation exceedingly difficult, they do make a difference. Circumstances in which we have to live our lives, they do make a lot of difference, they make the situation exceedingly difficult. We say, If only the Lord would deal with this physical matter or these circumstances or this something else! It is all due to that, that is the cause of it, the reason for it. That is our way of reasoning, but it is not the Lord's thought at all. The thing is deeper down than that, and it is simply a matter of believing God; resolute faith, confidence in God. The Lord is trying to get us out of our variable and varying soul life where we are at the mercy of all our feelings, thoughts and reasonings and all that kind of thing, into a realm where, in spirit, we are steadfast. That is the point upon which it is all fixed in the Psalm. "Their heart was not steadfast with him" (Psa. lxxviii. 37), and around that the whole of their forty years is gathered. The key to this is spiritual; tested by every other line, every other means, it is a spiritual matter ultimately. To be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inward man (Eph. iii. 16) is the answer to it all. The other may then give way; at least, we shall gain ascendancy over the other if it is not removed.

#### Faith in God the Secret of Courage

Come back to the word in Joshua. Of that first generation, only two men got out of that soul realm—Joshua and Caleb. They triumphed in and over that realm. They triumphed in that realm first, and then the Lord brought them out, but the fact that it was the rest of faith which was the secret of their triumph while they were in it is brought so beautifully; magnificently, to light in this fourteenth chapter of Joshua. I think this is fine. Caleb, one of the two, comes to Joshua. He is an old man now, but still living by faith in the position which he took up with the Lord years before. He took up that position when he went as one of the spies and when the great majority, the overwhelming majority, brought their evil report. They looked at God through their circumstances; these two men looked at their circumstances through God; it made all the difference. Caleb took up that position of looking at everything through God, and he is still living in that position; and now, as an old man, he comes to Joshua, and, while all the other people are being given their inheritance in nice, easy, prosperous positions "where every prospect pleases", Caleb says, Give me this mountain where the giants are, and cities great and walled up; this hilly country; give me this mountain!

Oh, dear friends, there is a lot to be said about that, but I am going to be content with this now as following up this challenge to my heart and to yours. What are you looking for?—an easy inheritance, a nice, workable cabbage-patch, something that is going to respond to your touch immediately and give you satisfaction? Are you looking for the flourishing land? The faith which brought Joshua and Caleb into rest of heart before they came into the rest of the land was this kind of faith—Give me a tough pro-

position! Here is a situation full of difficulties, full of threatenings, full of adversities; why, it is almost an appalling prospect, yet nevertheless give me a chance there! You see the challenge. Do difficulties appal you or do they at once present a great opportunity for the Lord? "It may be that the Lord...as the Lord spake." How are we facing the big difficulties?—and there are difficulties! there are problems! and these mountains seem to pile up upon one another as we go on. Sometimes it seems an impossible outlook and prospect, a hopeless situation. Perhaps for our own lives individually for some reason within ourselves or outside of ourselves, or for the work to which we are called, the ministry, the testimony that is laid upon us, it seems so utterly hopeless, the mountain is impossible. Well, what about it? Is it—Give me this mountain! Nothing but a real faith in God can take things on like that, and say—All right, it is difficult, there is no doubt about it, it is an appalling prospect naturally, a hopeless outlook, nevertheless let us take it on in the Name of the Lord; it may be that the Lord...*The Lord*—looking at the mountain through the Lord, and not at the Lord through the mountain.

I think that is the kind of faith that we need, that brings into rest. A mountain—yes, it is a mountain right enough, a physical mountain, a circumstantial mountain, a mountain of outlook in the work. Naturally we would do the right thing, the wise, commonsense thing if we said, No, we are not going to touch that! But faith says, I am not going to try and skirt that mountain, I am not going to turn my back on it and run away; give me this mountain! I want that faith, you want it. It is not just our natural courage, our bull-dog nature, our pugnacity that will do it. We know quite well that we have nothing; if left to ourselves, we had better quit. But the Lord is challenging us, and Caleb does come up as a rebuke to us. At the end of a long life when we might think that now is the time for him to be given a very nice little garden and a lodge somewhere where the work was easy and he could take his rest—no, he says, Give me this mount wherein are the giants, the walled cities; give me this mountain! His *choice* was a difficulty, because it was an opportunity for the Lord.

Probably we shall very soon be brought up against what we have been saying in very practical ways, but let us have dealings with the Lord on this. We are going to have to face what will be naturally appalling difficulties, within and without, taking the very heart out of us, but oh, for this quiet, restful assurance and confidence in our God which says, Give me this mountain as an opportunity for proving the Lord!

And Caleb got it—and it was Hebron, and that is another story; a very long story is Hebron. I leave you to look that up, for Hebron has a wonderful place in the purposes of God. David was first crowned king in Hebron before he was crowned in Jerusalem. Hebron means 'fellowship'. There is a great inheritance bound up with Hebron. Hebron is secured to men and to women of this kind of faith which says, I am not wanting to escape from my difficulty and

get out of my hard way ; let me take it in the Lord's strength and give the Lord an opportunity to show

that He can do what is naturally impossible. The Lord give us that faith !  
T.A-S.

## “Last of All—To Me”

READING : I Cor. xv. 3-8.

What wonderful transformations took place when people met the risen Christ ! It was not a matter of argument, disputation, long explanations or many words. Various people with all kinds of different needs met the Lord and all their problems were solved and their needs satisfied. I have it on my heart to speak of four such. Paul says first of all that Christ appeared to Cephas, but that is because he is speaking of what might be called 'official people'. Actually, the Gospels show us that first of all He appeared to Mary Magdalene.

### To Mary, the Broken-Hearted

We read in John xx the account of how Mary met the Lord ; she was the very first. We may say, perhaps, she loved Him most, she was the most devoted ; I think we might equally say she needed Him most. She was broken-hearted. It seems clear that she had a peculiar devotion of soul to the Lord Jesus. Mark xvi. 9 tells us she was one from whom seven devils were cast out. From that, suppositions have been formed that she was a woman of evil life. There is nothing in Scripture to warrant that idea, but certainly she had known a mighty deliverance. Jesus Christ on earth had met her in great stress of need and had delivered her, and her response was an outpouring of heart devotion, heaping upon the Lord every atom of her being in deep love to Him. The Lord's words to her after He met her on the resurrection morning are difficult for us to gather from our version. According to that version He said to her "Touch me not" or "Take not hold on me" (R.V.M.), and it is present tense. I think Moffatt's translation helps us best with this—"Cease clinging to me". She had her Lord and she was holding Him. The Lord said, No, you have not got Me back like that. "I am not yet ascended". It is not the Jesus after the flesh Whom you have loved so much ; do not hold on now as though He were.

Mary had loved and lost. When she lost the Lord, she lost everything. She was broken-hearted. But thank God there is an answer to the broken-hearted. The Lord brought it Himself with a minimum of words. Oh, it is not words, explanations, doctrines, that bind up broken hearts ; it is just the Lord. Two words were exchanged between them and everything was done ; just two words, "Mary !" "Rabboni !"

When the Lord really meets the broken-hearted, there is no need for explanations or words. "Mary !" It was the way He said it, the tone, the love, that touched that poor, broken heart. And the Lord Jesus has not changed: If there are Mary Magdalenes in the

world—and God knows there are broken-hearted people who have given themselves in utter devotion to somebody or something and lost it all—thank God, their case is not so hopeless as it seems. The Lord is not going to give earthly satisfaction, any more than to Mary. He gave Mary something better, and has something better for us—Himself ascended to the Father, known in the spirit in the power of an eternal life and of heavenly love. "Mary !" "My own dear Master !" That is what she said—"My Master !"—and all the problems were solved, all the difficulties gone for ever. That is the way the Lord Jesus met her, and that is the Christ Whom we have.

Dear friends, it is not our explanation or exposition that will comfort breaking hearts ; it is the living Christ that people need. If the living Christ can come to them and say, Mary ! Mary ! all will be solved, as it was with her. So He is enough for Mary, the broken-hearted.

### To Peter, the Conscience-Stricken

The next is Peter, and He is enough for Peter the conscience-stricken ; broken-hearted, true, in a sense—but the outstanding feature of Peter was his guilty conscience. He had sinned, and the weight of that sin must have been an intolerable burden upon him. There are some people who are troubled about their sins when they do not feel well, and when they are better they do not trouble very much, it is a matter of feeling. But Peter's was not a matter of feeling, it was a fact, an historic, ugly fact. He had denied his Lord ; he had sinned against the light ; he had sinned repeatedly, three times ; he had sinned in spite of warnings ; he had sinned in spite of his own resolutions and determinations not to. What a picture ! And who of us has not stood in Peter's place—oppressed not merely with a vague sense of not being right with God, but with the burden of positive sinfulness, facts which can never be evaded ?

What happened when the Lord met Peter ? There is only one indication in Scripture as to the whole circumstance. It is in the Gospel by Mark, which we are told was written largely under Peter's influence. When the angel spake to the women he said, "He is risen ; he is not here :...go, tell his disciples and Peter". There is a whole world stored in that—"Go, tell his disciples and Peter". Judas had sinned, sinned himself out of the Apostolic band and out of any possibility of hope of recovery. Who will say that Peter's sin was less than Judas's ? Peter might have wondered whether he had not sinned himself out of the Apostolic band too, and I think perhaps the other disciples thought he had. What a weight on his con-

science! "Go, tell his disciples and Peter". The Lord still thinks of Peter, guilty, conscience-stricken Peter. Well, there is hope: this is the Gospel of hope; and the Lord, before ever He appeared to the rest of that Apostolic band, had a personal and a private interview with Peter. It is not disclosed what was said, Scripture does not even give us a glimpse, as it gives of Mary. We are simply told, "The Lord...hath appeared to Simon." (Luke xxiv. 34). Says Paul, "He appeared to Cephas". Says Mark, "Go, tell his disciples and Peter". Peter never said anything more about it himself. It was between him and the Lord. What did they say? I wonder very much whether they said anything, whether anything needed to be said. What took the load of guilt off Peter's conscience, restored the sunshine of God's smile to his heart once again, was not words. It was the presence of the living Christ; and that is true, absolutely true. Sometimes Scripture can help; quoted and applied by the Holy Spirit it can be the means for bringing relief to the guilty conscience; but, when all is said and done, the cure for sin-sickness is a living Saviour. After all, it was the look. Was it a look of pity? It certainly must have been a look of love. It was a look from the Lord that had earlier melted Peter's heart under a sense of sin, and the same Lord, risen from the dead, singled out Peter. It was as though one of His first thoughts after the resurrection was, I must see Peter, I must assure Peter, repentant Peter. That is the difference between Peter and Judas. It is not the measure of their sin, it is the state of their hearts about it. Peter was repentant. Peter, though he was ashamed to be near, yet ran to the tomb in that strange mixture which is always found in the true penitent—you cannot face the Lord and yet you must have the Lord; you are ashamed to look Him in the face and yet you cling to Him; and that is how Peter was. Thank God, the risen Christ is the restorer of conscience-stricken, guilty Peter. He said to the broken-hearted one, speaking to her personally, Mary! He said concerning this one—"Go, tell his disciples and Peter". Can you take comfort to your heart? The Lord knew their names; He knows yours. He brought them in; He brings you in. Thank God.

#### To Thomas, the Doubter

The third one we are told about in the same Gospel. He did not meet the Lord Jesus alone, but it was a very personal matter. It was Thomas, Thomas the Doubter, the unbeliever. "Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John xx. 24-25). What about that? Well, you say, he is an unbeliever, he is lacking in faith, he is hard of heart; rule him out! What does the Lord say? "After eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood

in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and see my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into my side". How gracious the Lord is! Rule him out! we would say. But the Lord meets him on his own ground. He says, Here you are, Thomas: you want proofs, here are proofs. Reach hither thy finger. Of course, Thomas did not do it; he was overcome. But how tender the Lord is even to the man that we would reprove, full of his own ideas, full of self-will, not prepared to accept the testimony of others.

Now, of course, there are qualifications to that. Thomas was an unbeliever, but he put himself in the way of being convinced. He had missed the Lord by being absent from the Apostolic band, but he did not wash his hands of them and say, The Lord must seek me out and find me. He met with them, he gave the Lord a chance. I think therein lies a lot of the explanation. We may find it hard to believe. After all, if we are going to criticise Thomas, who of us has not at some point or other failed just there? If you cannot believe, there is a sense in which you cannot help yourself, you cannot pretend to believe. But you can put yourself in the way of being met by the Lord. If Thomas had removed himself, gone away and stayed away, I do not believe he ever would have met the Lord. But he gathered with the band, though he could not accept their testimony. He gave the Lord a chance to meet him among them, and, as he was there with the rest, the Lord came and met him. However unbelieving we may be, there is a gracious patience about the Lord that if He can meet us at any point, He will; and that is how He met Thomas; and Thomas's answer was virtually the same as Mary's—"My Lord and my God!"

Let us beware of unbelief, but let us realise that we do not get rid of it by pulling ourselves together or making up our minds we are going to be full of faith, merely exerting ourselves from our side. Unbelief disappears when we meet the living Lord. That is what we need. How often does the Lord solve your difficulties about faith by explanations? How often does He get you out of your strained condition of question and of doubt by setting out before you all the reasons why? Not very often, does He? No, somehow or other, somewhere or other, you meet the living Lord, the Lord Himself, and all the questions are forgotten. Do you think Thomas, after that, wanted to press this matter of personal investigation? Not a bit of it! He had seen the Lord and all he wanted to do was to worship. There is the cure for unbelief—the living Christ. God help us to bring Him to doubting Thomases of which this world is full.

#### To James, the Self-Righteous

Then there is the fourth, and perhaps the most enigmatic of all. "Then", says Paul in I Cor. xv. 7, "then...to James". Who was James? James was the brother of the Lord Jesus. He is later called "James the Just", and it is quite clear from his epistle and from what is said about him in his position at Jeru-

saalem, and the use—I may say the wrong use—that was made by the Judaisers of his name, that he was a man of great concern for righteousness. I think his trouble originally was not righteousness, but self-righteousness. He was a stickler for the letter of the law, for the most rigid and orthodox observance of Judaism, as were the Pharisees. They could not understand the Lord Jesus mixing with sinners, breaking the Sabbath, as it seemed to them. So it is written that even His brethren (including James) did not believe on Him.

Then we are told that, later on, at the Cross, Jesus had to commend His earthly mother, Mary, to the care of John the disciple, as though, when He left the world, she was left all alone. Where were James and the others? Where were they indeed! One can only conclude that they had washed their hands of Mary since she persisted in keeping with the Lord. There is no mention of James. John had to take Mary and keep her in his home. If a man were really a stickler for the righteousness of the law, he would let little matters come between him and his mother. Self-righteousness of a religious kind is the cruellest thing in this world. That is why I think the whole story is of a piece, it fits in. It would be difficult to imagine a worldly man abandoning his mother just because she followed the Lord Jesus, but, if you know anything about self-righteous, religious bigots, you know it is just the sort of thing they do.

There is not much hope for James. No, he is the last on the list. The publicans and sinners go in before the Pharisees. James very nearly lost everything. But thank God, not quite. The risen Christ appeared to him, and the self-righteous one melted. He kept something of the outward rigour of his life, but he

lost all his antagonism to the Lord. I do not think James was a Judaiser. I think his name was used by the Judaisers. He became quite obviously the leader of the people of God in Jerusalem, an outstanding figure, a disciple of One he had once despised. One of the greatest miracles of all had happened, a self-righteous man had been humbled.

That was a tremendous thing; but who of us is going to say that James was more self-righteous than we are? There is the clash with the Lord, there is the life that is unworthy and a contradiction, self-righteousness hardening our hearts; and even while we think, as James thought, that we do God service, we are found in conflict and in a clash with God's Son. There is only one cure for self-righteousness, and that is the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

What happened when the Lord appeared to James? We are not told. I do not think they said very much; it is quite possible they said nothing at all. Perhaps Jesus said, James! Perhaps James answered—fancy, to his brother, the one whom he had despised!—perhaps he answered, My Lord and my God! Well, there is the answer to all and every need—the personal appearance of the living Christ. That is our need.

“Last of all—to me”

Paul puts himself at the end of the list and says, “and last of all...to me”. But was it last of all? Last of all so far as Paul was concerned, but every one of us could write an epistle and say, Put me down, “last of all...to me”. Thank God we can put our names down there. Mary, Peter, Thomas, James—put your name underneath—“last of all...to me”.  
My Lord and my God!  
H.F.

## The Spiritual Clinic

### Paralysis

#### The Paralysis of Disappointed Expectations

There are not a few typical instances of such in the Word of God. Some of these are discerned in ejaculatory and fragmentary expressions, such as that of Job, “My purposes are broken off”; or of the two on the Emmaus Road—“But we trusted...” or, again, of John the Baptist—“Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?”

And then as to the man who has come to be known as “The Rich Fool,” there are two fragments in the narrative—“He said...but God said.”

In each case there was an arriving at an end, a deadlock, a paralysis, and each represented a false expectation.

Two of these at least (i.e. John the Baptist and the Emmaus Road) were to be accounted for by a mistaken conception. This conception is very far reaching to-day and has become responsible for much

deception; a deception which works in two ways. On the one hand many give up in despair—like John the Baptist—because the issues which they had come to believe were immediately inseparable from a certain acceptance and line of action have not developed: the results have not followed, the success has not materialised. On the other hand many have been ensnared by this false conception into thinking that a certain kind of success, increase, popularity, achievement, is THE thing, while—as a matter of fact—the ultimate spiritual value is almost if not entirely lacking.

In these two cases there were at least two further fundamental misconceptions which issued in paralysis. One was the failure to recognise the initial, primary, and essentially spiritual nature of Christ's mission and work. In their minds the temporal and earthly bulked upon the horizon to the exclusion of the spiritual and

heavenly. We think it unnecessary for us to show how much this was so. It is one of the most obvious things in the Gospels, and was one of the Master's greatest problems with His disciples. Again and again, He tried to let in light to correct this misconception, and knew that it would be the ground upon which at last they would all be offended, the difficulty over which they would all stumble, when they saw Him an apparently helpless victim on the Cross.

There was also a total misconception of the order of events, as Acts xv. 14-16 (R.V.) clearly shows. There was a complete incapacity to recognise the Divine purpose, method, means, time, instrument, basis, and passion. This let in personal interests, concerns, ambitions, and false anxieties. The thwarting of these, and the disillusionment of the Cross utterly smashed them and their whole scheme of things.

"But we trusted," said they; but their thought was earthbound. Something of "the heavenly vision" is essential to life and assurance and hope and ascendancy. We shall find increasingly that before there can be an earth- and world-manifestation of the sovereignty of Christ in anything like a commensurate sense, there will be an intense heavenliness and spirituality of life and work on the part of those who are called to share the Throne.

Whatever else may have been in John's mind leading to his pathetic and despairing message, it is almost certain that his own condition presented a problem occasioned by a mistaken idea. It would be something like this: 'If He really is the Christ, and all that has been prophesied of Him is true—all those things about opening the prisons to the prisoners, and letting the oppressed go free, etc.—why is it that I, having served Him as I have and standing in such a relationship to Him as I do, should be left in this dungeon? There are reports of miracles and mighty works. Why am I left to suffer thus?' This problem comes near to the heart of many of the Lord's people. We know from the Master Himself that He was far from ignoring or forgetting John. In John's case it is certain that not for sin or in Divine forgetfulness was he left in his trial undelivered. The reason was to be found elsewhere.

It might be as well to listen to another who has a different expectation without despair: "The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me." This one had much to say about the spiritual fruitfulness of his bonds.

"I am an ambassador in bonds for the mystery of the Gospel."

"My bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places."

"Many of the brethren, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word."

"Whom I have begotten in my bonds."

It may hardly seem fair to make this comparison between the two men, but one does it only because one finds so many where John was; and who is to know but that Paul sometimes was tempted to feel that way? The facts are that there is often a larger service

through a certain curtailment, a fuller life through a deeper death, a richer gain by a keener loss: and we have to look for the impact of the operation of God in us in a realm where the eye of man cannot trace. The Master said of John that he was the greatest of the prophets; and he, no less than they, was to lay down his life and suffer unto death for his testimony. There is evidently in the eyes of God a virtue in certain sufferings of His servants which is of greater importance to Him than the fleeting glory which might accrue to Him by His deliverance of them. There is that peculiar blessedness, to which the Lord referred in His reply to John, which belongs to them who under severe trial are "not offended in Him." In some strange way John was related to the Cross and to "the Lamb of God," and thus he was brought within the realm of "the offence of the Cross."

What do we expect in our relationship to "the testimony of Jesus"? Supposing the deepest purposes of God can only be realised by His hiding from our flesh all that that flesh craves for its life, and—more—supposing His work in us, whereby triumphant faith and obedience reach their highest form, necessitates His concealing Himself and accepting the risk of being considered to have been unfaithful? There is no doubt that most of those who have been called into some of the most vital expressions of "the eternal purpose" have been trained in the school of *apparent* Divine contradiction, delay, withdrawal, and darkness. Paul wrote to the Thessalonian saints that "no man should be moved by these afflictions for...we are *appointed* thereunto."

Job, who cried "My purposes are broken off," learned that that did not matter very much seeing that God's greater purposes stood fast. It all depends upon whether we know that we are in "His purpose" and in His way of fulfilment, whether in the day of the ordeal we shall triumph or be paralysed.

Job found strength in recognising that "He performeth the thing that is *appointed* for me, and many such things are with him," in spite of those things being quite foreign to his own expectation.

A right and true relationship to the Lord is a basis upon which there is absolute confidence, assurance, and hope when *our* purposes or expectations are shattered. It was not so in the case of the "rich fool." "He said..." He had purposes of his own unrelated to God. "But God said..." and that was the end of all purpose.

If we have God's life in us we can survive anything. The Lord is not out to peevishly frustrate our hopes or disappoint our expectations, but to either change them for His own or fulfil them in a higher and larger realm.

May we just add a word in this general connection? Many unexpected things, and things quite contrary to expectation, will come to us in the realms of both spiritual experience and Christian service, but one of the bitterest and often most fatal forms of this paralysis comes through disappointed expectations.

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with regard to people. David said in his haste "all men are a lie"; and many others have come perilously near to feeling that they dare not put any confidence in anyone. David's experience of the breakdown and worse of the familiar friend who went to the house of God with him has been that of many others. Trusted and highly esteemed leaders, conspicuous and greatly used men of God, such as we had come to trust and look up to and count upon and regard as authorities or counsellors, saints and deeply taught: these all in one or more of many ways may cause us to reel under the shock of a disillusionment—a manifestation of ill-temper, irritability, jealousy, personal interest, pride, respect of persons, suspicion; concern for place, prestige, approval; being influenced by hearsay, report, criticism; prejudice, partiality, compromise: all these or others, and some very much worse. Anyone who reads this will understand what is meant and will be well able to appreciate the acute suffering and resultant numbness and paralysis, of such an experience as it strikes at the vitals of faith, fellowship and trust. There are so many embittered and sceptical, soured and suspicious, because of such disappointed expectations, and too often they allow it to strike at their faith in God.

Now the first thing to say is that the Lord has prescribed very carefully for this form of paralysis, both for prevention and cure. He has pointed out the antidote both in word and deed. As to the word, at how much pains has God been to warn against "putting trust in man." Again and again the danger and folly of making man a prop and a basis of confidence

has been emphasised. As to the practical side, why—if not for this very purpose—has not the Lord prevented the disappointing and, sometimes, shameful breakdown of His best servants from being placed on record? If the Bible is inspired of God, then we have to place the record to the intention of God. It is strange that we so often extract the comfort for ourselves from this fact, but are shocked when we discover the "like passions" in certain others.

We had better settle it once and for all that, be grateful as we should and must for all the grace of God in His children, and value all the help through them, and esteem them very highly for their work's sake, the Lord will never allow us to go for long on human props or crutches, but will free us to see that He alone is our Rock, that our spiritual education and growth must ever and only rest upon *personal* and *direct* knowledge of Himself. The greater the usefulness to God of any life, the deeper the loneliness in experience. *He* takes us often where no others can enter, interpret, understand, help. Rather, by their mental play upon our strange experience, and their interpretations given to it, they create even greater painfulness and distress for us. Sooner or later we are bound to be disappointed in man, but this may lead to a rich and deep knowledge of God if we are not soured and paralysed by it.

It will also be the occasion of a great and healthy self-distrust on the one hand, and a deep sympathy and solicitude for the suffering on the other hand. The Master in the hour of anguish "looked for some to take pity, but there was none." We may be allowed just to sip the cup in order to know something of the help of God which no other *can* give. T. A.-S.

**Acknowledgments.**—We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts (other than local) received between 1st August and 30th September, 1946:

Birmingham, 2s. 5d. and 10s.; Boston, Mass., £6 3s. 6d.; Bristol, £2 17s.; Brockley, 5s.; Bromley, 5s.; Bunloit, 3s. 6d.; Canterbury, 10s.; Clydach, 5s.; Cockenzie, £1; Collingswood, N.J., 4s. 8d.; Congleton, £1; Crawley, 2s. 6d.; Dartmouth, 10s.; Dublin, 18s. 9d., 2s. 6d., 10s. and 9s. 6d.; Eastbourne, 2s.; Enfield, 6s.; Falfield, 10s.; Ferryhill, 5s.; Flushing, N.Y., £1; Greenford, £2; Heswall, 5s.; Hong Kong, £5; Hove, 10s.; Hoylake, 10s.; Inverness, 3s. 6d.; Kingswood, 7s. 6d.; London, N.16, 5s.; London, N.16, 2s. 6d.; London, N.W.9, 2s. 6d.; London, N.W.9, £1;

London, S.E.23, £2; London, S.W.11, 2s. 6d.; Loughton, 7s. 6d.; Manhattan Beach, Cal., 4s.; Montrose, £2 10s.; Murten, Switzerland, 11s. 5d.; Napa, Cal., £2 10s.; New-castle-on-Tyne, 5s.; Newport, 5s.; Plymouth, 1s.; Pudsey, 2s. 6d.; Purley, 9s.; Quinton, 15s.; Rowlands Gill, 5s.; St. Leonards-on-Sea, 10s.; Salem, Oregon, £2 9s. 5d.; Southampton, 2s. 6d.; Stillorgan, 3s.; Tacoma, Wash., £4 18s. 9d.; Tanerdy, 10s.; Tayport, £1; Theydon Bois, 2s. 6d.; Vancouver, Canada, £6 3s. 9d.; Wallington, 10s.; West Wickham, 10s.; Woodbridge, 2s. 6d. and 10s.; Worthing, 15s. Total, £57 3s. 8d. Huntington Park, Cal., \$1.00; Monterey, Mass., \$1.50; Steuben, Maine, \$3.00; Williston Park, N.Y., \$5.00. Total, \$10.50.

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