

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

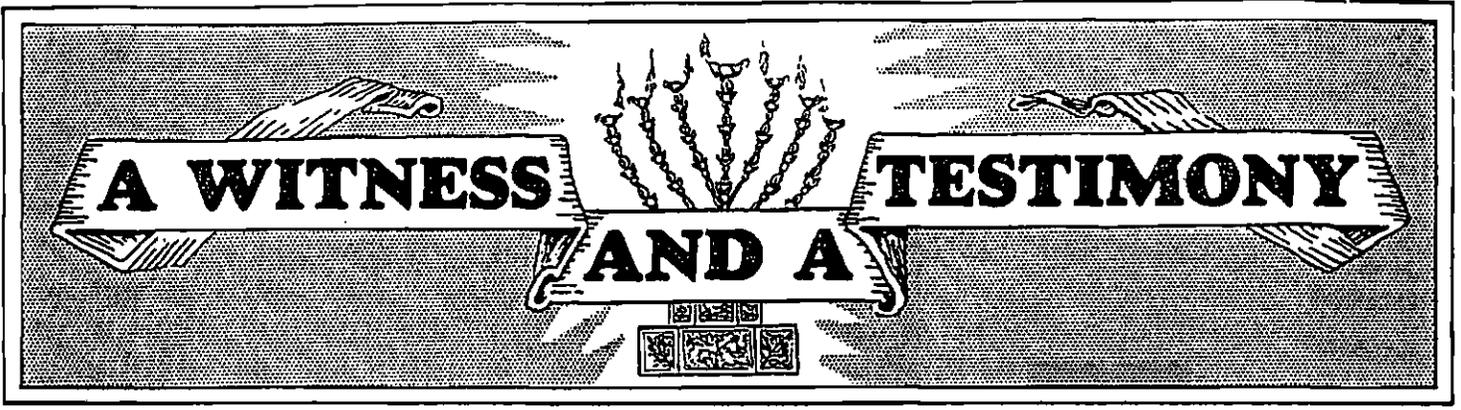
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a house of prayer

Christ our life 109

Cup of Joe series

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EDITORIAL

AS we send out this first issue of this little paper in this, its forty-sixth year, and break upon one more stage of the unknown future, I think that I could do nothing more helpful than to dwell upon the words of our motto for 1968:

"Ye have not passed this way heretofore" (Joshua iii. 4).

"He knoweth the way" (Job xxiii. 10).

"Certainly I will be with thee" (Exodus iii. 12).

Isn't it strange how we gravitate toward the apprehensive aspect of a confrontation? Already I have found people who, having seen the motto, immediately exclaim: 'Hello, what is coming now? What are we going to have to meet in 1968?' Perhaps heavy difficulties in the past or present do create some predisposition to fear or apprehensiveness, but such a reaction to the motto is to do two unfortunate things. First, it is to detach the first part from the remainder, and so to get out of balance; and then it is to take the words away from their great context in the book of Joshua. Balance and confidence will be restored or established if we remember that it is equally a part of the truth that,

in all the uncertainties of the future, "He knoweth the way." That is, what is quite hidden from us is already present to the knowledge and sight of the Lord. There is nothing that can take Him unawares, and be an emergency.

Then there is His categorical affirmation:

"Certainly I will be with thee."

This should counter all fear. But when we have got our poise on these assurances, there is still the wonderful context. It is the context of a prospect, not a tragedy. The people had reached the point where they were about to enter upon all that for which the Lord had chosen, called, and prepared them. All His dealings with them were about to have their purpose realized. There may be battles, as surely there will be. There may be more lessons to learn, but there is going to be a mighty victory placed right under their feet at the very beginning. Jordan, 'overflowing its banks', is going to be deprived of all its power to overwhelm them. 'Death will be swallowed up in victory' before they proceed into the future! The Lord's intention for them

has already become His realization. "I have," says the Lord. "You proceed on *that*."

There is, however, an element of warning or counsel in the context of the words concerning the unknown way. The ark was going ahead, but they were to put two thousand cubits of space between it and themselves. They were to "come not nigh it, that they might know the way". We know the ark represented both the presence, nature, and purpose of the Lord. It is, in effect and fact, the Lord Himself in charge of everything; His sovereign government. There was a man later in the history of the ark who got too near to it and assumed the responsibility and control; he perished tragically and lost the way.

How we project *ourselves* by fear, anxiety, mistaken responsibility into what is God's government! We shall only lose *our* way and God's support if we—in our heat—take His-alone place. Sometimes our very subjectivity can involve us in confusion, when we should have our eyes on the One who has done all for us. We need to contemplate those two thousand cubits in the light of the letter to the Romans, and remember that—without careless irresponsibility—He has the initiative; the way and the end are with Him. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." That is really the message of the motto. Perhaps a ray of

sunshine would be let in if we reversed the order of the words thus:

The Lord has said—

"Certainly I will be with thee."

'I know the way.'

"Ye have not passed this way heretofore."

Editor.

In our last issue we informed our readers of the passing to be with the Lord of our long-time fellow-worker and fellow in this ministry, our brother, Mr. C. J. B. Harrison.

We have now to report the Homecall of another of those who have been so valuable a help in the work. Many of our friends in many parts of the world have known our sister Lady Ogle. For over forty years she has been very closely bound up with this ministry and has been a "helper of many". Her prayer ministry has been such a great strength, and she will be one for whom we shall give thanks on all remembrance. She was called Home on Monday, 27th November, in the late evening. After a short illness and no suffering she opened her eyes, smiled, and was gone. May the Lord fill the gap made by this loss with others who will take up her ministry of prayer in—at least—as strong a way.

WORK IN THE GROANING CREATION (II)

"So also it is written, *The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit*" (I Corinthians xv. 45).

WE are brought to the consideration of the Lord Jesus in the redemptive plan of God, and we want to begin with Him in heaven, for everything in God's purpose now begins with Christ in heaven. It is important to recognize that. It may seem very simple, very elementary, and it may even be that you say: 'Surely it commenced with Christ coming into the world, with Christ on the Cross!' No! it does not! It commences with Christ in heaven, Christ in glory, Christ exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high. Apart from that the earthly life of the Christ lacked the essential dynamic. Everything commences in God's new creation with Christ in heaven.

We notice this contrast: "The first man Adam . . . a living soul. The last Adam . . . a life-giving spirit." The first Adam produced after his kind, a race according to his own constitution, and in Adam by nature we are that, a living soul. Adam,

if he had gone on the straight way in obedience, would have reached a point where he would have been changed in his constitution and nature from what the first Adam was as a living soul to what the last Adam is, but he did not go that straight way. Now God's thought is no longer with the first Adam, but with the last Adam, and in the last Adam God has already realized His original thought.

It is a tremendously important and valuable thing to recognize that the Lord Jesus in heaven now represents the fact that what was in God's thought originally, and that for which He created Adam probationally and potentially, is an accomplished and finished thing in the Person of the Lord Jesus, now. That He has got right through to the end of that and it is finished, it is completed; in the Lord Jesus God has a Man. And inasmuch as He is the "Firstborn among many brethren", and is the Head of the creation, all His race are in Him complete. We turn aside to the thought about the Body of Christ to get that made clear. Paul speaks of the Body as having many members, and all the

members, being many, are one Body; so also is *the* Christ. The article is there in the Greek. That is, *the* Christ is a Body of many members, with Christ as sovereign Head, so that "the last Adam" is a collective and inclusive title.

In Christ in heaven God has His Man completed according to His original thought, and in that Man, who is the racial Firstborn, He has His race as represented in perfection, completeness. When we come into Christ by faith we enter, *so far as position is concerned*, as full a perfection as ever we shall have, though we remain here for generations. In Christ we are as perfect as we ever shall be. What we are in ourselves will mean a process, but, so far as our *position* in Him is concerned, we are perfect in Christ.

What is this last Adam? He is different from the first Adam in that He is a life-giving Spirit, not merely a living soul. Following on the definition in this fifteenth chapter of I Corinthians we have:

"So also it is written . . . that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is soulical; then that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such as they also that are heavenly."

The seed of Christ is essentially spiritual and heavenly; that is why everything begins in heaven. You can no longer know Christ after the flesh. You can only know Christ after the Spirit now. You can no longer take hold of Him in the flesh; you can only take hold of Him in the Spirit now. You can no longer have fellowship with Him on the earth as of this earth; you can only have fellowship with Him now in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus; the spiritual and the heavenly. And such are they of this new generation. In their very being they are spiritual and heavenly. No longer of this world, and no longer of this natural or soulical order. They are essentially spiritual.

Before we follow that further we want to note this other thing: that the second Man was also put on probation, as was the first. He was put on probation to be tried and tested on exactly the same question as was the first Adam, that of obedience; and to be brought to a certain point of maturity, as was Adam. The Lord Jesus was put under conditions of testing before heaven, and all heaven was interested in that testing. All heaven was interested in the testing of the first Adam, and all heaven was interested in the testing of the last Adam. After the first phase of the testing in the wilderness angels came and ministered. They had been watching! In the hour of the deepest of all the

testings, in the garden of Gethsemane, an angel came and ministered. It was before heaven that this testing was going on!

The fact of the testing need not be tarried with longer. Two other things remain: the nature of the testing, and the object, or the issue, of the testing.

The nature of the testing was through three years of walk under temptation; temptation from without, and certainly not from within. Through those three years, what was taking place in His life was not atoning or vicarious, but He was being watched, observed, under the play of forces upon Him to see His reaction. He took the place of the sweet-savour offering during the three years, and His life was a sweet savour unto God. He was offering Himself to God through those three years, but not as an offering for sin, not an atoning offering. He was offering Himself to God as a sweet-savour offering for the good pleasure of God, for God's satisfaction, so that God could have a Man under continuous trial and testing before His eye, a Man who would not in any way develop a flaw, a blemish, a spot, a wrinkle, a stain or any such thing.

The other form of the testing, the probation, was in the passion when He was made sin, and, being made sin for us, He who knew no sin, God Himself had to withdraw, turn His face away, and deny Him. Then even under that strain He remained faithful and obedient. I have no doubt whatever that the cup which He was facing, and over which He had His supreme battle in the garden, was the cup of His Father's denial. For Him that had to be a part of the price, but in the presence of that cup He fought through to victory: "Not my will, but thine . . ." Heaven was so concerned about the aspect of the battle that heaven came in to succour Him when He had got through in spirit. He was on probation, under test. The question was one of obedience unto death, yea, the death of the Cross and the death of the Cross, in its deepest meaning was being forsaken of God. He was obedient.

The object and the issue of the testing was perfecting. He was perfect, but He was made perfect. He was perfect, and yet He was perfected. The Word distinctly tells us that He was "made perfect through suffering", and "though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered". While there was no sin in Him, He had to move toward a position as representing man which He could only reach through being tested out as man. He reached the position that, while He was perfect yet He was perfected. He reached a point of finality as Man which no man had ever reached before and when He was perfected through suffering, God had got His Son as in eternal Godhead, but

Man—through trial and probation—at the point where He intended the first Adam to come. When He had got a Man there He took Him away from this world and put Him in heaven. Why? Because conformity to the image of that Man was not going to be on the ground of flesh and blood, but it was going to be a spiritual thing. God was going to commence, not where He commenced with Christ, but where He ended with Christ. You and I begin where God has finished with Christ. That is one of the most blessed truths that it is possible for us to apprehend, if we could apprehend it. God does not start with us where He started with the first Adam. He commences with us where He finished with the last Adam. That is, **God is working** on the basis of **having already a perfect humanity**. He has put the last Adam in heaven, and there is the image, there is the model, there is the racial Man, in whom the race is already.

The second thing is that He sends forth the Holy Spirit from heaven. The New Testament phrase is: "The Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." Where is that? Where Christ is, where God's perfected Son is. Sent down from Him! What for? As the Spirit of all that Christ is in heaven. All that perfection that Christ is in heaven comes down in the Holy Spirit. We receive the Holy Spirit! What have we received? We have received into our inner being the Spirit of Christ in heaven.

The first phase of that is our new birth. What is our new birth? It is the life of God's last Adam. He is "a life-giving spirit". The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of the life-giving spiritual last Adam. The terms sound somewhat technical, but I am keeping closely to the Scripture. The Holy Spirit comes as Christ, as what Christ is, and gives life to those who believe on the Lord Jesus. We say that we pass from death unto life, that we receive the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord, that is, we are born anew, we are born of Him. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." So we are born of Him, the last Adam, who is a life-giving spirit, and in the innermost reality of our being we are living spirit. That is what is born from above. It is from above, and therefore it is not earthly, but heavenly. The nature of the new birth is that we are life and spirit, and heavenly, inwardly a living spirit, made to live by the very life of the Lord Jesus, and because that is from above it is heavenly. So God has here in this earth something which does not belong to this earth at all, and which does not belong to the first Adam race, something which is utterly different from the first Adam, and altogether apart from the earth. God has here that which is of Christ, and that

which is heavenly. The development of that, of course, is the whole history of spiritual growth, but that is where we begin, and that is the nature of the new birth.

We have got the perfected humanity of the Lord Jesus in infant form (if I may put it that way) at our new birth, and spiritual growth is simply the development of that in us. It is what the Apostle Paul speaks of as Christ being "fully formed" in us (Galatians iv. 19—Gk.): "Until Christ be fully formed in you." Christ in what He is is introduced, as it were, as a babe at our new birth, and the course of spiritual experience is the formation of Christ in us unto fulness. While this relates to the Church in completion, it has a personal meaning.

~~God did not, because of Adam's failure and sin, wipe out that race, destroy it, put it out of existence and make another creation. God is doing a much more magnificent thing than that. In the midst of all that He is introducing something and building up something which is taking ascendancy over that, and your spiritual experience, and mine, is simply the progressive ascendancy of the last Adam over the first; of the spiritual over the soulical, the natural; the heavenly over the earthly. That is the course of our life. It is progressive conformity to the image of His Son. The Word says: "Be not conformed to this age, but be ye transformed by the making anew of your mind" (Romans xii. 2). It is only another way of putting the same thing.~~

So, in the presence of the first Adam (which, mark you, in God's judicial act has been set aside but not annihilated—set aside judicially and no longer recognized as standing before God, yet remaining), as we walk in obedience, the law upon which God counts for all the realization of His purpose is the last Adam triumphing over the first Adam, taking ascendancy in us, having already taken full ascendancy in heaven in the Person of the Lord Jesus.

All that means that we are learning Christ. The Apostle said: "Ye did not so learn Christ" (Ephesians iv. 20). He used that phrase in a specific connection, but it can be used quite generally and applied in this way, that our business is to 'so learn Christ'. And it is an education which begins with A, B, C. It is an education which begins in infancy, and the wisest man after the first Adam does not know anything more about the last Adam than a little child just born into this world. The one who may be most confident and self-reliant in the first Adam has got to learn how to take a first step in the last Adam, and very often makes some tumbles in learning how to take even a first step. On that hangs all the doctrine of the Epistles: walking

after the Spirit. That is something new—another kind of walk. We are not natural, but spiritual and therefore this is something altogether different, and nature (that is, our relationship and our inheritance from the first Adam) gives us no help here. You will look in vain to nature to help you walk after the Spirit. You may be the wisest after the first Adam, but that can give you nothing for the second Adam. You have come into a new realm where it is not natural knowledge but spiritual knowledge, and “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them . . .” (I Corinthians ii. 14). What is true in walk and knowledge is true of every other thing that makes up life. Is food a part of life? Well, you are careful about your food. The natural man knows more or less what suits him and what he wants. Yes! We have to learn something new about spiritual food. You know that you need food for your new creation; you know you need spiritual food; and as you go on you know what spiritual food is, and you know what is not spiritual food that assumes to be spiritual food. You are discovering by a new spiritual—shall I say?—instinct, understanding, discernment, perception what is food and what is not food, spiritually.

What does all this amount to? The food, and the knowledge, the understanding, the strength, the walk, are not abstractions, and they are not things in themselves. **THEY ARE CHRIST!** He is the food; He is made unto us wisdom. The whole business of the life of the child of God is to learn how to live on Christ, how to make Christ their life at every point, for God has made Him to be all, and summed up everything in Him.

Let us focus on one thing: as to where Adam failed and where Christ triumphed. It was on the question of obedience. Adam did not reach God's appointed end because he failed in obedience. Christ did reach God's appointed end representatively, because of obedience. Now what is righteousness? Righteousness is the all-inclusive virtue. If you go through the Word of God you will find that everything is gathered up into that word “righteousness”. Whatever may be the forms of sin, all of them are gathered into that—righteousness or unrighteousness. Is it theft? It is unrighteousness! Is it idolatry? It is unrighteousness! Whatever it is, that is the word which expresses it. It is not so much the thing in itself, it is what it means of unrighteousness before God. Righteousness is “the foundation of his throne” (Psalm xcvi. 2), which means that all His government is upon a basis of righteousness. All God's governmental

activities are upon a basis of righteousness. All is summed up into one question of righteousness and unrighteousness. The ultimate issue for man's judgment or man's salvation is the issue of righteousness.

Come to the Roman letter, and you see quite well that “justification” is only another word for righteousness—being made righteous before God. The whole argument there is: “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans iii. 10), and then, out of that, comes all that is said about justification. Justification is simply to find that righteousness, to produce that righteousness, to bring to a position of righteousness.

What is unrighteousness? Disobedience! What is righteousness? Obedience! How did Christ provide God with the righteousness that He demanded? By His obedience, His utter obedience. How did Adam bring this race under condemnation, that is, take it off the basis of righteousness, and, therefore, of acceptance with God? By disobedience! So that the obedience of Christ provides righteousness. “Christ Jesus, who was made unto us . . . righteousness” (I Corinthians i. 30). How? Because of His perfect obedience.

That obedience of the Lord Jesus was as Man for man. It was representative obedience. His being in heaven means that there is the virtue of a perfected obedience in Him, satisfying God for you and for me, and we stand upon a basis of righteousness because of the perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus. Then we are brought by the obedience of one Man (that is Romans v) into the presence of God in the Person of the Lord Jesus, to stand without judgment and without any fear of judgment. No condemnation in Him, the inclusive, representative, racial Man. We come into acceptance with God because of His obedience, but, having been put in acceptance with God, our business is to walk in the obedience into which we have been planted. How can we walk in obedience? How are you and I going to keep on in obedience? The natural man cannot do it! The Adam man has proved helpless in this. How are we going to do it? The Spirit of the obedient One is in us, to be the strength of His obedience to us. ‘Lord, I cannot of myself be obedient, *but* You, as having already triumphed in this matter of obedience, are in me; I live on Your strength in this matter.’ That is living by Christ, and that is walking in obedience by reason of the Holy Spirit energizing. “It is God which worketh”—energizeth is the word—“in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure” (Philippians ii. 13).

(To be continued)

AT EASE OR AT REST?

The second message by Mr. DeVern Fromke at the conference in Switzerland.

"Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed" (Jeremiah xlviii. 11).

I WANT this morning that we should see the wrong tendency to be at ease, but the right way to be at rest. We will, from a bird's-eye view of the history of Israel, and continuing from what we were saying yesterday, see how she was always wanting to be delivered *from*, but was hardly ready to be moved *unto* the purpose of God.

We will begin by seeing Israel after her four hundred years of captivity in Egypt. God heard her cry when she began to be tired of the taskmasters of Egypt, and He delivered her out of Egypt and across the Red Sea. He brought her out from her bondage, or captivity, but, having been brought out, she then had the privilege of choosing: Would she give herself unto the purpose of God?

I think we shall see how even today there are so many who in their bondage cry out to the Lord for deliverance, but are unwilling to go on unto the full purpose that He has for them.

Israel was content to stop half-way instead of moving on unto the full purpose of God, but God seems to say: 'If ye will not go on *unto*, I have another captivity for you.' And so they wandered forty years round and round the wilderness instead of moving into the land of Canaan. They did not want the glorious captivity in the Lord, so there was imposed upon them a schoolroom captivity. Thus this whole generation died in the wilderness, except for two men, Joshua and Caleb, but God, in His mercy, heard the new generation and delivered them out of the wilderness-wandering into the land of Canaan. He delivers them out *from* the captivity of the wilderness, and now He waits for them to move *unto* a full possessing of the land of Canaan—but you know the story so well. While they possessed and conquered some of Canaan, pretty soon they settled down just to enjoy it for themselves. They were not primarily God-conscious, purpose-conscious, or fulfilment-conscious, but only deliverance-conscious.

So once again there is a captivity imposed upon them: the captivity of the nations of Canaan. God had said to them: "Make no league with the inhabitants of this land" (Judges ii. 2), but they did

not obey Him. They were fearful of the people of Canaan, and so became captive to them.

What does all this teach us? When we are first saved we are delivered out of the world. It is so wonderful to have a release from our old habits and our old way of life, but there are so many young believers who do not realize that God wants to teach them how to live by His life. They must learn how to live by the bread from heaven and the water that He supplies, but they still have an appetite for the things of Egypt, and there are those who murmur and complain for the onions, the leeks, the garlic! You would think that they would enjoy the manna from heaven, but God has to apply the tree to change our appetites. He says: 'If you will not move unto and live by My life, you will know the captivity of the fleshly life.'

And then there are those who do move into Canaan, as it were, but somehow they make entanglements with the men around them; and we read of the darkest hour in Israel's history during the period of the Judges. They cried out to the Lord, and with each new judge that He raised up there was a bit of revival, but I believe that this would teach us that mere reviving is not the real answer. God must awaken His people to be alive to His larger purpose, not merely awakenings and revivings for themselves.

In due time the people of Israel cry out, and God gives them the prophet Samuel. Then, after a short period of King Saul, King David unifies the people into a nation. Finally King Solomon builds the House of Prayer for all nations, and it seems that for the first time God is maybe getting something out of His people Israel. And yet, once again, they begin to settle down merely to using all the good things for themselves. They had been in the land four hundred and ninety years, and this represents seventy sabbaths, when the land was to rest, and so the Lord tells them that they will be carried into Babylonian captivity for seventy years. He would take them away and enforce a sabbath rest for every sabbath year that they had failed to let the land be idle. Let us go back and see once again what this means.

Taken first out of the world, then delivered from the fleshly life of wrong appetites, then set free from the entanglements and the fears of men, this is the people that should have a ministry unto God and unto the world around, but they began to enjoy

God's blessing and the temple just for themselves instead of letting them be a means for the blessing of the world. *My gift, in my ministry, must never be merely for my blessing, but for the blessing of others.*

And so we see the northern armies of Syria coming in and taking Israel into the Babylonian captivity. I wonder if now we have a fuller appreciation of Psalm cxxxvii? I see so many of the Lord's people in this kind of captivity. Instead of joy there is defeat, and the only testimony they have is: 'We remember a better day!' But hear me! We today should know the joy and the overflow of the life from within. Let us read about these people in Psalm cxxxvii:

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion: We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof."

Now notice how the people round about are turning to them and saying: 'Why do you not sing us one of your blessed songs of Zion? We remember that you are the songbirds.' I notice in my country how many people of the world like to slip in and hear the Christians sing!

"For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion."

All the people around us are looking for something of reality in us. If not in words, at least in some way they are saying: 'Lift us with one of your songs of Zion', but all these people can say is:

"How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

I know I am in a strange land here, but I have a song, for this is a different kind of strange land—I am here with my brothers and sisters! But I wonder if we catch the real significance here: these are the people who had a ministry, but they lost the ministry they had. You see, the very issue is this: We are called all along the way to give, to be poured out. 'Death worketh in us', and this brings life unto others.

And so we see that there are three different planes. Up above there is a glorious captivity in the Lord. If we do not want that, then the Lord says: 'Well, I have another one for you', but there are so many of the Lord's people who want to stop half-way. They do not want to be a love-captive, nor to be a bondage-captive, but they just want to be free. But I must remind you that this half-way plane is only a passing-zone; it is *not* a stopping-place. You think you can stop here, but God says: 'I enrol you in My school-room'. Israel turned the wilderness

into a schoolroom, and the captivity of the nations into another schoolroom. Even the Babylonian captivity was turned into a schoolroom.

So we read that in due time, after seventy years of captivity in Babylon, the Lord stirred the spirit of Cyrus, King of Persia, and the people go back to their land. They rebuild the temple, restore the wall—and settle down to enjoy it all for themselves again! Well, we have another Psalm—cxxxvi—which tells us about the turning of their captivity:

"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them."

Do you know who it is that knows when you are set free? The neighbours begin to say: 'Something has happened to brother . . .!' Even your wife says: 'He has a song again!' You see, the heathen had a sense of what Israel ought to be. They may be glad that you are in captivity, but they know inwardly what is right, and so they say: "The Lord hath done great things for them." And then the Israelites reply:

"Yes, the Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."

Now, God wants to turn one captivity to another, for we are not made to be free in ourselves. Many years ago Dr. Matheson wrote these words:

*"Make me a captive, Lord,
 And then I shall be free!"*

And so we read in the next verse:

"Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south."

He who expects to have a real, poured-out ministry must know the broken 'streams of the south'. In our country we say that the South is way down deep, and the North is up, so it is way down deep within that the 'streams of the south' must be broken up.

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

Let me illustrate that. Many years ago, when my grandfather came from Sweden to America, he homesteaded out in the bleak prairies of the Dakotas. One spring they had so little food for the family that when it came time to plant the potatoes in the ground, my grandfather said he felt that each potato he put in was being taken out of the mouths of the little children. It was almost like weeping and watering each one, but that was the only way to have a joyous harvest. Beloved, there is no easy way to bring life to others. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

That may perhaps be true of our ministry, but look at my lovely Lord who comes with all of His sheaves!

So it is hard to say how much Israel did move unto the full purpose of God. The temple was built, and the nations round about looked upon the glory of Israel. You remember that the Queen of Sheba had heard about the glory of a people who had sanctified the Lord God in their midst, and when she came and beheld it all she said: 'Oh! The half has not been told!' Israel had her wonderful ministry of representing, of being a testimony to what a people could be who are living unto God, and I have often wondered what she could have moved unto if the kings who followed had continued wholly in the way of the Lord. But we remember how, after Solomon, the kingdom was divided under Jeroboam and Rehoboam, and, weakened from within, Israel was overcome by the Babylonians. The enemy's way is always to weaken us first from within, and where there is no real life within we are subject to all the diseases from outside.

Israel comes back from the Babylonian captivity, rebuilds and restores, and in due time the Lord Jesus comes to offer Himself to them as their King; but they could not recognize the One they had cried for for so long. However orthodox they were in their interpretations, they did not have the spiritual eye to see, and so we find them today dispersed throughout the world. But we have a promise in Deuteronomy xxx. 3: *"Then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee."* This does not mean that they will merely be brought back from captivity, but they will be turned again to another captivity—the one up above.

There is the background. Do you not see that the tendency of man is to get delivered from, and then to settle down at ease? People who move from one experience to another experience, or from one lovely doctrine to another doctrine, are so prone to settle down at ease. Do you not see that if Israel had moved up to the upper plane God could have

taken them on into all that they needed to see? Jesus had said: *"I am the Life; I am the Way; and I am the Truth."* I do not know how to explain what I see of entering into this captivity by which He becomes my life, my *whole* way and the very reality of everything, but are you not glad that God is very sovereign? He gets His way in spite of us.

Is there someone here who wonders why their spiritual life has come to a stalemate? Even when you read God's Word it does not seem to speak to you as it once did, and in praying God seems so very far away. If God would bring you out from some captivity, would you say with your whole heart: 'Lord, I choose to see and move unto your fullest purpose?' I believe I have learned by sad experience that, while the lower plane seems to be the easier way, the upper plane is *the* way. I believe I can see that in my earlier life there was such a period of wilderness-wandering when God was changing the appetites, and then a period when I was so prone to be yoked with men for rest and security, and I got all mixed up in the denominations. You forgive me—but there are many kinds of nations with which we become entangled! But God's highway is the way of identification with Him.

In closing, listen again to what God says in Jeremiah xlviii. 11: *"Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees."* So many of God's children wonder why God takes them through the crucibles of life, but with all the Moabites they live on at ease. If you are a Moabite, all right, but if you are one of God's own, He stirs you up to keep you from settling down at ease. Oh, how many times I have groaned in being poured from vessel to vessel! It seems that God says to Moab that he has not gone into captivity, but he is not really free. There is a much worse captivity! There are people who say they are captives of the Lord, but when I live close to them, I see that their tastes have not been changed. You see, if we are captive to the Lord we smell of His fragrance, but if we are in this imposed captivity, we smell of the flesh, we have the odour of entanglements, and we are those who are defeated, without a real ministry unto the Lord.

Finally, we are either deliverance-centred (or salvation-centred), or we become purpose-conscious.

DEV. F.

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"THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER"

1. WHAT IS THE KINGDOM?

"Verily I say unto you, There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matthew xvi. 28).

"To whom he also shewed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts i. 3).

"But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts viii. 12).

"And he entered into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts xix. 8).

"And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, shall see my face no more" (Acts xx. 25).

"And when they had appointed him a day, they came to him into his lodging in great number; to whom he expounded the matter, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved" (Acts xxviii. 23-24).

"Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet" (I Corinthians xv. 23-24).

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come . . . And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen" (Matthew vi. 9, 10, 13).

I DO not know what version of the Bible you have in your hand, but if you have a modern translation you will find that the second half of Matthew vi. 13 is not there. However, the people who made this version from which I am reading put a footnote, which says: "Many authorities, some ancient, add *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*" Now, I am not going to have any argument with the authorities, but I believe we have very good reason for retaining the

second half of that verse, and I think that the ministry that the Lord has given me for this week is based upon that questioned half-verse. I am going to speak about something in the Bible that some men say is not in the Bible: "Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever."

WHY SHOULD THOSE WORDS BE RETAINED?

Before we can go on any further we must state why we believe that that half-verse ought to be there. The whole Bible, especially the New Testament, is built upon those three words: "Thine is the Kingdom" stands over the whole Bible; "and the power" stands over the whole Bible; "and the glory"—all the Bible is gathered into that. The New Testament is especially true to those three words, so that half-verse which is questioned is justified by the whole Bible.

We read that wonderful word in I Corinthians xv. 23, which looks right on to the end of the Bible. It says: "Then cometh the end, when he (the Son) shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father." The Kingdom belongs to the Father, and Jesus included Himself in that prayer: "Our Father, which art in heaven . . . Thy Kingdom come." In the end the Son will deliver up the Kingdom to the Father: when He has done the work of the Kingdom He will hand it to its right owner. You will notice that this is very comprehensive: "Then cometh the end . . . when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power." Those are three very rich words: all rule, all authority, and all power. You cannot get outside of that! That comprehends every form of opposition to the will of God, and it says that all that opposition will at last be subjected and subdued. In a minute we are going to ask the question: "What is the Kingdom?", but here we begin with this very comprehensive thing: "Our Father, which art in heaven . . . Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth . . . For thine is the kingdom." The Kingdom is that which is above all other rule and authority and power that is against the will of God. I Corinthians xv. 23 says: "Then cometh the end." The end of what? *Everything* that is opposed to the will of God. That little word: "Thy will" is a tremendous word! It reaches out to the uttermost bounds of everything opposed to the will of God.

Now the Lord Jesus knew what He was talking about. I expect you have used those words many, many times, for they are called 'The Lord's Prayer'. Whether that is the right title or not we will not discuss, but it came out of a vast spiritual knowledge; and this is one of the things, dear friends, that we must recognize in order to get an enlarged spiritual understanding: that in every small fragment that came through the lips of the Lord Jesus there was a whole universe of meaning. When we use these words: "Thy will be done", how little we understand of what we are saying!

THE BATTLE FOR THE KINGDOM OF THIS

UNIVERSE

Let us see something of the range of that one fragment—"Thy will be done".

From before the foundation of this world, and all through the ages, there has been an immense cosmic conflict, and that conflict always had one issue: 'Who shall have the kingdom of this universe?' There was the One to whom the kingdom belonged, and it belonged to Him for ever and ever; and then there was the other one who aspired to have possession of that kingdom, and whose ambition was to be the "god", the "prince" of this world. And so, at some point, this great conflict commenced, this great cosmic conflict for the control of this universe. Once again we go back to I Corinthians xv: 'He must reign till He has *put down* all rule, and authority, and power'—and that is what is going on now, and we are involved in that conflict. That will explain a very great deal!

We have a kind of microcosm of this whole conflict. In our arrangement of the Bible it is contained in twenty-eight chapters. It is only a little pamphlet, called "The Book of the Acts of the Apostles", but the Apostles never gave it that name! I would like to know what they would have called it. I know what I would call it, but that title is far too big and far too difficult: "A Microcosm of the Conflict of all the Ages." We think that the Book of the Acts is just a history of apostolic times. Well, it is that, but oh! it is the story of the conflict of the ages. In this little book heaven and hell are in deadly conflict, and the conflict concerns the kingdom. It is very impressive that this book *begins* with the kingdom and *ends* with the kingdom. It begins by saying that Jesus, after He was risen, appeared unto His disciples "by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God" (i. 3), and in chapter xxviii. 31, the end of the book, the Jews were crowding into the little apartment of the Apostle Paul and he was "preaching the kingdom

of God". These three words stand wonderfully over this little book! The Apostles and all the workers in that book were fighting the battle of the kingdom. They never arrived at any place in the world that then was but that this battle commenced. They went everywhere 'preaching the kingdom of God', and their arrival in every place was always anticipated by the rival to the kingdom of God. They were working out this little fragment: "Thine is the kingdom." It was not just a little bit of ritual, or a formal prayer: it was the battleground of the universe.

Now where in the New Testament did this real battle begin? It really began almost immediately after the Lord Jesus had said to His disciples: "There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom," though perhaps I ought to say that it entered upon a more intensive phase from that time. There ought to be no chapter division between Matthew xvi and xvii, for after that verse it goes immediately on to say: "And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: and he was transfigured before them." Now there are those people and teachers who think that the Transfiguration was the fulfilment of those words: "the Son of man coming in his kingdom", but that is only half the truth. What was the meaning of the Transfiguration? The Gospel by Matthew, as you know, is the Gospel of the Kingdom, and the Transfiguration was the manifestation of the King in His glory. You must have a king before you have a kingdom, so in the Transfiguration you have a foreshadowing of the King in glory. The Kingdom is vested in the King. They came down from the mountain—and what would you expect to happen? Well, you would expect that those men would go out into the world and say: 'We have seen the King in His glory', but Jesus said emphatically: "Tell the vision to no man until . . ." Until when? "Until the Son of man be risen from the dead."

Now link together two little words. "Tell the vision to no man *until* . . ." Then He said: "Tarry ye in the city (Jerusalem) *until* ye be clothed with power from on high" (Luke xxiv. 49), and *until* 'ye receive the promise of the Father' (Acts i. 4). That little word 'until' links two things together. "Until the Son of man be risen"—that involves the Cross. 'Until ye receive the promise of the Father'—that involves Pentecost. The Cross and Pentecost introduce the Kingdom. Before the Cross it was: 'Tell no man!' After the Cross and Pentecost they went everywhere preaching the kingdom.

We are answering the question: 'What is the Kingdom?' I hope I am not tiring you. I am only laying a foundation, and in a few minutes I will be saying something which I think will be helpful, but we must be clear as to what the Kingdom is.

First of all, the Kingdom is not a realm, but the personal rule of a Person. It is the dominion of a Person, that which belongs to that Person. You see, you must be very clear about that, because the whole conflict centres in the question of to whom the Kingdom belongs. The Kingdom is the sovereign government of God over all. It is the will of God deciding everything eventually. Only in a secondary way is the Kingdom a sphere, or a realm, and it is the realm in which God's will is absolutely sovereign: "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." God is absolutely sovereign in heaven, and there no one ever challenges His will. Angels and archangels bow in adoration and submission to the will of God in heaven, and if the Kingdom becomes a realm, it is only the realm in which it is like that.

You will be able to tell from that whether you are in the Kingdom. It is so easy to talk about the Kingdom, and to say "Thy kingdom come", and "Thine is the kingdom", but the fiercest battle that ever raged in the history of this world rages over that Kingdom.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Perhaps some of you are not quite sure of the difference between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of heaven. I have often been asked that question. Well, I think the answer is quite simple. If you look in the Gospel by Matthew, and remember that that Gospel was written for Hebrews, the phrase is usually "The kingdom of heaven", but if you look where it was written in Greek you will find that it is "The kingdom of God". This is not always so, because there were always some Hebrews even amongst the Greeks, but it is a general distinction. To the Jews it was the Kingdom of heaven. Well, the Jews understood heaven, and the Greeks did not, but they quite understood deities. They had 'gods many', and 'god' was a kind of comprehensive term for them. So "The Kingdom of heaven" was all right for Jews, for they understood, and the Greeks understood "The Kingdom of God".

Well, that is only a technicality, and it has not helped you very much, but it is part of the answer, at least, to what is the difference between the Kingdom of heaven and the Kingdom of God.

THE KINGDOM IN THE HANDS OF THE ENTHRONED KING

Let us try to come to a close with something quite helpful. What have we been saying? The dominion belongs to God: "Thine is the kingdom." The securing of that Kingdom for the Father was committed to the Son, so that the Lord Jesus has the Kingdom of God vested in Himself, and as He moved from His Cross He said: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew xxviii. 18). So after the Cross, in the Book of the Acts, the Kingdom is in the hands of the enthroned King, Jesus Christ.

Now your problem arises, and here is something that is going to test every one of you. It has been my problem many times. If Jesus is on the throne of the Kingdom, and all authority is committed unto Him, what about things like this?

"Are they ministers of Christ? . . . I more; in labours more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labour and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches" (II Corinthians xi. 23-28).

And Jesus is on the throne! I venture to say that if you were in any one of those things you would ask the question: Is Jesus really on the throne? If all authority is in the hands of Jesus, why all this? And this is not the only list of Paul's troubles! Now, Paul, are you quite sure that the Kingdom belongs to Jesus? When something goes wrong, some tragedy enters into our life, when some great sorrow overtakes us, is not our first temptation to ask the question: Is the Lord really Lord? Please, Paul, answer my question! And Paul will answer by saying: "This is all the battle of the Kingdom. Oh, no, things have not gone wrong. They are all going right, for this all says that the devil does not like what we are doing. If you will only wait until the end, you will see." And it was this Paul who wrote: "Then cometh the end . . . when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power." You see, we just look at the things of the present, but Paul looked through the present to the end.

Well, were all these sufferings for nothing? Was

Satan lord after all? What are we doing here tonight? Millions and millions have come this way and owe their debt to the Lord through this Apostle Paul. I can see a picture: a great multitude which no man can number, out of every nation and tribe and tongue, and the Lord Jesus standing with His arm around His Apostle Paul and saying: 'Look, Paul, do you see this great multitude? Do you remember that night when you were shipwrecked, and that day when they beat you with rods? Paul, this is all the fruit of that. The Kingdom has come and

your sufferings have brought the Kingdom in.' That may be a bit of imagination, but I believe there is a lot of truth in it.

It depends on how we look at things. Do we interpret these adversities as the victory of Satan, or do we interpret them as the way of the Kingdom and look through to that day when He shall have subdued all rule and authority?

Well, we have got out into a big realm! How much more there is in "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done"!

(To be continued)

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

THE WILL AND THE DEED

THE oboe is a rather unusual reed instrument and is difficult to play, but little Leon's father and mother had very special reasons for wanting him to learn to play it. Their reason had started because of the grandfather's wish, but they had taken up the idea wholeheartedly and made it their own.

Leon was still very young, but already he had shown signs of musical instincts. The problem was how to get him interested enough to go through with all the discipline and effort which would be needed if he were to make the grade as a good oboe player. They felt that he needed the will first if it were to be followed by the deed.

Leon's father was himself a gifted musician, in fact, he conducted the orchestra at the Opera House. It so happened that many of the operas had oboe solo parts in them, and it was this that gave the father his idea. As he thought the matter over, he decided on a plan which would need his own orchestra and Leon's mother to work out. And this is what it was.

Whenever there was a solo oboe part in the score, little Leon was taken to hear the opera. His mother would tell him when the oboe part was about to be played and get him specially interested in listening for it. At first he could not follow it well, but little by little he came to recognize the clear reed instrument, so that when he was warned to watch for it he got very excited and was very pleased with himself for being able to distinguish it.

As time went on he got better and better, so that in the end he did not need his mother to tell him to listen for the oboe but proudly told her as soon as he heard it. So it was that the months went by with

the constant visits to the opera, not so much to hear the rest of the music as to listen for the oboe, which the boy Leon was learning to appreciate and enjoy. In fact, the instrument was becoming one of the main interests in his life.

Now, thought his father, the time has come for the next step. So on a suitable occasion, when oboes were being mentioned, he asked Leon: "How would you like to learn to play the oboe?" Like it! Leon could hardly answer for excitement. There was nothing he would like more! It had been such a joy to hear it, so much so that he could not think of a greater unless it was to play it for himself.

So the lessons began. It was not easy. His longing to play did not take the place of much hard work and constant exercise. But somehow work seems easier when you want to do it. So it was that in due course Leon not only learned to play the instrument but became a very great oboeist indeed.

Everything became possible once he wanted to do it, and his father had very wisely worked to get him to want it before he worked to get him to do it. So the family plan and pleasure became a fact.

This is a true story, and it is a good one for explaining the text which says: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians ii. 13). Our heavenly Father has a plan for our lives, just as Leon's father had for Leon. And He also begins by arousing in us a desire to do His pleasure. He works in us "to will . . .".

That is why we read the Bible if we are Christians. There we find how the Lord Jesus lived, and the more we read it the more we shall find ourselves

identifying Him, appreciating Him, and in the end longing to be like Him. When God has aroused in us the will to be like Christ then He is able to work in us to bring it to pass. When Leon wanted to play the oboe he had taken the first step towards playing it. This first step had to be followed by many others, for it was not enough to "will" it; he had to

"do" it. Too many Christians wish to be like Christ but do not press on with the lessons in daily life which will work the likeness into them. Our heavenly Father is willing to teach us these lessons and to work out His will in us if we really want Him to do so.

H. F.

THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

14. A TRAGIC AND INSTRUCTIVE EPISODE

Reading: II Samuel vi. 1-5; I Chronicles xiii, xvi.

IN tracing the history of the Ark of the Testimony we have been deeply impressed with its foreshadowing of the Testimony of Jesus in the New Testament. What a varied and instructive history that has been! In its journey from its formation to its ultimate and final rest in the House of God and glory, what deep and important lessons it has taught! As it sets forth the greatness and glory of the Lord Jesus the way of that Testimony has been seen to touch the life and history of God's people at every point in their pilgrimage. Both as positively *for* them when their life was in keeping with it, and as *against* them when it was otherwise. That is a first lesson of which we must take notice in our relationship with the "Lord of Glory". The Testimony of God in Jesus Christ is not just a doctrine, a system of truth, the fundamentals of the Christian faith; but a vital relationship with a living Person; a relationship jealously watched and checked by God the Holy Spirit Himself. The greatness and glory of Jesus Christ is something given to the custodianship of the Spirit of God, who has "the seven eyes" of perfect spiritual intelligence and discernment, and who never eventually overlooks any details which affect that Testimony, for good or evil. This is what we have been seeing in these messages thus far.

In this present message we come to an episode which contains some of the most vital, solemn, and instructive lessons for God's people personally, and His Church universally and locally. Upon the lessons of this incident hang—for our own time—issues as serious as was the case when it actually happened. This is indeed a very real example of the words: "The things which were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Romans xv. 4).

Let us, then, come to the elements of this episode.

David, after his chequered history, discipline, troubles, in preparation for his anointed kingship, has at length been made king after the tragic death of Saul—man's choice (note)—and Saul's sons, including that fine man, Jonathan, who was caught between the two régimes, a victim of divided loyalties. Upon this confirmed anointing of David it is not long before his thoughts turn to the ark of God, which still lingered on its way to fulness and finality. He had the right idea as to what was due to that sacred figure. His motive was sincere and true. The question was how to realize the Divine intention: Let us pause there and look forward to what eventuated from the point of that question. We will return there presently.

There has been a tragedy. Disaster has overtaken the enterprise and venture. The ark is turned aside. One man closely associated with the proceedings is dead, smitten by the hand of God. The people are in consternation and confusion. David is dismayed and "angry". The whole process has been cut short, and for a long time the atmosphere of frustration hangs over everything. Arrest, death, abortion, frustration, suspense, disappointment, confusion—these are the features which hang over the life of the people of God. They had, with one accord, "made David king", first in Hebron, and then in Jerusalem. That was a right and excellent thing, and the portents and potentialities of that were very great. It was as God meant it, and that was accompanied by much Divine favour. Hebron was "Fellowship". Jerusalem was "His Foundation of Peace". But now "the radiant morn has passed away, and spent too soon her golden store". Shadows have descended. Disintegration of hearts, and bewilderment of purpose have overtaken.

David is somewhere, first nursing his grievance and fretting his spirit; murmuring against the

Lord's non-co-operation with his good-intentioned purpose. The spirit of unity and responsibility, as symbolized by David, is disconcerted and paralysed. "And the time was long."

I wonder whether, thus far, we are able to discern corresponding features in the Church and the Testimony in our own times. Let us pause, think, and ask the question!

Now we return to David where we left him before the tragedy. He is thinking out a *scheme, a plan, a programme, a method, a means*, for advancing the Testimony. It ought to "get a move on". Something must be done to remove "stalemate". 'It has been in the house of that man Abinadab too long.' So, to action to release the Testimony! 'Let's have a committee. Let's confer with some men of substance.' 'I have an idea,' said David. 'Do you remember how the Philistines returned the ark after they had captured it, and God had so honoured it with judgments? Why, God was in *that*. They were quite respectful and made a perfectly new cart for the ark. They had common sense and used their own good judgment. That's an idea for *our work for God!*' So David instructed the carpenters and wheelwrights to make a new cart such as the Philistines made. Best wood, well put together, wheels well oiled, ornate coverings; some well-chosen beasts to be the power and volition; and when we get going, let Ahio go in front, and—in case of difficulty—let Uzza be nearby to steady things. Yes, man's idea, man's creation, organization, technique; man's leadership, man's custodianship, man's enthusiasm! Very well. Off we go! The shouting and the singing and the dancing begin. The *makebelieve* and artificiality. There is something hollow in it all. But, isn't it all for God? Isn't the object and the end that we have what God wants? Surely that is the guarantee of prosperity and success! Well, was it? And is it?

All seems to go well for a time and everyone is enjoying the "New thing".

But, oh, why are there such things as "threshing floors" in the Bible? They have always been such *testing* places. They search for reality as against *makebelieve*, grain and chaff. They stand for the ultimate issue, what is of God and what is of man. At such a place David's oxen stumbled, the new cart rocked, the ark was imperilled, and—you know the rest, for we have told it.

Here we return to David—the spirit of responsibility.

Such a man as David could not remain indefinitely with a controversy with God. God is waiting for him to come out of his cul-de-sac. So David begins to run through the Bible which he had

(*which had been there all the time*) and his eye is directed to:

"And thou shalt put the staves into the rings on the sides of the ark, to bear the ark withal" (Exodus xxv. 14).

"And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the furniture of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch the sanctuary, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tent of meeting" (Numbers iv. 5).

"But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none: because the service of the sanctuary belonged unto them; they bare it upon their shoulders" (Numbers vii. 9).

As he looked he was startled, shocked, amazed, ashamed. Here was God's own prescription and ordination for the transit of the Ark of Testimony! As David read these Scriptures he must have called up his knowledge of the history lying behind God's unchanging order. The new cart faded from view, and in its place were some men who, through a most testing and searching history with God, had qualified for this so sacred ministry.

Although David did not have the prophecies of Malachi, God's speaking there (Malachi ii. 4 . . .) was retrospective to Exodus xxxii. 26-29, and Numbers xxv. 12, 13. God's covenant with Levi and his sons, which governed their service, and gave them responsibility in relation to His Testimony, was because they were proved and approved *men*. In New Testament terms they were 'spiritual' men, "approved of God, workmen needing not to be ashamed". Yes, approved of God, and of His people. Not chosen, voted for, appointed and given office by men! Men of spiritual measure, "pillars of the church". In Christianity one of the most sacred expressions of the Lord's Testimony is His Table. "The Table of the Lord" is characterized as most holy; dangerous—like the ark—to what is not wholly suitable to it, and most blessed to those rightly related. Surely it is here that Levitical service is to find its true expression. Those who serve at the Lord's Table ought to be true "Levites" in the sense that they have—under extended or intensive trial and proving—shown to the Lord and His people that they are men of spiritual measure and quality! With reference to "overseers" Paul said: "Not a novice." "Novice" means "one newly planted". Surely this ought to apply to so sacred a function as serving at the Lord's Table! To put an untried and unproved 'novice' into such ministry is to put him into a false position, and even a dangerous one, and also making the church and its elders

very responsible. Levites may not *now* be an ecclesiastical class or a ritualistic "Order", but the law of spiritual approvedness and quality born of experience surely holds good for every ministry in the Church!

No, not a "new cart"! Not a man-conceived technique! Not—with the best of intentions and motives—man's arrangement! It is possible for man to get *too* close to the Lord's Testimony with *his own hand*, like Uzza, and consequently find himself out of the *living* fulness of the Divine goings and purpose. He may even be responsible for arrested, retarded, and confused conditions in the work of God. To put a hand on something that is of God as to purpose is surely—sooner or later—to meet God in stern disapproval, and to forfeit His "Well done". Of the various instructive things which arise so evidently from this episode, not by any means the

least is the solemn government of the Word of God. David's disastrous course was due to his overlooking, ignoring, and consequently violating the clear Word of the Lord. His act—if unintentionally—implied superiority to the Scriptures. This is always dangerous! It is particularly incumbent upon any who are in a position of responsibility to familiarize themselves with God's Word in relation to any course of action in which they may be involved.

We have written the above out of very long and wide experience in the Lord's work, and we are sure that to give serious consideration to the Bible's teaching in this episode would be to have the explanation of much tragedy, would be a strong warning and corrective, and see the Lord's Testimony freed to proceed. Thank God, David recovered himself and had a happy end. This we shall see in our next message.

(To be continued)

"THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM"

8. THE MANY-SIDED RICHES OF GOD'S GRACE IN JESUS CHRIST

"The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones" (Revelation xxi. 19).

The following passages are a commentary on that verse:

"Putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation; if ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious: unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Because it is contained in scripture,

Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious:

And he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame.

For you therefore which believe is the preciousness" (I Peter ii. 1-7).

"In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians i. 7).

"That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians ii. 7).

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach . . . the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians iii. 8).

"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man" (Ephesians iii. 16).

"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans ii. 4).

"That he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory" (Romans ix. 23).

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past tracing out!" (Romans xi. 33).

Now we have to come back to the first passage, in Revelation xxi. 9: *"The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones."*

THAT TO WHICH GOD IS WORKING SET FORTH IN THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION

I think you know that the order in which we have the books of the New Testament is not the order in which they were written. The chronological order

would be quite different from the one which we have in our arrangement. The Book of the Revelation was not the last book of the Bible to be written, but there is a Divine order in the arrangement, and this is a very real mark of the government of the Holy Spirit. When the books were put together in the way in which we have them, perhaps the men did not know what they were doing, but the Spirit of God, who inspired the writing, also governed the arrangement, and everybody recognizes that this book of the Revelation is in the right place. It is the summary and consummation of all that is in the Bible, and its dominant note is the coming again of the Lord Jesus. These words stand over every section of this book: "Behold, I come quickly", and almost the last words are: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come!" (xxii:17). It is the Person of the Lord Jesus who stands supreme over this whole book, in all its sections. He is given various names: The Word of God, the Faithful and true Witness, King of kings and Lord of lords, and other names, all of which only occur once, but there is a name which is repeated again and again, and that name stands over every section of the book from the beginning to the end, and that name is "The Lamb". Jesus as the Lamb of God stands over this whole book, so that the book is a record of the power, the authority and the glory of Jesus Christ in His cross. It is His place of supremacy in the Church and in the nations by virtue of His sufferings.

This book is therefore a presentation of what Christ is through His Cross, that is, through His suffering and death, and all that He is through His suffering and death is here, in this book, reproduced in the Church. The Church here, as we have been seeing, is represented in the symbolism of the city, and that city is the Church embodying all the features of what Christ is by His suffering and death.

I only have to remind you of those words in the letter to the Hebrews, chapter xii. 22, 23:

"But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven."

You see, the city of the living God is the general assembly of the firstborn, the Church of the firstborn ones whose names are enrolled in heaven, in other words, whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life. The letter to the Hebrews corresponds to the book of the Revelation.

So this book of the Revelation, and especially these last chapters, sets forth that to which God is working in the Church now. It tells us what it is

that God is seeking to do in believers now, and the goal to which He is working, which is a full revelation of Christ in the Church at the end. That statement is a very important statement for us, for it means that if God has got hold of our lives, if we are truly under the government of the Holy Spirit, He is doing a work in us throughout our lives, and that work is that at the end all that is symbolically true of the New Jerusalem will be found true in us.

"ALL MANNER OF PRECIOUS STONES"

Having already considered many aspects of this city, we have at last come to the wall. We have read that "the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones", so that the wall represents the many-sided riches of God's grace in Jesus Christ. We did not read all these precious stones, but if you will just pass your eye over them you will see how precious they are, and what a variety of preciousness is represented here: the jasper, the sapphire, the chalcedony, and so on, and you will notice that they finish with the amethyst.

There was a little Methodist church in the country in England, and they were having a conference. For the lesson an old farmer read this twenty-first chapter of Revelation, and he came to the part about the precious stones. Everybody saw his face getting more and more excited. He started off: "The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony . . ." and he was getting more and more excited. ". . . the fourth, emerald; the fifth . . . and the sixth . . . and the seventh . . . and the eighth . . . and the ninth . . . and the tenth . . . and the eleventh . . . and the *twelfth* was a METHODIST!" Well, it is something to be excited about. If we could put ourselves into the description of an 'amethyst' it would indeed be something glorious!

We have said that all these stones set forth the many-sided riches of God's grace brought to us in Jesus Christ. It is quite impossible for us to comprehend the many aspects of God's grace, and that is why we read all those passages about the riches of His grace, the riches of His glory, the unsearchable riches of Christ, and also why we read Peter: "For you therefore which believe is the *preciousness*." But perhaps we can understand this a little better if we take note of two things.

THE GRACE OF GOD FOR JACOB

It says here that there were twelve gates to the city, "and names written thereon, which are the

names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel" (verse 12), and then it says: "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (verse 14). Now, you Bible students, don't expect me to exhaust all the meaning of that! But I want to suggest to you just one thing about those two verses.

On the gates were the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Paul tells us, about Israel, that "it is the remnant that shall be saved" (Romans ix. 27). While all Israel may now be cast away, a remnant shall be saved. Israel will be represented at the last, but why and how? This is what I suggest to you to be a meaning: The twelve tribes of Israel sprang from Jacob, and if ever there was a man who ought not to have had the position that Jacob had, it was Jacob. No man of character has any respect for Jacob. He was a deceiver, a man who was always seeking to get his own advantage at the expense of someone else. It did not matter how much others had to lose or suffer so long as Jacob got what he wanted. The earlier years of Jacob's life are a story that is not pleasant to read. You say: What a mean and despicable man was Jacob! And you agree with the prophet when he says: "Thou worm Jacob" (Isaiah xli. 14). Jacob had very little naturally to commend him. Why, then, should Jacob come to occupy the great place that he has in the Bible? Why should his name be changed from Jacob to Israel, 'a prince with God'? There is only one answer: Sovereign grace! God took hold of *that* man to make *him* a "vessel of mercy". We know the mercy and the grace of God when we see it taking hold of a character like that! "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past tracing out!"

THE GRACE OF GOD FOR THE TWELVE TRIBES

But not only the man, the twelve tribes. What a story of tragedy, failure and shame is the story of the old Israel! God's patience was tested to its utmost by that people. There was a time when He said to Moses: 'Stand aside! Let Me destroy them and I will make of thee another nation.' One day Moses himself cried: 'You rebels! Must we bring water out of this rock for you?' Yes, it is a long and a terrible story is the story of the twelve tribes of Israel, but their names are on the gates of the New Jerusalem. Whatever other things this may mean, I am quite sure that it means this: Here you have a wonderful, wonderful testimony to the unspeakable grace of God in Jesus Christ. "For you which be-

lieve is the preciousness." A remnant of Israel shall believe and be found in the holy city. So that, whether it be Jacob himself or his twelve sons and the tribes, here at the last is this testimony to the sovereign grace of God.

THE GRACE OF GOD FOR US

Why is this written at the end of the Bible? Just to say that there is hope for you, and there is hope for me. The grace of God for Jacob and the twelve tribes is big enough for us. This Church city is a great monument to the unsearchable riches of His grace.

There is always a note of warning in these things, and the Apostle Paul warned Christians to beware of failing of the grace of God. We read that verse in Romans ii. 4: "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering?" It must be a very terrible thing to fail of this grace if it is so great! But let us proceed.

THE GRACE OF GOD FOR THE DISCIPLES

On the foundations of the wall were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Now this means much more than I am going to say, but I am quite sure that it means this one thing.

I read the story of those twelve men before Pentecost, and it is not a very happy story. They were men who were constantly quarrelling with one another, and they all had something of Jacob in them—trying to get an advantage for themselves at the expense of the others. Two of them came round the back of the others with their mother. There has been a little family conspiracy, and this mother was very ambitious for her two sons, and the sons fell into her ambition, so that while the other disciples were not looking (you see, this is Jacob!) they came round to the Lord Jesus and the mother said: 'Master, I want to ask you for something. Will you promise me something?' But Jesus was always awake to anything like that—'You tell Me what you want and then I will tell you if I will give it to you.' And so the mother said: 'Master, when you come into your kingdom, will you let *this* boy be on your right hand, and *this* boy be on your left hand? Will you let my two sons have the first two places in the kingdom?' Well, Jesus just said: 'That is not Mine to give. That is for the Father.' But it was not all over then—the story does not end there. When the others knew it they were very angry: 'They tried to steal *our* place!'

Well, I could go on like that about these disciples

—and you know how that story ended! The chief one amongst them denied the Lord Jesus three times, most vehemently. When it was said to him: 'You are one of them!' he said: 'I don't know what you are talking about.' And then, when later on it was said to him: 'You *were* with Him,' he said: 'I tell you, I know not the man!' We can hardly believe that the leader of the Apostles should fall so low! Surely, we would say, there is no hope for a man like that, and the others are not much better, because it says that they all forsook Him and fled. All right—their names are on the foundation of the wall! The riches of His grace are at last manifested in them. Peter needs grace in one way—I don't

know whether he corresponds to the jasper—and John needs grace in another way—perhaps he corresponds to the sapphire. But they all needed some form of Divine grace in a special way.

And that is true of us all. My nature needs Divine grace in a special way, and everyone here needs the grace of God in some particular way. But the grace of God in Jesus Christ can meet every one of us in our particular way, and right at last, whether it be an amethyst or a 'Methodist', we will be in the city.

We have only just touched the very fringe of the unsearchable riches of grace, but may we from this time have a larger appreciation of this wonderful grace of God in Jesus Christ.

(To be continued)

THE UNVEILING OF JESUS CHRIST

3. THE CONSUMMATION OF THE AGES

WE concluded our last chapter with the words: "The last movement before 'I come quickly' *must* be a Christ-movement." If this book of "the Revelation" is finality, then it is—in that very connection—the book of the fulness and finality of Jesus Christ. Above we have used the word 'consummation', the etymology of which is: 'to bring into one sum, to perfect, to bring together'. This is exactly what this book does. It is the summation of the ages. It comprehends the whole Bible and bounds all history. It compasses creation, redemption, and perdition. It embraces heaven, earth, and hell. It connects with God, man, and Satan. In it there are no less than four hundred allusions to the Old Testament. When all is said, the one question that arises is: 'Is there one thing—one issue—that interprets and explains everything?' Yes, there is! The all-inclusive issue is

THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN THE ETERNAL GOVERNMENT OF THIS WORLD

In our other series of messages on the Holy City we are seeing that—not only at the end of this book but at the end of all time—universal government is represented by the City, both in fact and nature. It is the symbol of universal authority vested in, and mediated by Christ and His Church. It is the nature of the Son of God as Son of Man. That is why "judgment begins at the house of God" (I Peter iv. 17) as in the first chapters, representatively.

This inclusive issue is seen (in this book) to relate to the purpose of God

1. in creation;
2. in redemption;
3. in His Son;
4. in Israel;
5. in the Church;

and *that* is the way in which to read and study the book! The book is the revelation of final restoration and recovery in Christ Jesus.

A revelation has been given in

(a) the Old Testament;

(b) the New Testament. (Brought to its greatest fulness through the Apostles Paul and John.)

That revelation has been departed from, both by Israel and the Church. Its greatest fulness was given through Paul to the churches in Asia; hence it is there that the comprehensive message of judgment unto recovery is focused. But that was intended to reach through *all* time to the end, and that message shows that if recovery cannot—or will not—be in entirety, it *will* be—as always—in a Remnant. So, what we have seen in our first two chapters is a fundamental presentation of God's Pattern and God's way, i.e. His Son and the Cross.

The consummate issue, then, is brought into view in two ways:

1. A personal presentation of Christ; and
2. A comprehensive designation of Christ in His titles.

As to the latter we have:

1. "Jesus Christ, the faithful witness" (i. 5)

"Jesus"—the Man. The title of His humanity before His exaltation. When He is so called, almost invariably the connection is with His earthly life before 'being glorified'. After that, *as a rule*, there is added 'Lord'—'Lord Jesus', or 'Jesus, our Lord', etc. It is quite a mistake now, as with a whole body of people, to say just 'Jesus, Jesus'. That title, or name, is used only to identify Him with the designation that follows. This One who is majestically and gloriously unveiled, is none other than the One who came into this world at Bethlehem and lived a life as a man here.

"Christ"=Messiah, the Anointed. "This Jesus" was, by anointing, made Prophet, Priest, and King, for all men, in the midst of God's new Israel, the Church. 'Anointed' is His official title to carry out a Divine mandate. It is God committed to Him.

2. "Faithful and True Witness"

"Witness" is the same as "Martyr", "Faithful unto death". His testimony—"the testimony of Jesus"—is forever sealed with His own blood. A vast amount of the Bible is gathered into this.

3. "The Firstborn of the dead"

This is position and relationship. Priority to be followed by others in resurrection. There could be no resurrection for any until Jesus was raised, but then 'a new and living hope' sprang to birth for all born-again believers.

4. "The ruler of the kings of the earth"

By His resurrection He won universal lordship. What Satan offered Him on the ground of compromise, and He refused and declined, He has gained through no compromise, but obedience unto death.

This brings us to the all-inclusive issue—the issue which is greater than Caesar and Satan—His victory.

5. "The first and the last" (i. 17)

Note the particular use of this title in relation to this book. This is the end! The end is to see everything where, and as, God—at the beginning—intended it to be. 'All things summed up in Christ' (Colossians i. 16–20). Pause here with your New Testament open at 'Ephesians', 'Colossians', 'Hebrews'.

6. "The Living one" (i. 18)

"I became dead"—not 'I was killed'.

The Roman Empire, the Jewish nation, the kingdom of Satan, all conspired to kill Him, but "No one taketh it from me. I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down, and to take it again. This commandment received I from my Father" (John x. 18).

"I am alive unto the ages of the ages, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

Here we have two things:

(a) The purpose of His 'becoming dead', His voluntary death.

This is in verse 5, and it is summed up in a mighty "us"—"Loveth us"—"Loosed us"—"Made us".

"Christ loved the Church."

Christ loosed the Church from Satan's authority. Christ made the Church a "Kingdom and Priests".

"The keys of death and Hades." The right and authority to deliver from the sum of human sin and Satan's power thereby, which is death. Read in here I Corinthians xv.

Death, and subsequent captivity—imprisonment—cannot prevail against the Living Lord and His Church.

Death is the power, and Hades is the realm in which the system of death operates. Christ has plundered both, and taken their power into His own hands.

"He plunged in his imperial strength
To gulfs of darkness down;
He brought his trophy up at length;
The foiled usurper's crown."

Again, we have to place the Cross over the whole book!

The throne is the throne of *the Lamb!*

(b) The second thing intimated here is the one which relates to the final issue in a primary way. It is going to be *the* ground of the real controversy, connected with everything. Because it requires so much consideration, we shall do no more than mention it now, and reserve fuller attention till later. It is just what is *the* meaning of our risen Lord's exultant cry: "I am alive for evermore." Yes, that is it! The life of the ages. Life triumphant; life immortal!

You may be sorry that we break off there for the present; but this is enough to bring us face to face with the mighty issue of this book—even that of God's eternal counsels.

(To be continued)

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THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

15. THE ARK OF GLORY

Reading: I Samuel iv. 10–11, 17–22.

“And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the adversary’s hand” (Psalm lxxviii. 61).

WE have been occupied with the greatness and glory of Jesus Christ as represented in the ark of the testimony. Amongst the various titles of this ark we noted that one is ‘the ark of his glory’. We also noted that the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews speaks of Jesus Christ as the effulgence of God’s glory, and one of the names of the Lord Jesus is ‘the Lord of glory’. Here, in our last consideration of this matter, the ark is called ‘the ark of glory’, for, when the ark was captured by the Philistines, it is said: “The glory is departed from Israel.”

Although there is very much more to be said about the history of the ark than we have said, we are going to finish this consideration where we began—with the glory of Jesus Christ, and once again the ark will be our illustration.

We must notice that there is one word which covers the whole history of the ark: it is always the ark of life. Wherever you touch it in its right place, in one way or another you touch life.

Look at what was in it! There we have life revealed in three ways, or, I should say, there we have the testimony of life revealed in three ways. The first thing in the ark was the Word of God, and God said that His people should live entirely by His Word, and be governed by it: “Man doth not live by bread only, but by every thing that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live” (Deuteronomy viii. 3). The Word of God was intended to save people from death, and to be their life, so the testimony of Jesus is the testimony that He is the living Word of God, that is, that in Him all the mind of God has been revealed for His people. “The word of the Lord abideth for ever” (I Peter i. 25). It is the word of eternal life, and that is one aspect of the glory of Jesus Christ. He has

brought to us in His own Person the revelation of God's mind, and in that way we are to find our life. How often, in a time of trial and difficulty, we have gone to the Word of the Lord and in the Name of the Lord Jesus we have made that Word ours, and it has been our salvation and our life—"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him, Amen; unto the glory of God by us" (I Corinthians i. 20, A.V.).

Looking again into the ark—and, thank God, we may look into the ark now!—we see the testimony to the living provision of God for His people. There was a golden vessel with manna in it, testifying to how God met the needs of His people in the wilderness and thereby saved their life. God has made full provision, in our Lord Jesus, for all our need to be kept alive.

And the third thing in the ark was Aaron's rod which budded and brought forth fruit. Do you remember how it came about that that rod was put in the ark? There were certain men in Israel who said to Moses and Aaron: "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, everyone of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?" (Numbers xvi. 3). They were disputing the priesthood of Aaron, so God said: "We will answer this dispute. Let a man out of every tribe of Israel bring a rod, write his name on it, and then let them all be laid up in the house of the Lord overnight, together with Aaron's rod." You know, things don't usually bud, blossom and bear fruit in the dark. They really do need the sun! However, God made this test in the most difficult situation. He said: "The man whose rod is found in the morning to have budded and blossomed is the one whom I have chosen." When morning came Moses went in to look at all these rods. Eleven of them were dead, and only one was alive. The strange thing was that all the seasons were represented in that one rod! Not only was there blossom, but there were also buds and there were fruits. When God answers a question He answers it thoroughly! That rod was Aaron's. You notice what happened: the others died, under the judgment of God, but the house of Aaron lived, and in this way God signified who was the living high priest. The high priest is the one whom God raises from the dead and makes abundantly fruitful. The work of the priest is salvation, and he is the mediator between God and man.

We are here because Jesus "ever liveth to make intercession for us". And so, in the Lord Jesus, there is the testimony of life in relation to the revealed will of God, life in relation to God's full

provision for us here, and life as our High Priest Saviour.

We move from that to the Jordan again, and you will recall how the ark, moving into the bed of the Jordan, made the waters withdraw. The waters at that season were overflowing all the banks, and all that overflowing testimony of death was destroyed when the ark moved into the bed of the Jordan. We can say that in that ark death was swallowed up by life. The ark destroyed the power of death, and the people were saved from death in all its fullness. Here we have the glory of life overcoming death, and that is the testimony of Jesus. That is His glory.

Life comes because Jesus is glorified and the glory of the Lord Jesus destroys death. That is the great testimony of what our Lord has done in His Cross. He is risen from the dead and cries: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Revelation i. 18)—"The authority of death is in My hands." "Through death he might destroy him that had the power of death" (Hebrews ii. 14). He came to bring "life, and incorruption to light" (II Timothy i. 10). And that is the ark in the Jordan.

We move on with the ark to Jericho, where we have seen all the powers of evil represented. The seven times round the city represented the sevenfold victory of the Lord Jesus over the evil powers, the number seven being the number of spiritual perfection. In His resurrection Jesus has completely overthrown the authority of Satan. So at Jericho we see the glory of Christ's power over all the evil forces in this universe, and "this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith" (I John v. 4). "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down" (Hebrews xi. 30). The Lord teach us how to stand firm in faith when the enemy is trying to demonstrate his power, and to stand firm in faith believing that the enemy is going to have to give way because Jesus has fully conquered the powers of evil. This is the glory of the power of Jesus Christ over all the power of the enemy.

From Jericho we move to Ai, and this looks like a contradiction of all that we have just been saying. The ark is there at Ai, but instead of victory there is defeat. Is that a contradiction? Is it the defeat of the ark or of the Lord's people? Is this the defeat of the testimony of the ark itself? Does this really speak of the glory departed? No, this is only another aspect of the glory. It is the testimony to the glory of holiness. The story of Ai begins with a little word: 'But'. There is the great story of victory at Jericho on one side, on the other side is

the defeat at Ai, and in between is this little word 'but': "But the children of Israel committed a trespass" (Joshua vii. 1). The whole story of Ai centres in that little word 'but'. It is really a testimony to holiness, and how very holy is this ark! To violate that holiness is to bring defeat. When the sin was judged and put away, victory was restored. There is no glory where sin governs, but there is glory when sin is judged and put away. Holiness and life are inseparable.

It is a long time before the ark is mentioned again, perhaps three hundred years, and it is more than that when we come to this first Book of Samuel. Here we have this terrible story that we have read: the ark captured by the Philistines and taken into their country. You see, this is a long story of spiritual decline. I have often said that the most terrible book in the Bible is the Book of Judges, and as you go through all that long period you see how the spiritual life of the people of God was going lower and lower. That leads up to this story of the ark being captured by the Philistines; and the old man, Eli, dying after judging Israel for forty years. As representing the whole people, he is a pathetic picture of spiritual weakness and blindness. Eli was physically blind, and when Samuel was born it says that "there was no open vision" (I Samuel iii. 1). Eli was a type of the spiritual condition of the whole people, and because of the spiritual decline this terrible thing happened: "The glory is departed from Israel."

But we are not going to dwell on the negative side, though we could say a great deal about how glory goes out when the spiritual declines. It is always like that. If the spiritual level goes down, the glory goes out. We shall come back to that, but we will keep on the positive side.

Now note exactly what it says. It does not say that 'there is no more glory'. The glory may have departed from Israel, and it may have gone into the hands and the country of the Philistines. Be that as it may—but the Philistines are going to discover that this thing is not dead. They put the ark into the house of their god, Dagon, and had a great celebration, spending the evening and the night rejoicing. They had a night of feasting and singing, and said: 'Dagon is greater than the God of Israel.' They took the glory from Israel and gave it to Dagon. Well, so much the worse for Dagon! When they got up the next morning and went to the house of Dagon, they found that he had fallen on his face before the ark. If it were not so serious it would be humorous. Think of having to lift up your great god after he had fallen on his face and stand him up again! Jehovah has never needed that! However,

they got round poor Dagon, lifted him up and put him on his feet again. They were having to have some second thoughts about this matter! They went away, and when they came back the next day they found that Dagon had fallen down again. But this time he had not only fallen down—his head, his hands and his feet were off. Poor Dagon! But the glory has not been destroyed. The testimony of Jesus still holds good, and if the Lord's people are not living in the good of that testimony the enemy is being made to know all about it.

I believe that the Philistines are a type of rationalism. They were always trying to look into Divine things with their own minds. They took hold of the ark as uncrucified men, and are always called 'the uncircumcised Philistines'. If you look into the second chapter of the Letter to the Colossians you will see that Paul interprets circumcision as being the effect of the Cross. We will read verses 11 and 12:

"In whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God."

So circumcision is a type of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and this word says that baptism is the testimony to that.

Therefore the uncircumcised Philistines were men who knew nothing about the Cross, and yet they were always trying to get hold of the things of God and look into them as uncrucified men.

Now if, as I have said, the Philistines were a type of the rationalists of our time, it is interesting to see what is happening. I will give you an illustration.

I usually have a book beside my bed at night so that I can read before I go to sleep. One night I went to my bookshelves, looked along the books, and saw a book that I bought fifty years ago. It gave an appreciation of the lives of some of the great theologians. I opened the book at the chapter about a great modernist theologian of fifty years ago, a man who did not believe in the inspiration of the Bible, nor in the deity of the Lord Jesus, but believed in a lot of other things of the new theology, as it was called. That man got a great name in his time. The writer of this book said: "Now the teaching of this man is the teaching of the new age. It is going to change the entire belief of the Christians. It has come to stay, and everyone will have to accept it." 'Well,' I said, 'that is enough of that!' and I put the book back into the cupboard. A little while afterward I went to find another book. This book

was written by one of the great theologians of our own time, and he started by saying: "No reputable scholar of our time will believe the theology of fifty years ago. It has gone for ever."

You see the big change? The testimony stands. Let it go into the hands of the Philistines, and the Dagon of intellectualism will come down on his face sooner or later. The glory may go away from the Lord's people, but it does not lose its power. The glory of Jesus Christ still stands.

Now I must come to an end, and leave several other things.

We come right over to I Chronicles xvi. David is on the throne at last. After all the troubles of his past life, he is now enthroned as king, and his first thought is to bring the ark to Jerusalem.

What a chequered history this ark has had! How many enemies have been against it! What various conditions it has known in the Lord's people! What difficulties it has come through! But at last it is in the house of God, and the last thing about it in the Old Testament is this:

When the ark came to rest in the house of God the glory of God filled that house. That had been reached of which the Apostle Paul spoke, as he looked forward to the end of the testimony on this earth: "*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 the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus*

unto all generations for ever and ever" (Ephesians iii. 20, 21).

That is the testimony to the glory of Jesus Christ. It goes through all these sufferings, sorrows and adversities. It sees the spiritual life of God's people rising and falling. It sees the powers of this world trying to take its glory away, but after the long, long story, when perhaps sometimes we might tremble for the ark of God, for the greatness and glory of Jesus Christ, it will come to rest at last in the House of God, and the glory will be in the Church by Jesus Christ unto all ages for ever and ever.

... May the Lord keep us faithful to His Son! When the testimony is in adversity, passing through troublous times, and it seems that the enemy has prevailed, may we abide faithful to the Lord Jesus, and His glory will be in the Church for all ages for ever and ever. The testimony of the ark is a true representation of the history of the Lord Jesus. All the forces of this universe are against the testimony of Jesus, but the Word of God shows that in the end that testimony is going to triumph. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him"—when our Greater David brings the ark into the House of God at last.

If we cannot understand all that has been said with our minds, may the Lord give us a greater impression of the greatness and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ!

(Concluded)

HOW TO EAT AND HOW TO GROW

A further message by Mr. DeVern Fromke at the conference in Switzerland

WE are going to speak on the Tree of Life, and this morning we are going to make our title: "How to eat and how to grow."

When we read the Scripture last evening about Adam standing before the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge we realized that God planned for man to eat. In Genesis we find Adam standing before the Tree by some precious stones and by a river of water, but notice now what God is working toward: by the time we get to the end of the Book of the Revelation we have the Tree, the precious stones and the river *inside* of man. I must not take time to go into all that, but we have a wonderful city composed of living stones—or human

beings—and all that had been outside has now moved inside the corporate man.

Here, then, we have the two trees, the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Now it will help us to see how God uniquely designed man so that he could eat of the Tree of Life. We know from many places in the Scripture that man is spirit, soul and body. In the innermost room God created the human spirit, but we must remember that He designed it much like an empty room, because the human spirit was made for God's Spirit to come in and dwell inside. When our human spirit works alone there is an incompleteness about it. Is it not wonderful that our human

spirit is always pictured as the female and the Holy Spirit is always pictured as the male? If you could study the Hebrew and the Greek I am told that this is pictured very wonderfully; and the characteristic thing about anything feminine in the Scriptures is that it always wants to go on its own and be independent. Now, men, I am talking to you as well as to the women, because we all have the spirit that is feminine! That is why the Holy Spirit must bring our spirit under control and dominion, and, you see, when our spirit and God's Spirit are joined, they become one spirit. God plans to control the whole man from the inside, working outwards.

Now, in order to see this more clearly we must look back into the Old Testament picture of the tabernacle. You remember that there was the outer court that all men could see, then there was the second room which was covered, called 'The Holy Place', but beyond the veil there was the innermost room called 'The Holy of Holies'. We have in the ninth chapter of Hebrews a description of the furniture in the Holy Place and in the Holy of Holies, but before we read that I should tell you that the outer court is like our body, the Holy Place is like the soul, and the innermost Holy of Holies pictures the human spirit. We know that there are three functions in the soul, the mind, the emotion and the will. We will read from the first verse:

"Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary."

Now let us see the three pieces of furniture in the second room:

"For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary", and I believe these three things picture the three functions in the soul.

"And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant" (verses 3 and 4).

In this inner room, then, we have the ark, and in the ark these three things: the tables of stone, the pot of manna and Aaron's rod that budded. We want to look at this innermost room for a little while and see how it functions.

In the human spirit we first recognize the conscience, and the conscience only works on the basis of the law, so we have the ten commandments. The reason why our younger generation does not seem to have much conscience is that we are trying to take away all law from them. In training their young

children the mothers of Israel were told to bind the law to their fingers. In my country when people are speeding down the highway at fifty miles an hour, and then they see a speed sign that says '30 miles an hour', why do they immediately look at the rear-view mirror? Of course, you don't do that over here! However, until I see the speed sign there is nothing for the conscience to work on. So we must be sure that the doorway into the human spirit is by the conscience.

After you walk into a room, and sit down and begin to eat with someone, you can have fellowship, and so we have the pot of golden manna in this room. And then you remember that the third thing is Aaron's rod that buds.

I hope I can explain to you how this working in the inner man is so very wonderful. When we come to fellowship with God we must have a conscience cleansed by the perfect blood of Jesus Christ. Then, because the door is open, we can enjoy fellowship, sitting at the table and eating the hidden manna. I am sure you know what it is like to be fellowshiping with the Lord and you see something new—Aaron's rod buds. You see, it is the Lord's way that we be open and honest with Him first, and as we learn this wonderful fellowship and eating in spirit, God, who knows what inner light we really need, shares it through fellowship. So we have three things in the spirit: our conscience, the open door; the table at which we fellowship; and finally we have the inner light, which we call intuition. We have been speaking about revelation, and the revelation comes through intuition.

Now let us go back and see what happened in the garden of Eden. God said that Adam should not eat of the Tree of Knowledge. He planned for Adam to eat continually of the Tree of Life, thus feeding his inner spirit. Thus the Tree of Life was for feeding the inner spirit. God planned for Adam to walk with a continual dependence on, and fellowship with, Himself, but you know that Adam turned to his own way and determined to live an independent life, that is, independent of the Tree of Life. In this independence he could eat of the Tree of Knowledge and merely feed the soul, that is, the mind in the soul. From that time on Adam's spirit became more shrivelled and smaller and smaller. The Bible says that he was dead toward God, but his soul became bigger and bigger. It was over-developed. Have you met some people who are well-developed in their mind, or over-developed in their emotions, or very strong in their own will? This is the great battle and shows us the need for distinguishing between that which is of the soul and that which is of the spirit. This morning we are

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either living by the Tree of Life or by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Now, when a baby is first born you do not have to teach it much about eating. How well I remember that when I first came into real touch with the Lord I just ate! Every place in the Bible to which I turned was like drinking the milk of the Word. Like a little babe I just ate, and I grew in a very simple way, but then I got hold of a Bible with lots of footnotes and the books of men. I got all involved in the doctrines and the systems of men's interpretation and I began to enter the battle of the soul. How should you be baptized: once, twice, forward, backward? It was a case of one man arguing with another man and trying to get him to accept his doctrine, but it was all in the mind. What we are trying to say is that it is possible when we are first like a baby to learn to eat in the spirit, but then we get corrupted and begin to feed just the soul. Oh, I have seen men with so much knowledge about the Word of God, yet when they come to a bitter crisis in their life they have no inner spiritual strength. This is why brother Golsworthy said the other morning: "The test is not what you know, but how much Christ is increased in your spirit." When I see something with my natural mind I will say: 'How do I perform?'; but when I learn to just feed upon the Tree of Life, I am not hunting for answers, I am just hunting for Him, and in this eating with Him *He* gives the budding of Aaron's rod and I see. The man who has this inner seeing has the 'How?' built in. You see, in this seeing there is the *authority* of Aaron's rod. The man who has a mere branch from the Tree of Knowledge can sway in the midst of the storm, but the man who has eaten of the Tree of Life in his spirit will stand.

Now I must shock you for a moment. After Adam sinned in the garden he was shut out from eating the Tree of Life. Now the Tree cannot be eaten as such. We must eat the Lamb. You see, fallen man cannot eat unless his conscience is cleansed by the perfect blood. We have the picture back in Egypt on that night of the Passover. You remember that the blood was put on the lintels and on the door-posts of the Israelites' houses. This was for God to look at, and He saw the blood. This is why I say that the conscience is like a door and it must have the blood applied, but inside, behind the door, the people were eating the lamb. They were getting strength so that they could march out of Egypt, and, of course, there was the light within, but darkness all around.

When you try to speak to an individual, if their mind is not open you bump into a stone wall, but there are times when the mind is open and you

bump into a closed conscience. Did you ever try to sit down and fellowship with someone, but your words came back to you? Sometimes their ear may be open to receive your words, but you know their spirit is closed to you. If we are to really learn how to eat the Tree of Life, we must get more than the mere words of the speaker: the door of our conscience must be open to God so that His Spirit can teach us. If you only get the words in your mind it is like getting the husk of the peanut but throwing the meat away. How often I have left a church on a Sunday with my mind full of husks, but so hungry inside! And I used to blame the preacher, but the trouble was not with him—it was my closed conscience. I have even sat in a very liberal, modern church, and when the preacher read the Word I got something of the meat by the Spirit that *he* did not see.

Now let us turn to II Corinthians x. We must see that there is so often a war going on between the strongholds in our mind and the inner teaching of the Spirit. You see, in my mind there is a mental concept or doctrine, but the Spirit is trying to show me something else, so they are in conflict. God does not want to get rid of our mind, but, working from within, He wants to renew it, and this renewing brings transformation. I suppose every one of us has strongholds that have had to be renewed. In my country I have oftentimes met individuals who have a very weak mind. The enemy gets hold of a stronghold and he pours in imaginations into the mind. Have you ever seen a young girl or boy growing up who has allowed their mind to be filled with imaginations and they say: 'Oh, my mother and father—they are old-fashioned!?' The things of the Spirit seem so foolish to the natural mind.

I remember a dear brother who had a peculiar imagination in his mind. He had a lovely Christian wife, but there was something closed in his conscience towards her, and he imagined that she was not clean in her cooking or in her housework. But I knew her, and she was very clean. However, with this imagination the husband went around all the doorknobs with a handkerchief, and when we sat up to the table he wiped the knife, the fork, the spoon and the plate in my presence. I am sure he knew he had this foolish imagination. I could not pull this stronghold out of his mind, but when we prayed together he saw that there was something between his wife and himself. The door of his conscience opened, he became honest before God and open toward his wife, and God renewed his mind from within and cast down the stronghold. For one whole year, while he was right with God and toward his wife, he had no imaginations like that, but

two years later I came back and he was going around with his handkerchief again. I had to sit down and plead with him again to be right with God, and when he was, the matter was settled again.

You see, if we are not really walking with, and eating of, the Lord, the enemy attempts to get strongholds in our mind.

God now offers us the precious Lamb which gives us the blood for our conscience, and then the food for fellowship, and light. It is so wonderful to be just a simple Christian eating from the Lamb every day!

DEV. F.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

GOD'S WATCHFUL CARE

PHILLIP was very fond of his grandmother, but there was just one thing he did not like about her room. This was a framed Sampler which hung on the wall over her bed. Of course, it was very old-fashioned; but what Phillip did not like were the embroidered words: "*Thou God seest me.*"

"Why do you have that on your wall?" he asked his grandmother one day. She replied: "Because it comforts me." "Well, it doesn't comfort me," said Phillip, "it does just the opposite. I don't think it is fair that God should always be spying on me." "Fair or not," said his grandmother quietly, "it is true."

As Christmas came near the matter of shopping arose, and when one day Phillip's school had a shopping holiday, his father also took a day off and they drove into the nearby town. As he drove along, Phillip's father remarked: "I hear that the police have TV cameras covering the town centre, so that they can keep an eye on thieves and pickpockets." He added: "Of course, some people don't like the idea of being spied on. In fact, my newspaper this morning says that it is not right." Phillip's mother said that she thought that it was a good idea, but Phillip broke in with his old complaint about it not being fair. "I don't like it," he told his parents. "No," said his father, "and nor do the criminals. Those who are doing no wrong have no need to fear being watched." "Well, I don't like it," repeated Phillip. "I don't think that it is fair. Why, it is almost as bad as Grandma's text!"

By this time they had arrived at the car park, and were soon so involved in their shopping that all else was forgotten. There seemed so much to buy and Phillip found it very exciting. The great moment for him was when he chose his tape-recorder. This was something he had longed to have, but because of the price he hardly dare hope that he would ever

get one. However, his parents and his grandmother had joined together to give him the money. He found just the thing, at just the right price, and was thrilled when they went back to the car park and he was carefully carrying the parcel with the recording machine. Of course, he was carrying other parcels as well, and so were his parents. In fact, they were all three so loaded up that nobody had a free hand to open the car.

Father's arms were full of small parcels, so he asked Phillip to get the car key out of his outside pocket. Phillip first placed his precious parcel in a safe place and then fished around in his father's pocket till after a struggle and some delay he managed to find it. At first he could not get the car door open, which made Mother and Father rather impatient, as they were so laden with their parcels, but at last he succeeded. Father poured out his armful of parcels on to the back seat, helped Mother with hers, and then they all got into the car and drove off.

They were less than half a mile from the car park when they were stopped by a police car. Father wondered for a moment if he had hurt somebody without knowing it, and even more so when the policeman's first question was: "Have you just come from the main car park?" "Yes," he replied. "I hope that there is no trouble." "Not really, sir," said the policeman, "but I think that you left a parcel there." Both Father and Mother were about to deny this when Phillip broke in. As soon as the policeman mentioned a parcel he had a cold feeling inside him as he remembered that he had forgotten to pick up his recording machine. So in a rather scared voice he said: "It's mine! I left it down behind our car." "That's all right, sir," said the policeman cheerfully. "Not to worry." So they turned round to drive back to the car park.

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Meanwhile poor Phillip hardly dared to breathe in case the tape recorder might be stolen while they were driving back, but really he had no cause for worry, since there at the car park entrance was a smiling police officer with the precious parcel in his hand. Phillip was so grateful that he could hardly speak, but his father thanked the policeman and then he asked him how they knew about it and whose it was. The man explained that at the Police Station there was an officer watching the television screens. He had seen it all happen, had taken their number, and had then put out calls to him and also to the police car. "It was the ever-watchful eye that did it," he concluded laughingly.

Phillip was very quiet as they drove home. His father could not resist asking him if he had changed his mind about being spied on, and he had to admit that but for the TV cameras he would never have

been warned about his mistake and would have lost his valuable Christmas present.

That evening he went into his grandmother's room and told her all about it, and how the watchful eye of the man at the Police Station had saved him from losing his parcel. In a very gentle voice she said to him: "Now you know, Phillip, why I find it such a comfort to remember that God always sees me. He is looking not to spite me but to take care of me. He will do the same for you if you trust Him to be your Saviour."

She then showed him another verse about the eye of God. It was that wonderful reminder that "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (II Chronicles xvi. 9). This was the lesson which Phillip had learned. Have you learned it yet?

H. F.

STRONG IN THE DAY OF BATTLE

"Only be strong and very courageous, to observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest have good success whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not affrighted, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua i. 7-9).

"Thou therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier. And if also a man contend in the games, he is not crowned, except he have contended lawfully. The husbandman that laboreth must be the first to partake of the fruits. Consider what I say; for the Lord shall give thee understanding in all things. Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of

the seed of David, according to my gospel" (II Timothy ii. 1-8).

THERE is a very striking similarity between the exhortations found in the second letter to Timothy and the charge given to Joshua: "Be strong and of a good courage"—"Thou therefore, my child, be strong . . ." Joshua was not a child, but he was the child, the successor, of a previous generation. The words in this first chapter were not spoken actually by Moses. In Deuteronomy xxxi. there are very similar words in the charge which Moses himself gave to Joshua. This was a new generation, not called upon to begin a new work, but to finish a work which had been begun.

Now, passing over into the New Testament, nor is Timothy a child, and I suppose by the time this letter was written to him he was not exactly what we would call a young man, but he too represented a new generation, a succession. Paul looked to him, and to those who were like him, to carry through the work, the testimony, that had been begun. And if you read on to chapter iii. you will immediately find the scope of this charge reaching right into the last days.

So this letter is written for all saints, but it has a special emphasis and a peculiar message to those who find themselves called upon to be a new generation, to be the instrument of pursuing a purpose

already begun, and of carrying it right through unto the last days. So the whole thought bound up with these two charges, the one to Joshua and the other to Timothy, has special reference to us who find ourselves, as undoubtedly we are, in the last days.

THE DAY OF BATTLE

The first thing that we look at for a moment is to see the circumstances which surround them, the characteristics of the time. In Joshua's case, of course, there was only one issue, only one occupation at that particular time. He was the leader of a fighting nation; and Paul, writing to Timothy, lays special emphasis on this same fact, that one of the characteristics of the hour is to be conflict, and he makes no apology for taking up as a metaphor the wars which men pursue and the occupation of a soldier—"a good soldier of Jesus Christ". There is a battle on, nay, more than a battle. You will have noticed, if you have an Authorised Version, that it says: "No man that warreth." But the Revised Version speaks of "No soldier on service"—no soldier on active service. There are two words used in Scripture about conflict in this military sense. One speaks of a battle, one decisive engagement fought through to a finish and then it is over, but the other (and this is the word which is used here) speaks of a campaign—if you like, a war—with its many phases and its many aspects, and it is that which is typical of the whole age in which we live and peculiarly characteristic of the last days. Conflict, not a straightforward 'ding-dong' battle, but with all the skirmishing, the subtlety, the long drawn-out endurance of a campaign. We are in that, but the difficulty is (and I speak for myself in this case) we so often forget what we are in. Every step that we take, especially when it has something of special value to the Lord in it, every movement, is fraught with opposition, not necessarily of the straightforward brutal kind, but opposition as of the skill, the cunning, the guiles and the force of a whole army. That tremendous army is not ranged against us alone, but we are in the battle and we very often become focal points round which it rages.

Now our difficulty is just this: we think something has happened to us, and we often get offended about it, and do not recognize, or recognize only too late, that that circumstance—it may have been some small, irritating thing—is only a part of a great conflict. If we hug to ourselves our own particular grief or grievance, and wonder why this has happened to us, or why we are here and why others are not in our position, we come to an absolute

standstill and virtually, on that particular front, there is defeat. If we rise up and realize that this sorrow, however crushing, or this problem, however acute, or this irritation, however annoying, is just a part—but a very real part—of a great worldwide, nay, universal, battle, it makes it so much easier. We realize that it is not that we are being hardly dealt with by the Lord, but we have been entrusted with a definite position to hold for Him. It revolutionizes your mental outlook. For lack of that many of us have failed very badly.

And so conflict is one of the great features of the time. It will come in any kind of way, most particularly in the way which we do not expect and which we do not desire. We do not expect the enemy to choose out that particular trial that we could bear best; if we do, we have mistaken his nature. I speak out of my own heart. How true it is that we are blind and forgetful and taken off our guard again and again because we regard incidents and circumstances as things in themselves, and fail to realize that the whole scene as it is now set is one of a great, complicated campaign, and we are soldiers in the ranks.

ENDURE HARDSHIP

The next note that is sounded so much in this letter is that of suffering. If you go through the second letter to Timothy there is no cloaking of the fact, no attempt on Paul's part to make light of his own experiences, or in some cheap optimism to encourage Timothy. On the contrary, it is, again and again, to bear in mind the sufferings of his great predecessor, and himself to be prepared to suffer, as it is all a part of the campaign. Some natures can enjoy a good 'ding dong' fight, and there is an appeal even in the word 'conflict' when it is looked upon in certain aspects. Get down to pray and deal with the thing, and you may find some satisfaction in feeling you have given the enemy a bad time. Well, that may be a part of the battle, but so often our fighting is suffering, and a case of enduring the hardness of a long drawn-out, and to us, very mysterious campaign. You cannot expect the One who is Himself at the head of His forces to take us into His confidence as to the whole of the thing that He is doing, or even, perhaps, as to our little part in it.

This is the note that you hear so often in this letter. It is a sad one, for it is in the falling away, the turning aside, of men. Of course, it is all a result of the conflict. There is conflict for all, at least, conflict faces all, but you can choose the conflict, you can seek to be a good soldier, and that means

suffering, or you can turn from the conflict, and that means what you find again and again in this letter: those who turned aside, those who opposed themselves. All the time the solemn appeals that the Apostle makes to Timothy are to 'hold on', 'to stir up into a flame that gift which is in him'. Oh, how the fire dies down! How quickly, without any effort, without any consciousness on our part, the fire dies down! And surely it is not without significance that in John's letters and in the message to the overcomers, all right in the atmosphere of the last day, again and again such words as these arise: "Hold fast that which thou hast"; "See that no man take thy crown." Well, that is just the atmosphere.

Now, the command to the one who is found, as we are all found, at such a time is, in the first place, the word: "Be strong!" The first need, the greatest requirement in those who would be true to the Lord at this time is strength, and that is just the thing that is most lacking. Do you notice how, again and again, that was said to Joshua? "Only be strong!" And how the Apostle is most anxious that Timothy should grasp this great, important need to be found strong. We have got to be the Lord's instruments for pressing this battle home, and that needs strength, and it is strength that the Lord is looking for in His people, and strength that must be found in us: "Thou therefore be strong." It is no use saying: 'Oh, what a strong man Paul is! How blessed, how wonderful, to sit under Paul's ministry, to talk about Paul, to share some of the radiance of this spiritual giant, and bask in it!' It is no use looking at a man and living under his shadow and praising God that he is strong. What reason Timothy had for praising God for Paul! But Paul turns round on him and says: 'What about you, Timothy?' 'Oh, but I am very weak naturally!' Yes, that is true, for this is a strength which is not a natural strength. Timothy had no physical strength and he very often suffered infirmities. The Apostle was not saying: 'Get cured of your physical weaknesses!' but he was saying: 'Timothy, you poor man with your oft infirmities, be strong, only be strong!' So it is not physical strength or natural strength. If you read the letter, it is quite obvious that Timothy himself must have been of a very timid disposition. The Apostle exhorts him not to be afraid and not to be ashamed. Nay, you may be a very gentle, shrinking, timid disposition, and the suggestion is not that your disposition should be changed, but that, in spite of it, you will be strong. For actually, as the true rendering is, it is not so much a question of our being strong as of our being strengthened. There is grace in the Lord for you to be strong.

Oh, these things are so practical! If you read the letter, you find that Paul is not calling upon Timothy to exercise, or to imagine that he possesses, or to lay claim to, some theoretical strength which is imaginary, but he comes right down to very practical things—doing the work of an evangelist, being strong to speak the Lord's word, and reproving among His people if necessary. Although he does not say it to Timothy, I am sure being strong in prayer is included. It is practical strength that is needed, not of a natural kind, but of a spiritual nature applied to practical things.

The Lord is calling you and me to be strong. Here is a prayer meeting, and we come into it largely inactive or neutral. If it is a good prayer meeting, then we shall be caught up. If it is rather a heavy one, well, we will sit back, and we may be critical. The Lord is saying to every one of us: 'Be strong! Come in with a strong spirit and contribute strength by your spiritual attitude. In prayer and in every phase of the Church life, as well as in your individual experience, be strong!' A continual individual strength is essential if we are to go on; and for our ministry. That is the thought that Paul is bringing up. Be strengthened continually! There is strength for you. We have looked upon Joshua as a great figure, a strong man, but it is very significant that, again and again, the Lord had to say to Joshua similarly: 'Do not be afraid!' It seems as if Joshua might well have been fearful. "Be not dismayed . . . be strong." However weak we may be (for many purposes the weaker we are the better), we may have a robust virile strength and a positive attitude for the Lord at every moment of every day, and there is grace in Christ Jesus to give us that strength.

REMEMBER! REMEMBER!

The second requirement in the Lord's servant is what is called here 'remembrance'. Shall I say—it is an ever-fresh vision. You will notice how several times the Apostle says to Timothy: 'Remember!' "Remember Jesus Christ." Was Timothy ever likely to forget Him? No, but you can have an historic Christ, a Christ who was real to you in some past experience but you have lost the freshness and present value of a living vision of Christ. I think this is what corresponds in the Joshua passage to: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth . . ." Remember! First: "Remember Jesus Christ of the seed of David."

What does that mean? One in whom large purposes were bound up, for in this sense David had

not many seeds, but one seed, and all the purposes of God were staked upon this One, Jesus Christ. Remember that! And remember that the conflict and suffering of His life were all bound up with that one thing. Why did Herod try to destroy Jesus Christ? Because He was the seed of David. What was the great accusation against Jesus Christ at His crucifixion? "The King of the Jews", the seed of David, and this meant that the question of dominion being bound up in the purpose of God with this Man's life brought Him into suffering and conflict. Remember that, because you are apt to think beautiful thoughts with the idea of a heavenly calling. Jesus Christ is the One supremely of the heavenly calling. Remember what He suffered and the way He went. He was raised from the dead, but He had to die first. We sometimes feel that there are those whose sufferings are so great that there are no words of comfort one could speak to them. One feels that if somehow one could get alongside of them and read to them some of the sufferings of the blessed Son of God, that would in some senses interpret the dealings of God with them. In the conflict, in the suffering, remember Jesus Christ, the seed of David. So much depended upon the realization of God's purposes in Him, and that was the explanation of the suffering. And that was the explanation of His endurance. He did not fail God. God's purposes were realized and the afterward was a wonderful resurrection from the dead. Look at the Lord Jesus on the Throne and remember how He came there, and with that fresh in the mind there is victory.

Then: "I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee . . ." (II Timothy i. 6). Remember the purpose of God in His people, and ever have it fresh in view. You see, the soldier is on active service now, but the thought is: If he is a good soldier, there is going to be a glorious victory. The athlete is feeling some of the strain and stress of the conflict now, but there is a crown at the end. That is the purpose of God; remember that! The husbandman that laboureth is bearing the heat and burden of his toil, but there are fruits being enjoyed as the result of labour. Remember the calling, the purpose of God, and remember that it is not just personal. There is a blessed word of comfort concerning the suffering when the Apostle talks of "suffering together". If we are suffering for Christ's sake, we are suffering as a part of a people who are being brought to glory by the road of suffering and we are not suffering alone. Suffering hardship together with Him, says the Apostle, and not only with Him but with others. Our way is a way of fellowship.

THE ADEQUATE MOTIVE

And then the third great need, if we are to carry through the charge given to us. Firstly, it is our strength, and then a continual remembrance, and the third thing is love to the Lord. ". . . that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier." That is rather idealistic with regard merely to earthly armies and soldiers, and yet is it not true that through the ages, from David onwards, the best soldiers have been the men who had a passionate devotion to their leader? Some remarkable things have been done in this world by a few men devoted to their leader. In some cases it was misplaced, but it was devotion. To have this as the great dominating ambition and purpose in life: to please Him who has called me to be a soldier!

Then the Apostle goes on to speak of those vessels in verse 20 of chapter ii. The Lord's house is a great house. The Lord has a great purpose and there are many vessels, but among those vessels there are some unto honour, as it were, gold and silver, and there are some unto dishonour, not noble, but common, ordinary, necessary, useful. But if any man will set his heart on full obedience and devotion to the Lord, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified. What is the great consolation and joy of his heart? "*Meet* for the Master's use." The Master takes special notice of him, takes special pride in him, as of some valuable or beautiful vessel in the great household. And that surely is the vision which will sustain and carry us through to the end: the joy, the privilege, not only of being in the Master's house—praise His Name, we are there!—but, being there, a vessel unto honour, bringing some joy and satisfaction to His heart.

So the Apostle is able to say, as far as he is concerned, that he has come through—"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (II Timothy iv. 7). The charge is handed on, not only to Timothy, but to us, to fight the same fight, to finish the course, to keep the faith. We need strength for that. There is strength for it. We need continual remembrance—shall we better say—vision for that. There is vision, and the word is the great instrument of bringing it to us. We need a deep love to Christ, for while we may be conscious that our love is not a deep one, it is our ambition to please Him. That is the way. Do you notice that the emphasis in that connection is that Paul did it, so Timothy could do it, and it was because God was faithful to Paul, and He would be faithful to Timothy. So with Joshua: it was not because Moses came through that he came through, but the word was: "As I was with Moses, so I will

pe with thee." Not Moses, but Moses' God; not Paul, but Paul's Lord, and there is no reason why Timothy should not go through just as victoriously as Paul, because he has the same Lord. And there is no reason why the weakest of us should not be in

the Lord's hands for overthrowing His foes, and fighting His battles, and enjoying His crown, because this God is our God for ever and ever. Amen.

H. F.

"THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM"

9. DIVINE LIFE.

'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the garden of God' (Revelation ii. 7).

'And he shewed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month . . . Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life . . . And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city' (Revelation xxii. 1, 2, 14, 19).

THE PLACE OF THE TREE OF LIFE

SO with this last chapter of the Bible we are taken right back to the beginning of the Bible and find ourselves in the presence of the tree of life. In this connection, the ending of everything is found to correspond to the beginning, but, of course, with one great difference: the end is the full realization of the meaning of the beginning. In this form of a symbolic tree of life we are quite evidently in the presence of the main issue of the ages—all the ages are compassed by this one issue. When Jesus, here at the end, calls Himself the "Alpha and the Omega, . . . the beginning and the end" (verse 13), He is referring to Himself as the tree of life. The tree of life is the first thing, and it is the last thing.

But although the tree of life was there in the midst of the garden at the beginning, man never partook of it. The partaking of that tree was on certain conditions. Those conditions were faith and obedience, and because man failed in those conditions, and because man disbelieved and disobeyed God, he was removed from the presence of the tree of life. Then God set up a protection for that tree

and made it impossible for man without faith and obedience to partake of it.

Of course, these are spiritual principles set forth in a symbolic way. This question of Divine life is the supreme question in all history. It is the issue of all the ages—just whether man will receive this Divine life or not. Man's eternal destiny is decided upon that issue. This was God's supreme purpose in the creation. This life is the life of God, Divine life because of the Divine nature, and it was God's desire and purpose to share His life with His creation.

The symbolic place that this tree had is very significant. It was in the midst of the Paradise of God. This question of Divine life is at the very centre of the creation, and, having the central place in all things, it governs all things.

SPIRITUAL DEATH

This life was available to man. It was God's thought and desire that man should take this Divine life, but, as we have said, it was on the condition of faith and obedience, and man never partook of this Divine life because he failed in those two things. So God said, quite effectively: "That kind of man shall never have My Divine life", and death, and the prince of death, reigned over that realm and that kind of man. What the Bible means by death reigns over the whole creation of unbelieving men. Disobedience is the positive aspect of unbelief. If man says that he believes, God says: "Prove it by obedience!" Spiritual death is the hallmark of unbelief and disobedience.

And if you want to know what spiritual death is, the Bible makes it quite clear: it is separation from God. God is the source of this life, and separation from God means separation from the very source of life.

But that is not sufficient explanation. What is the effect of spiritual death? It is that nothing is ever

allowed to come to perfection apart from God. It will just go so far, and no further. In our cemeteries in England we have stones set up over graves, and many of these gravestones are in the form of a pillar which is just a certain height, and then it is broken off. It is meant to say: This life just went so far and could go no further. Life apart from God can never go through to fullness.

There was a great atheist once who thought he knew a great deal. He boasted of his wonderful knowledge of philosophy, and made a great name for himself as what is called a 'free-thinker'. Then the day came when he was dying, and on his death-bed he was in a state of mental torment. His last words were: "I am taking a terrible leap into the dark! It does not matter how much we gain in this life. If it is apart from God that is all left behind. Nothing can come to perfection that is separated from God, and that is the mark of spiritual death."

THE BATTLEGROUND OF THE AGES

Now because faith and obedience are the way out of death, this matter of faith and obedience has been the battleground of all the ages. There is no greater ground of conflict than the ground of faith, and this great issue was headed up to its climax in the incarnation of God's Son. The whole purpose of God being manifest in the flesh in His Son was to take up this issue and settle it for ever. "A Final Adam to the fight and to the rescue came."

This whole issue, then, becomes a matter of faith in the Son of God, and a life of obedience to Him. That is the pathway of eternal life.

Now you see that the tree is not just a tree, it is a Person, and that Person is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We have been considering this New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven, and we have been seeing how its many features are the features of Jesus Christ. Now what we have to see as we are coming near to the end is that all the features of the city are summed up in the tree and the river of life. All that the city represents is found in these final things, the tree and the river, and it is the tree of life and the river of the water of life.

THE PRACTICAL NATURE OF DIVINE LIFE

I want to say here, quite emphatically, that life is a very practical thing. That is true of natural life. We know what a tremendous thing it is to fight for someone's life. All the vast resources of medical supply and surgical care are concentrated into this one issue, and that vast realm of activity is concen-

trated upon this one thing—life. Everything and anything to save life. It may be just a little life in some poor body, but all the resources of medical science and care will be employed just to save that bit of life. What a tremendous amount is bound up with this matter of life! When that life has gone all the activity and energy and concern ceases.

This matter of life can make us very busy. I expect most of you have heard of the great missionary David Livingstone, and some years ago I was associated with a great movement for the celebration of the centenary of his birth. You know, for nearly a whole year we were busy, almost night and day, making the arrangements. We took the greatest hall in London, got the Archbishop of Canterbury to promise to preside, we had a special oratorio composed, and had special biographies of David Livingstone written. My word, we had to work hard! One day the man with whom I was working said to me: "Old David Livingstone is not dead! He is still knocking us all out by his vitality!"

Well, you see, life is a very practical thing. Electricity is a very practical thing. You do not need that I should demonstrate that! If you want proof of that, just unscrew the lamp, pull down the switch and put your thumb on the point. If you did that to the lamp over there, the next moment you would be sitting in another corner and you would be believing in the practical aspect of electricity!

Now all that is only to come to our point. If all that is true of natural life, how much more true it must be of Divine life! Divine life is immensely practical. It is not just something which we receive; it is a power in us. The Apostle Paul said one of his very great things about this: "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*" (Ephesians iii. 20)—"Exceeding" . . . "Exceeding abundantly" . . . "Exceeding abundantly above" . . . "Exceeding abundantly above all . . . according to the power that worketh in us." It is the power of this Divine life by the Holy Spirit.

THE LIMITING OF DIVINE LIFE

Now we have been seeing that this city, in every part, is an expression of the Divine nature, and that is brought down to us in the Person of Jesus Christ. Where there is anything contrary to the Divine nature, that is death and not life. Recall some of the features of this city.

We said that it was clear as crystal. You can see right through it—there is no dark thing. It says that it is like transparent gold. That is only a symbolism for absolute honesty, absolute truth, and absolute

purity of mind, and where there is anything that is not absolutely honest and true and transparent, there is not life. If you were to try to deceive me, or someone else, or I tried to deceive you, that would seriously limit the Divine life in us. If we as Christians are not absolutely honest in our business, we are working against the life of God in us. If our Christianity is only a profession and not a reality, there is no life in it. I think I need not labour that any more. This place where God is is completely free from everything that is dark and dishonest.

There are several things in the Bible which are said to be an abomination to God. We pointed out that the lie is an abomination to Him; and the Bible says that pride is an abomination, too. It says: "The proud he (the Lord) knoweth afar off" (Psalm cxxxviii. 6). Pride cannot come near to God. What is pride? It is making believe something that is not true.

Let us look at another thing about this city. A city, ideally, is the symbol of order. In a true city everything is in proper order, and everything that is governed by it is put into order. God is a God of order. Disorder is contrary to His nature. Whether it be in the personal life, or whether it be in the home, or whether it be in the church, or wherever it may be, disorder is contrary to the nature of God. Disorder is lawlessness, and all lawlessness has come from Satan. Satan is called the 'Prince of this world' (John xiv. 30). Now, look at the world! There is only one word to explain the world situation, and that is *chaos*. More and more, and ever more chaos is coming over this world. The prince of this world is making for disorder everywhere in his world. In the realm of Divine life things are ordered if that life is having its way, for it is Divine life that will bring order into your personal life. When I see a disorderly life, a life in which you cannot see any real order, then I have to say: 'Divine life is suffering in that person'. When there is disorder in a company of the Lord's people we know quite well that the life is limited. We have to say:

(To be concluded)

BACK ISSUES OF A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

We have quite a number of spare copies of certain issues of *A Witness and a Testimony* which we will gladly send to those who desire them, the only charge being for postage (in advance). Please give the dates of the issues required and we will send

'When I go there, amongst those people, I do not come away feeling renewed in my life.' When things are in Divine order, then you always feel life.

THE FRUITFULNESS OF DIVINE LIFE

Just two other things about this life. Divine life is always fruitful. You see, this tree is planted by the river of the water of life, and it bears all manner of fruit. It does not matter whether it is seventy, eighty or a hundred years old, it bears fruit every month. You have never seen a natural tree do that! It just means that fruit goes on and on and on. Divine life never grows old. What does that mean? You are saying: 'Well, what do you mean by fruit?' Life is influence. Somehow or other, this water of life has an influence upon its surroundings, and that influence is seen in green leaves and much fruit. You have to say: 'Well, that water is having a great influence on this whole area!' If we really have this life in us, our lives will be influential. They will have an effect upon what is around us.

THE PLACE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IN OUR LIVES

The last thing for this time. The city is the seat of government, and you notice that the river of the water of life flows from out of the throne, so it is the throne that produces everything. You know what that means! It is the throne of God and of the Lamb. In a word, it means the absolute lordship of Jesus Christ. Right at the very centre of everything is the government of Jesus Christ, in virtue of His Cross, and as the Lamb. All the other things will depend entirely upon the place that Jesus Christ has, and will depend entirely upon how much we are committed to Him. If we are *wholly* committed to the Lord and He is *altogether* Lord, then the life will flow and all these things that we have said about life will be true in us. It will be the testimony to absolute committal to Jesus Christ.

those which are available. We have no complete sets (i.e. all the issues for a particular year), other than as bound volumes, details and cost of which are given at the end of the list of literature on page 44.

“THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER”

2. THE KINGDOM OF LIGHT IN CONFLICT WITH THE KINGDOM OF DARKNESS

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light” (Genesis i. 1–3).

“But and if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that are perishing: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them . . . Seeing it is God, that said, Let there be light, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (II Corinthians iv. 3, 4, 6).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness overcame it not” (John i. 1, 4, 5).

WE proceed to consider a little further what the Kingdom of God is. We have seen that from the beginning there has been a great conflict in this universe as to *who* shall have the dominion. The New Testament speaks of two kingdoms, the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, the Kingdom of the Son of God’s love and the kingdom of that one who wants to usurp the place of God’s Son, and all through the history of this world those two kingdoms have been in deadly conflict. As to the Kingdom of God, we have said that it is the sovereign rule of God. We speak of ‘entering the Kingdom of God’, and in that way we think of the Kingdom of God as being a sphere of God’s rule, but there is something about which we must be very clear, although it is not easy to explain.

GOD RULES BY HIS OWN NATURE

We could think of a kingdom being just a place, and a number of people in that place, and then we could think of some person, a dictator, an autocrat, having dominion in that place over those people. We could say that Egypt is the kingdom of Mr. . . ., and that China is the kingdom of someone

else, but that is not the idea of the Kingdom of God. You see, God does not rule just as an autocrat or as a dictator. God’s Kingdom is composed of those who are like Himself. That is what it is going to be at the end. The Kingdom is coming now, and when it has fully come it will just be, and only be, people who are like God Himself. I wonder if you understand what I mean when I say that God rules by His own nature? God’s government is on the basis of what God is. That is how He is ruling now. When we say: “Thy will be done”, we have to go on immediately and say: “As in heaven, so on earth.” The Kingdom of God is according to that which satisfies the nature of God.

We have, then, two things to consider. The first is this: that to belong to the Kingdom of God we have to be reconstituted according to God. You know, the door is closed to every man and woman who has not been reconstituted according to God. Let us think of it like this: Someone wants to be in the Kingdom of God and they come to the door, and on that door they see the word: “Cannot.” ‘You cannot come in here. Something has to happen in you before you can come in here. This realm belongs to people who are altogether different from what you are by nature.’

You remember that the Lord Jesus told a parable of someone who made a great feast, and in order to attend and participate in that feast the guests had to wear a certain garment. Well, the people came with the garments on, but when the master of the feast came to look over the people he found one man without that garment. He said to that man: ‘Friend, how did you get in here without the garment on?’ In effect he said: ‘You have no right here.’ The master of the feast said to his servants: ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him out!’ It was in that parable that the Lord was expounding this very principle: if you are going to be in the Kingdom of God something has got to happen that makes you suitable for that Kingdom.

Now, of course, you know that I am talking about the third chapter of the Gospel by John. I am quite sure that this man, Nicodemus, would have had an awful shock if he had been told that he was the man without the wedding garment, but this chapter makes it perfectly clear that it was Nicodemus. The only difference between Nicodemus and the man in the feast was that the latter got in

nd was thrown out, but the unborn-again Nicodemus never got in at all. Now, you note that it was about the Kingdom that Nicodemus was concerned. He was a very religious man, and highly educated, a man held in high esteem amongst the men of this world. Perhaps you would have found no fault with him, but Jesus said to him, without any hesitation: "Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3), and: "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John iii. 5). Far from being able to *enter*, he cannot even *see*!

There is something about this Kingdom of God that necessitates having an altogether new constitution. We are hearing a great deal in our times about outer space, and we send men into it. Have you seen pictures of those men? You can hardly recognize that they are men! They are so laden with artificial apparatus that you can hardly see them. They have no natural qualification for living in outer space, and have to have artificial lungs. In this sense, they have to be reconstituted upon another principle. That is just an illustration of John chapter iii. Jesus might have said to Nicodemus: "Nicodemus, if you got into the Kingdom of God you would die. You have not the equipment to live in that rare atmosphere." That is very simple. If you had to bring a man or a woman whose life is in this world, to whom this world is everything, into a meeting like this, where we are singing these wonderful hymns and talking about these heavenly things, you know, the eyes of that man or that woman would be on the door all the time. They would be wriggling in their seats and saying: "I will be glad when this is all over and I can get out. Let me get out of this as soon as I can!" You see what I mean? They are not constituted according to the realm of God.

So the Kingdom of God is what God is in His own nature. It is not just a sphere in which God rules as an autocrat. It is the realm in which God's nature is expressed. Peter spoke about His "precious and exceeding great promises through which we may become partakers of the divine nature" (II Peter i. 4), and that is only another way of speaking about the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of heaven.

Now we come to the real message for now.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD THE RULE OF DIVINE LIGHT

What is God like? If the Kingdom of God is the realm where God's nature rules, this opens a door to very many things. I only want to speak of one of those things now, but it is a matter of fundamental

importance. It is the matter which just went to the heart of Nicodemus' case. The Scripture says: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (I John i. 5), so the Kingdom of God is the rule of Divine light, but Divine light has always been a focal point of intense conflict.

The Bible opens with a conflict. There is a state of things in nature which God attacks—He begins to make a tremendous assault upon a condition of things, and the first attack of God was upon darkness. "Darkness was upon the face of the deep", and I do not think that God just looked at that darkness and in a very soft voice said: 'Let us have some light.' I believe that there was an angry look on His face and He said: 'Let light be! This is a situation that I never intended to exist and which I will not tolerate. It is a contradiction to My very nature.' So the Divine fiat was uttered in a strong voice: "*Let there be light!*" Do you think I am reading something into the story? No, I have the whole Bible behind me to support what I am saying. That is why I gave you II Corinthians iv. 3-6, and if you can listen to the tone in the voice of the Apostle Paul when he is saying those words, you would not find anything very meek and mild—"The god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ should dawn upon them." This darkness is the work of the devil, and God is against it.

I repeat that the first attack of God was made upon darkness, and the natural is a parable of the spiritual. You know that throughout the whole Bible redemption is centred in light, as the redemption of the natural earth was by light. The first phase of the redemption of the earth was by reason of warfare against darkness, or light overcoming darkness.

You can take up that principle right through your Bible. I can only touch on a few points now. We were hearing about Abraham this morning, and Abraham was another movement of God's rule concerning His Kingdom, and that new movement in redemption was on the basis of light. Our brother called it vision, but it is the same thing. Light is vision, and vision is light. It was left to the great martyr Stephen to tell us how this happened: "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia"—if you like, "when he was in darkness"—(Acts vii. 2). The God of glory *appeared*, showed Himself. Abraham had his eyes opened to see the God of glory, and all the great redemptive work of God went forward through Abraham on that basis. It was a marvellous illumination! Jesus said to the Jews: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see *my day*" (John viii. 56).

What a light Abraham came into! He was a great key to the whole plan of redemption.

You leap over a few centuries and you see the seed of Abraham, the children of Israel, in the darkness of Egypt. If you want to see what God thinks and feels about darkness, look at the ten judgments upon Egypt! God entered into a tremendous warfare with the darkness of Egypt, and that phase of the warfare headed right up to this: on that fatal night for Egypt, in all the deadly darkness, the children of Israel had light in their dwellings. The first-born sons of Egypt died in the darkness, but the first-born sons of God went out in the light. And that was not the end. All the way through the wilderness journey, in the darkness of the night there was a pillar of fire, and that light above them was in warfare against the darkness around them. They were redeemed from being lost in the wilderness by the pillar of fire, the light in the darkness.

Now, how much of the Old Testament am I to employ to show you how true this was? The Prophets were centres of light in the darkness of the people of God to redeem them from their darkness. If you take Isaiah alone, what an example he is of this very thing! His great ministry took its rise from: "*I saw the Lord . . . high and lifted up*" (Isaiah vi. 2). Again and again he spoke about the darkness and the light, and at last, with a vision beyond, he cried: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come" (lx. 1).

I want to get this right home. All that is truth which may be objective, but let us come back to this: There is a tremendous conflict between these two kingdoms of light and darkness. In II Corinthians iv. 4 we are brought right to the very work of the devil: "The god of this world hath blinded." What, then, is *the* supreme work of the devil? It is not that he makes good men bad men, nor that he drags good men down into the mire of sin, nor that he brings strong young men and beautiful young women down into moral corruption, nor makes atheists and infidels. Those are only by-products. They are the results of something else, and that is: "The god of this world hath *blinded*." Remove their blindness, open their eyes, and these things will be dealt with quite simply. The work of the devil is to keep people in the dark. Light is the most fatal thing to the kingdom of Satan; he fears light more than he fears anything else. He is the "prince of darkness". He has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, and why has he done so? It is a precaution against something, and one little word explains it: "*Lest* the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ should shine." "If those people get the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, *my* kingdom is

gone. The battle is over for me. I am lost.' So that Satan will do anything to keep us from having light.

There is a real touch of genius in Bunyan's "Holy War". Satan and his kingdom are making their assault upon Mansoul in order to capture it—the city of Mansoul is besieged by the powers of darkness. Satan says to his captains: 'There is one man that you must capture. If we capture that one man the city is ours. Focus all your attention upon the Lord Mayor!' What is the name of the Lord Mayor? His name is Mr. Understanding. 'When you have captured Mr. Understanding put him down in a dark dungeon so that he does not know what is happening. The rest of the battle will be easy.' That is the genius of John Bunyan, but where did he get it? He got it from Paul. Do you remember this little phrase of Paul's: "Being darkened in their understanding" (Ephesians iv. 18)? Paul is speaking there about all the moral evils of the Gentile world, and he says they are due to one thing: their understanding is darkened.

Now, dear friends, you perhaps wonder why I am speaking to you like this. You may say: 'Well, we are not in the dark. We are saved people.' I will ask you to explain one thing to me: Why is it that invariably when we are going to have a conference where the Lord is going to give more light, we have to come to it through so much conflict? That is quite true of this very conference. All kinds of things arose to get in the way. But that is only a simple example of a great truth.

We have spoken of the prophets, and they were points of light in the darkness of Israel. Will you tell me that they were not in a conflict? Because they were points of light they were points of the most vicious assault of the evil powers. Jesus said: "I am the light of the world" (John viii. 12), and every day and everywhere Jesus was in conflict because He was a light. It was true of the apostles. Wherever they went, even without beginning to preach, they found themselves in conflict. It is as though the devil and his powers said: 'We will not have this in our kingdom!', and they will stop at nothing to quench the light. And the Lord says: "Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew v. 14). Here is the challenge. Divine light is *positive*. You cannot have Divine light and be neutral. If God has shined into your heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, your life is a challenge to the kingdom of Satan, and his attitude to you will be: 'We will get you out as soon as we can!' You will find that Satan will stop at nothing to quench that light. You see, Divine light is not just teaching and theory; it

is a menace to the kingdom of Satan. Are we in the Kingdom of God? That is what it means. Individual Christians are to be like that—their very existence disturbs the kingdom of Satan.

And what is true of the individual is true of the little companies of the Lord's people. Satan does not mind you organizing communities of people called Christians. I don't think he troubles about them very much, for the simple reason that they don't trouble him, but if any little company of the Lord's people anywhere are really in the light and are focal points of the significance of Jesus Christ,

(To be continued)

Satan will do everything to destroy that little company.

I must add this as I close. Remember that this is not only an initial matter in the Christian life. Every fresh step of advance in the spiritual life is the result of some new light. We only make progress in the spiritual life by more and more Divine light, and the evil one does not want us to advance to the fullness of light. As soon as we think we have got all the light, then death will set in.

Well, I must leave it there for the present.

WORK IN THE GROANING CREATION (III)

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people: and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more" (Jeremiah xxxi. 31-34).

"Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body didst thou prepare for me; in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure: then said I, Lo, I am come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. Saying above, Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein (the which are offered according to the law), then hath he said, Lo, I am come to do thy will. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews x. 5-10).

"To whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we proclaim, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ" (Colossians i. 27-28).

"I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Galatians ii. 20).

THAT portion in Jeremiah has its fulfilment now in Christ. It concerns the new covenant which the Lord said was to be altogether different; not according to the covenant which He made with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt, but something within them, written in their hearts. We know that the Lord Jesus Himself is the embodiment of all the terms of the covenant, and that covenant is sealed with His own blood. "Christ in you" means that all that that covenant contains becomes an inward thing, an inward power, an inward revelation of God. "Christ liveth in you", said the Apostle, and the mystery which God has been pleased to reveal is: "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

There is one comprehensive and all-embodying truth which, if it really gained the complete mastery of our hearts and dominated our whole consciousness, capturing our will, our hearts, and our minds, would really revolutionize everything, just as the new covenant represents a revolution from the old

covenant. The great truth which embodies everything is this: that God has determined that nothing which is not Christ shall remain, and He is working toward that end, on the one hand to rid this universe of everything that is not Christ; on the other hand to fill this universe with that which is Christ. That means that God does not accept or recognize anything whatever that is not Christ. Then again, it means that God puts His seal upon what is Christ, and it is all a matter of the measure of Christ. It is a tremendous thing when that really does come to our hearts with the force and the power which it really does represent. It explains everything of God's dealings with us. It gives us the key to our problems. **It sets us at once upon the highway of God's own purpose.**

If it should be felt that the world is really becoming more and more full of evil, and not of Christ, we will explain that seeming contradiction later.

But we begin here, and we notice the significant setting of this in the letter to the Colossians. The first thing in the Colossian letter is the matchless presentation of the Lord Jesus. There is nothing in all the Word of God to compare with the first chapter of this letter as an unveiling of the Lord Jesus, that is, in any one part. From eternity Christ is seen in and through creation, all things unto Him, by Him, through Him, Christ in sovereignty governing all things, controlling all things. Gather it all up into one fragment, a universal fragment: "That in all things he might have the pre-eminence." There is the universal and eternal Son of God! And then, all that, as in a Divine secret, is brought right down and it is said: "Christ *in you*, the hope of glory." All that in you—the Church. It is *that* Christ that is in you. He who created all things is in you **IN YOUR RELATEDNESS TO THE CHURCH**. He for whom all things were created is in you *thus*. He who upholds all things is in you *thus*. He in whom all things consist, hold together, is in you corporately, as in His Body.

The second thing is this: that the letter goes on, "seeing that ye have put off the old man . . . and have put on the new man" (iii. 9-10). What does that mean? That all that is not Christ is put aside, is repudiated, and all that is Christ is put on, is brought in. So that God's intention concerning His Son as universally pre-eminent is going to be realized by His being put on on the part of believers, who, as the third chapter says, have been "raised together with Him". This, the Apostle says, is the meaning of baptism (Colossians ii. 12).

Christ is not a second personality or power, to come along to reinforce *us*, to vivify *us*, to streng-

then *us*, for us to use in life and in service, and that He should make *us* something. That is not the thought, and that is not the angle of Scripture at all. And yet, how almost universally, perhaps largely unconsciously, that is what is happening. Christians are wanting to be made something, even as Christians; and Christian workers and the Lord's servants are, though perhaps unwittingly, wanting to be made something as workers; and they want Christ to reinforce *them*, come behind *them*, and make *them* something as His servants and in His service. That whole system of things is diametrically opposed to the truth. The truth is that Christ shall be all, and that we decrease that He may increase; that He should be the primary Personality, and that the **impact and registration of any life and any service** should not be: 'What a good man he was!' or 'What a good woman she is!' or 'What a fine worker!' but: 'What a presence of Christ! What a testimony to Christ! What an expression of Christ! What a sense of Christ! What a reality of Christ!'

The next thing I am going to say may be difficult to accept, just as it is difficult to say, and yet faithfulness demands that things like this should be said. There is going to be a tremendous surprise one day over this matter. There is a tremendous amount of energy, and activity, and machinery, and zeal and devotion in the work of the Lord, in the service of the Lord, which seems to be producing something quite big, and carrying on something quite extensive. It is not for us to judge, but it is for us to lay down laws and recognize those laws, or, rather, recognize laws that are laid down by God. When eventually all work, all service, all activity, is weighed in the balances, which will determine what abides for ever or passes away for ever, all that which was *merely* human energy for God will go; all that which was merely man's enterprise for the Lord will go; all that which was in any way out from man himself, even though in devotion to God, will go. Only that which was the energy of Christ, the wisdom of Christ, the power of Christ, will remain. God is not using your energies and my energies. He is calling upon us to use the energies of Christ. God cannot set His seal upon anything that is of man. God's seal only rests upon that which is of His Son, and we must not say that because a thing is big, extensive, and *seems* to be a great work for God, that it necessarily is such. What we have got to be quite sure about is that that thing is not being carried on by the momentum of man, or the momentum of organization, the momentum of machinery, the momentum of human zeal and energy for God nor by the momentum of a

programme, but that it is being energized by the Holy Ghost, that it is Christ Himself who is the life and the power of that thing. In so far as human personalities, energies and all that kind of thing are the mainspring, we may be sure that in the end there is going to be a good deal that goes. That can be seen as you look back over the history of things which claimed to represent God.

The object of saying this is not for one moment to cast a cloud of suspicion or doubt over anything, but it is to emphasize this truth, this basic truth. It is along the line of jealousy for Christ. Nothing will remain in this universe eventually but what is Christ, and we must recognize that everything for God's ultimate purpose is bound up with and in Christ, and it is Christ. We shall only come to the end which God has fixed as we know how to draw upon Christ for everything. We shall be established as we live by Christ, the work will be established as it is out from Christ, as we do it out from Him.

We have often spoken of this same thing in the direction of the candlestick all of gold, as mentioned in the prophecies of Zechariah. We must remember that the wrought gold is the Lord Jesus. It is only a typical way of saying that He was made perfect through suffering. The gold is refined and perfected in its purity in the fire. That is what happened with Him. Perfect, yet perfected through suffering. The candlestick of pure gold is what Christ is, and inasmuch as it is a candlestick, it is the vessel and the instrument of the Testimony, the life, the revelation, the unveiling. The vessel of the Testimony, then, is what Christ is, and the Testimony can only be upheld and maintained in clearness by what Christ is. We in ourselves cannot maintain the Testimony. The Testimony of Jesus will be maintained in us just in so far as we conform to His image. To put that in another way: just in the measure in which Christ has supplanted ourselves—"no longer I, but Christ". God has a gold standard, and He never departs from it. God's gold standard is His Son, and He never deviates one little bit from His Son.

This change from Christ in heaven to Christ in you is just with that object in view. It is that, Christ being in you, everything else shall be brought down under Christ, and that Christ should take the ascendancy in us just as He has taken universal ascendancy in heaven, and it is that taking of ascendancy which is the conforming to His image. "No longer I" is a very inclusive statement, for that "I" is many-sided. There is 'I like' and 'I will', 'I think' and 'I want'. And then the opposites, 'I don't like', 'I will not', 'I do not think', 'I do not want'. And 'I' is much more comprehensive than that. Conformity

to His image simply means that that is ruled out, and oh! what a business that is! While we have all accepted the final and the full abolition of the 'I', by no means have we attained unto that. We are very often in some way or another up against that 'I', and the question again is whether it is going to be Christ or 'I'. But the very fact that the Holy Spirit makes a conflict of it shows that the thing is active, and that something is going on. We need to ask definitely that the Lord will keep that active, and that He will make these crises much more acute.

Sometimes we have to ask ourselves, as we see personal desires being followed out, likes being served, preferences being manipulated, and it becomes so patent that there is something which is quite natural ruling decisions and making the plans: Where is the Cross, and where is the Holy Spirit working by the Cross? Therefore, you and I need to ask the Lord more every day to make these crises acute, that we shall have no blind spots on this matter, thinking that it is for the Lord when it is really for ourselves. Any measure of that 'I' is countering God's end, and anything that is done, even though it be by a most devoted soul, for the Lord on that basis is bound to have in it that element which will limit its *eternal* value.

The thing which is going to be wholly, utterly abiding, eternal, must be utterly Christ. It may, therefore, be necessary for a course of reduction to be followed by the Lord. The thing may seem small and it may seem to be very limited according to the world's standards. What is going on can hardly be seen on the surface, but God is working right down at the bottom to build from the foundation, slowly, steadily, surely, and every fresh fragment that God adds to that work is sifted, purged, tested. It is as though God puts in something and then, before He adds to it, He tests it, proves it, tries it, sifts it, until the thing is, in its absolute purity, all of Christ and is established.

That seems to be God's way with something that is going to be wholly of Christ. You can have, if you *must*, to gratify the old human desires to *see*, to *possess*, to *know*, to *do*, to be active, something bigger. But when you look on toward the end, it will just be tested as to what is of Christ. All the other is waste. You have plenty of Scripture to bear that out. I am only putting my finger upon a central law. Is it not true that God has determined to have nothing in this universe eventually but what is Christ, and all else will be removed for ever?

There is another way of looking at it. It is a glorious prospect to know that the universe will be filled with Christ, and God is going to have His end.

When the Lord gets hold of a life utterly, and when the Cross has really entered into that life, so that that life can say: "I have been crucified with Christ", nothing passes, nothing gets through that is not Christ. God keeps intensely short accounts with that life. God is alive to everything concerning the first Adam. That is the meaning of: "He that hath the seven spirits of God." That phrase means the perfection of spiritual vision. Go back to the prophecies of Zechariah and you remember it speaks of "seven eyes". That means that the Lord Jesus, who has the seven spirits of God, is alive to everything, takes in everything, comprehends everything. Nothing escapes Him. Especially is that perfection of perception related to the things that would be a menace to His ultimate purpose, and in all that we do He knows exactly where the point is which marks the end of what is of Himself and the beginning of us. We do not know, but He does, just where these things overlap, and He is letting nothing pass.

That represents a challenge to us! We have been seeing that God, for His own satisfaction in relation to His own ultimate purpose, must have a candlestick all of gold, a vessel which represents what Christ is in an utter sense. That means a deep cost, a great measure of suffering. That is the challenge which comes to us. Until the Lord reveals it with a heavenly light we do not see how big the difference is between self and Christ. When the Lord does a thing it is eternal.

Are our hearts set upon God having that which is wholly of Himself? That means 'I' crucified! No longer I, but Christ! And that means that Christ in us is the basis of our conformity to His image, until we partake with Him of His own nature—pure gold. It is something to face seriously before Him. It brings to us a challenge, but surely it also brings to us a glorious possibility! What Christ is can be made good in us!

This is what God is doing in the groaning creation. It does not appear to be so, for, to all appearances the 'fullness' seems to be evil. Do you re-

member a very illuminating phrase in Genesis xv. 16: "The iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full"? The context shows that Israel's exodus and occupation of the Promised Land waited upon the Amorite's full cup of iniquity. "Amorite" is a representative name for all the nations then occupying the land. When that cup of iniquity was full God emancipated Israel. The exodus synchronized with a condition in the world. The filling of the land with what was of God required the enemy's extension of his evil nature to its limit; then God acted.

We need say no more. The end time will be marked by 'iniquity abounding'. The rapture of the Church will take place—as its exodus—when "the man of sin is revealed", when the cup of iniquity is full. We are living at a time when there is a positive landslide of moral iniquity. It is called 'the new morality', but it is not morality at all, it is 'non morality'. Look at your map of the world and note how minute is the area of the United Kingdom. It is almost lost in the great areas of the world countries. And yet, in this so small country, four hundred millions of pounds are spent annually on gambling. There is a corresponding expenditure on alcoholic drink, to say nothing of the iniquitous drug business. No wonder that the nation is fighting for economic survival, and has lost its place of honour in the world. Perhaps the worst feature is that governments legislate for these things, and thereby largely condone or recognize them.

If this is true of such a fragment of the world, what of the whole world situation? God is taking account of this. He is causing the simple facts of His salvation to be made known on a scale unprecedented in the world's history, and when the whole world has had its opportunity "then shall the end come". Two things are *unmistakably* evident: the world-encircling by the simple gospel of salvation as never before, and the headlong rush of iniquity to 'fill up the cup'. There is a third feature: it is the ripening of saints by suffering unto the grape-harvest. These three things are the "work in the groaning creation".

(To be continued)

**"Hath he said, and shall he not do it?
... hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?
At the due season shall it be told...
What hath God wrought!"**

Numbers 23. 19,23.

TAPE RECORDINGS

Readers of this paper who do not already know about them may be interested to hear that we now have quite a library of tape recordings. These are of individual messages and of series of messages given at gatherings of the Lord's people in various places by those whose published ministry appears in the pages of this paper. These recordings are available on loan to those who can use them as a means of ministering to those who gather in the Lord's Name, whether few in number or in larger groups. They are also available to those who are

'shut in' and unable to join with others to hear the Lord's Word through spoken ministry. There is no charge for the use of these tapes, which are returnable to us afterwards, but gifts to cover the cost of postage will be appreciated.

These recordings are all made at 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (9 $\frac{1}{2}$ cm.) per second and are on 5" (13 cm.) and 7" (18 cm.) spools. When asking for a tape recording, please indicate the maximum size spool which your recorder will take.

AESCHI, 1968

Already since the beginning of January we have been having enquiries as to whether there will be a further conference at Aeschi, Switzerland, this year. Many of those who were with us last year will have known that the owners of the hotel where the conferences have been held and from whom we have had such happy co-operation through the years were in the process of negotiating the sale of the hotel. This has now gone through and the new owners are in occupation, but we understand that they propose to run the hotel along the same lines and in the same spirit as has been in the past. They will also welcome our conference at the hotel and

we have accordingly booked all the accommodation there in faith for the period:

*Saturday evening, 7th September,
to Monday morning, 16th September, 1968.*

Further details and forms of application for accommodation which will be available in English, French and German, can be obtained by writing to:

*The Conference Secretary,
30 Dunoon Road,
London, S.E.23, England.*

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Aberdare £1; Belfast £1 8s. 6d., £2, 14s. 4d., £1 2s. 6d.; Bengeo 17s. 6d.; Berlin £1; Bideford £1 1s.; Birmingham 12s. 5d.; Boardmills £5; Bournemouth £2 14s. 8d.; Brisbane, Australia £1 15s.; Bromley £5, £1; Brynmawr 18s. 2d.; Carryduff £1; Chadstone, Australia £1; Clacton-on-Sea £1 0s. 9d.; Colwyn Bay £1; Congleton £4, £4 12s.; Crediton £5; Deal £3, £2 14s. 6d., £1 3s. 6d.; Dlam-buzi, South Africa £1; Dublin £1, £2 14s. 9d.; Dunmow £1; Edinburgh 11s., £1; Ewell 10s.; Filey £1 8s. 6d.; Gaoua, Upper Volta £2 11s. 8d.; Gateshead 7s. 11d., £5; Gawcott £1 3s.; Glasgow £2, £2,

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Total: £289 9s. 6d.

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DATES TO REMEMBER

MAY we remind our readers everywhere of the following special gatherings which will be taking place, in the Lord's will, later this year, and earnestly ask for your prayer fellowship for these ministries?

July 8th to 15th

Atlantic States Convocation at Camp Wabanna, Mayo, Maryland, when ministry will be shared by Mr. DeVern Fromke, Mr. Stephen Kaung and the Editor.

Those wishing to attend should write early to: Mr. E. L. Chase, 1370 Ray Street, Norfolk, Virginia 23502, U.S.A.

September 7th to 16th

Conference at Aeschi, Switzerland. Further details and forms of application for accommodation can be obtained by writing to: The Conference Secretary, "A Witness and A Testimony", 30 Dunoon Road, London, S.E.23, England.

"WHITHER THE TRIBES GO UP"

(Psalm cxxii. 4)

"Gather my saints together" (Psalm 1. 5).

IT was a beautiful thought in the mind of God when, in His Divine economy, He prescribed for

the periodic convocations of His people. Away back in the time of Moses He commanded that all the males in Israel should journey three times in every year to some place of His appointment (Deuter-

onomy xvi. 16), the details of which are worth noting. It is clear that David laid great store by such convocations. Psalm cxxii is (by its heading) attributed to David, as were other "Songs of Ascents", or Pilgrimage. It was due to division resulting from spiritual decline that such gatherings ceased for so long, until Josiah had a great recovery celebration (II Chronicles xxxiv. 18, 19). It was therefore a sign of spiritual recovery and strength when the Lord's people so gathered from near and far.

We can briefly summarize the values in the Lord's thought for such convocations:

1. They were times when the universality of God's Church, or "Holy nation", as on the basis of the Passover: (the Cross) was preserved in the hearts of His people. "They left their cities"; that is, they left exclusively parochial ground. By the gathering from all areas they were preserved from all exclusivism, sectarianism, and the peril of isolation. They were made to realize that they were not the all and everything, but parts of a great whole. Thus the ever-present tendency to make God in Christ smaller than He really is was countered.

2. Thus, they were times of wonderful fellowship. People who belonged to the same Lord, but had either never before met, or had been apart for so long, discovered or rediscovered one another, were able to share both "their mutual woes, and mutual burdens bear", or tell of the Lord's goodness and mercy. Loneliness, with all its temptations and false imaginations, was carried away by the fresh air of mutuality. New hope, incentive, and life sent the pilgrims back to their accustomed spheres with the consciousness of relatedness.

3. They were times of consolidation. The Psalm says: "For a testimony unto Israel." The testimony

of the great thing that the Passover (the Cross) means in the heart of His people. A testimony to the unifying power of the blood and body of Christ. The gatherings held a spiritual virtue in the livingness of the presence of the Lord. If they had been assailed by doubts, fears, and perplexities, they went away confirmed, reassured, and established in their common faith.

4. They were times of instruction. The Word of God was brought out, read and expounded. They were taught, and they "spake one to another". In a word, they were fed. There was spiritual food. The initiation of these convocations was connected with three "Feasts" (Deuteronomy xvi). Eating and drinking in the presence of the Lord. They returned fortified, built up, enlightened, and with vision renewed.

5. They were times of intercession. Possibly not every individual was able to "go up". For various reasons—infirmity, age, responsibility, or some other form of detention—kept some from the blessings of joining with the pilgrims. But God's idea of the gatherings was—as put into later words—"My house shall be a house of prayer for all peoples." The New Testament is clear and strong on this point, that the representation of the "Body of Christ" in any place *can*, and *should* have real spiritual values for all its members because "the Body is one".

So, let the lonely, detained and isolated ones realize that when the Lord's people are together, they are being supported. And let those who are not so deprived of the 'gathering together' realize how vital it is, and what a necessity there is in expressing this Divine thought.

Would to God that all our gatherings were after this sort!

"THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER"

3. THE KINGDOM OF LIFE IN CONFLICT WITH THE KINGDOM OF DEATH

"And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden" (Genesis ii. 9).

"And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but

of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis ii. 15-17).

"And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden,

to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Genesis iii. 22-24).

"The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (John x. 10).

"The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was received up, after that he had given commandment, through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles, whom he had chosen: to whom he also shewed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God: and, being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye heard from me: for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (Acts i. 1-5).

"But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8).

WE are occupied in these messages with those words: "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory", and I must take you back for a minute or two to where we began.

You will remember what we said about the last verse of Matthew xvi and the first verse of chapter xvii. Jesus said to His disciples: "There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom", and because there are no chapter divisions in Matthew's writing, the record runs straight on into what is our chapter xvii: "Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: and he was transfigured before them." Many people have thought that the Transfiguration was the fulfillment of those words at the end of chapter xvi, for they think it was the "Son of man coming in his kingdom", but we have given good reasons for saying that that was only half of the truth. The Transfiguration was the King presented in His glory, but it was on the Day of Pentecost that the King came with the Kingdom, spiritually.

THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT THE POWER OF THE KINGDOM

Now it is from that point that we have to take things up. "Thine is the kingdom, and the power." It was on the Day of Pentecost that the Kingdom came in power, for although the disciples had seen the King, they had not received the power of the Kingdom. At the beginning of the Book of the Acts the King is speaking to them "the things concerning the kingdom", and then, having Himself been present as King and speaking these things concerning the Kingdom, He said to them: "Tarry ye in Jerusalem until ye receive power, and ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you not many days hence."

What we want to see at this time, as the Lord helps, is what it is that the Kingdom and the power focus upon. What is it that the Kingdom and the power focus upon? In other words, if the coming of the Holy Spirit is the power of the Kingdom, upon what does the Holy Spirit focus His attention? I hope you will not think that I am exaggerating when I say that this is the most important thing in the Bible, and it is most manifestly true that it is the most important thing in the New Testament. Be very patient with me, for I want to get this very clear. What is the focal point of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Kingdom and the power?

What is the supreme mark of the Holy Spirit's interest? Let me put that in another way: What is the supreme evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit? Now I am not going to give the answers that a lot of people are giving to-day. They are saying: 'Except this . . . and that . . . you don't know anything about the Holy Spirit!' Whatever there may be of other evidences of the Holy Spirit, and we are not discussing that, there is one supreme evidence of the Holy Spirit, and that truth is found in the Bible from the first chapter to the last. There are, of course, a lot of these other things which are not found in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, but you will find this one thing everywhere through the Bible, and it comes out into full manifestation at the beginning of the Book of the Acts. Well, one word: Resurrection. Resurrection is the greatest thing in the Bible, and most certainly in the New Testament.

RESURRECTION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

You open your Bible with this: "The spirit of God was brooding upon the face of the waters." What was He there for? Why was He brooding over the waters? Because the world had been baptized into

the judgment of death. The baptismal waters had overflowed the whole earth in judgment and everything was in a state of darkness and death, so the Spirit of God was there for the purpose of resurrection—and it is something to be noted that it was on the third day of the creation that living things came into being on the earth. The earth began to produce living things on the third day, and everyone knows that it was on the third day that the Lord Jesus rose again.

Well, we cannot pass through the whole Bible on this matter. Undoubtedly Abram was in the realm of death. The beginning of his life with God was like a resurrection from the dead, and the climax of Abraham's life was the resurrection of Isaac. Later Israel as a people were in Egypt, the place of death. The judgment of death was executed upon Egypt, but, as by the power of resurrection, God brought His people out of the land of death and darkness. It is said that they were "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (I Corinthians x. 2), and we know that baptism is through death into life. Later the nation was in Babylon, the land of spiritual death, and there the Lord called deliverance from Babylon a 'resurrection'. The Lord said, through the prophet, "I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, O my people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel" (Ezekiel xxxvii. 12).

That is only a very imperfect indication that resurrection governs the whole of the Old Testament.

RESURRECTION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Now when we come into the New Testament we come to these words of the Lord Jesus to His disciples: "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses." What did that witness turn out to be? It is in one statement: "And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts iv. 33). They were witnesses to two things, or to two sides of one thing. They were witnesses to the *fact* of the resurrection, but they were more than that; they were witnesses to the *power* of the resurrection.

Why did the Lord Jesus dwell forty days with His disciples after His resurrection? Luke puts it into one statement: "He also shewed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days." That is the answer to the question—"many proofs". He was going to leave them without any ground for a question about this matter of the resurrection, and they were

going to have the evidence of the resurrection by many proofs.

Now, dear friends, resurrection is not just a doctrine. It may be Christian teaching, but it is not Christian doctrine without up-to-date evidence. Do you know that all the writing and the teaching about the Lord Jesus and the resurrection was not done until thirty-five years after it all happened? I do want you to get this. You see, we have it in a book, and I could be just telling you what is in the book, for there it says that Jesus died, was crucified, and God raised Him from the dead, and then He appeared to His disciples for forty days. You can read all that in the book—but not one apostle had a book, that is, a New Testament or any part of it. The teaching came after the truth, the fact. What is in the book came thirty-five years after the fact! If people were to ask those apostles: 'Now how do you know that Jesus rose from the dead?', they would never have said: 'It is in the book.' They said: 'It is inside of us!' It is a part of our own spiritual history, and you will only have to wait a little while to see the proof of that. You will do all that you possibly can in this world to kill this testimony, every kind of power that is known will be used to kill this testimony—and this testimony will prove to be greater in power than all the powers in this universe. When Jesus said: "Ye shall be my witnesses", He meant that the apostles themselves would be personal witnesses to this great fact. When Matthew wrote his Gospel, he did so because the things that were going to be in it had already been proved to be true in the world. Christianity had got on very well for at least thirty-five years without any written record, for it rested upon facts which were proved in the lives of those who preached. The impact of this Kingdom was upon a realm greater than this world.

THE KINGDOM OF INDESTRUCTIBLE LIFE

The Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of indestructible life. Do you get that? Let me say it again. This is not only a statement of Christian truth; it is a test of Christian life. The Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of indestructible life, but the Kingdom of God is in conflict with another kingdom, and this is a thing we have been emphasizing all the time. We have seen that the Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of *light* in conflict with the kingdom of darkness, and now it is the Kingdom of God as the Kingdom of *life* in conflict with the kingdom of death.

I wonder if you have ever stopped to think about: "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy

Spirit is come upon you"? I think there are a lot of mistaken ideas about this matter of power. So many people tell us that *this* is what the power of the Holy Spirit is, and that . . . and that. Well, they may be more or less right, but what I am saying to you, dear friends, and what I believe to be the truth, is that the power of the Holy Spirit is the power of Divine life. If I had the time I could prove it from the Scriptures. You have only to see how power is linked with resurrection in the New Testament to see that that *is* the power of the Holy Spirit. What does the Word say about the Holy Spirit's action in raising Jesus from the dead? It focuses upon the life that was in Him, and says that when Jesus was in the grave He did not see corruption. Peter quotes the Scriptures about this—"Thou wilt not suffer ~~thine~~ Holy One to see corruption" (Acts ii. 27), and then applies that Scripture to Jesus and says: "Nor *did* his flesh see corruption" (Acts ii. 31). The whole natural course of things was held in control. And then Paul says: "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you" (Romans viii. 11). You see, the power of the Holy Spirit was demonstrated in suspending the power of death. And then there is that superlative word of the Apostle Paul: "The exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead" (Ephesians i. 19, 20).

RESURRECTION LIFE THE BATTLEGROUND

Well, I think you are getting clear that the supreme mark of the Holy Spirit's presence is resurrection, but this resurrection life is always the battleground between the two kingdoms.

Take the case of the Lord Jesus. It says: "In him was life" (John i. 4), and remember that that is put right at the beginning of John's Gospel and is linked with the incarnation. This Divine life did not come into Jesus at some later period in His life. It was there from the beginning. Why is the little babe, Jesus, immediately the object of the great murderer, Satan? That devil-controlled man, Herod, will murder all the little boys in order to get that one Boy. Satan wants to destroy that life before it gets a chance of growing up! Well, the Holy Spirit saw to it that Herod did not succeed.

Then, when the Lord Jesus came up from the waters of baptism and commenced His preaching ministry, He commenced where all preaching ought to begin—in His own town. He went to Nazareth, and what did He say in the synagogue there? He took the prophet Isaiah and opened at the place

where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" (Luke iv. 18). The Divine life is within, and the Spirit is open. What was the end of that episode? The men of His town took hold of Him and dragged Him toward the edge of the hill in order to throw Him over and destroy Him. The life, the Spirit, and the warfare: the power of death seeking to destroy that Divine life.

And then, in Jerusalem. How many times did they take up stones to stone Him? How many times did they take counsel together to put Him to death? You see, it is the battle for this Divine life.

And what was true of the Lord Jesus was true of His apostles. The power of the Spirit came upon them, the Divine life was in them, and then the battle began! Peter is put in prison. He is brought before the council and the council decide to put him to death. Herod decides to put him to death. He had killed James, and when he saw that that pleased the people, he took Peter also. Stephen is stoned, and what shall we say about Paul? He said: "In deaths oft". They stoned him, and tried to kill him many times.

What is the reason for all this? It is that Divine life. Anything or anyone who really is possessed of this gift of eternal life is a marked person by Satan. Anything that has this Divine life in it is something that Satan cannot endure. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (I Corinthians xv. 26). Death is the great power of Satan, and the power of the kingdom of Satan. Life is the power of the Kingdom of God.

This, of course, means two or three things. The first question arises: If this is true, have we got this Divine life? Let me put that in another way. Does the devil leave you alone? Does the devil tolerate you? If there is any reason to feel that the devil is not troubled about you, that ought to be a very great trouble to you! It is a very good sign if the devil does not like you. Dead things are allies of the devil. A dead church is never troubled by him because it is his ally. Whether it be an individual Christian, or a company of Christians, if they have this Divine life they will be in a battle. It is an easy thing to say, but it is not so easy to experience. It is easy to say: 'Well, I believe that I have everlasting life,' and it is easy to say that we believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but it does involve us in a real conflict.

What I want you to take away with you is just this. This is not just teaching about resurrection. We are to be witnesses *to* the resurrection, and, as I have said, witnessing is not even just taking the Bible and saying: 'It says in the Bible that Jesus rose from the dead.' We must not only have a Bible,

we must *be* the Bible. Why does the Lord allow the devil to attack us? In order that the testimony of the *power* of His resurrection might be manifested in us. Paul put it this way: "Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body" (II Corinthians iv. 10—R.V. margin). We are the testimony to the resurrection. "Ye shall be my witnesses . . . the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon you."

Because that Divine life was in Jesus, in His apostles, and in the early Church, we are in the good of it to-day. Otherwise the best that would have happened would have been that Christianity was a story in some history books of two thousand

years ago. It might even have ceased to be a story at all, so great was the power of the kingdom of death against it, but because this indestructible life was in it, and is in it, it goes on and on through the centuries. The power of death is sometimes so great that we wonder if we will survive and, like Paul, we despair of life, but, as I have said so often, up we come again! With Paul we say: "As dying, and behold, we live" (II Corinthians vi. 9).

This is the Kingdom of God in power in terms of Divine life. "Whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away" (I Corinthians xiii. 8), but that which abides for ever is that life which the Lord has protected from the garden of Eden onwards.

(To be continued)

FROM SEPARATION UNTO REVELATION: FROM REVELATION UNTO WORSHIP

IN our first time together we considered how Moses was one with God in His purpose, and because of that oneness he had a very wonderful authority for God. Then we considered how God wanted a people, His people Israel, to be one with Him in fulfilling His purpose, but they were so pre-occupied with their own things and their own concern for deliverance that they hardly saw anything of the larger intention of God. God's Word says: "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs xxix. 18). The Fenton translation says: "Where a nation has no continuous revelation she fades", and yet another translation says: "Where there is no vision the people cast off restraint."

We ask the question: Why did Israel lack vision? Let us see this, not in a group of people, but in one man—Abraham. In the pathway of Abraham's life we see unfolding revelation. In the beginning God gives him a little flower bud, but in each crisis through his life the flower bud blossoms more and more. I suppose Abraham thought he saw a lot when he had the first bud. It was all in the flower bud, but it had not blossomed. You pardon me, but I look back to the first time that the Lord seemed to speak to me and I saw a bit of purpose—and I thought I saw it all! You know, each petal of the flower looks so different when it opens. Well, we must see what is the controlling, or the governing thing behind revelation.

We will turn first to the book of Genesis, chapter xiii, and here we will consider how God takes Abraham through various steps by which the fuller unfolding of God's purpose is before him. There is one principle that we must get hold of. In this chapter we read that the herdsmen of Lot and the herdsmen of Abraham are quarrelling, for each wants the best watering places and the best grazing land. Abraham tells Lot that it is not right that there should be quarrelling among them, and in verse 9 he says:

"Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

Among Bible teachers in America we have what we call 'the Law of First Mention'. This means that where a term, or word, is used the first time in Scripture it gives us the meaning it will have throughout all of the Scriptures. Now notice: Just as soon as Abraham turns and says to Lot: "Separate thyself", we are going to see that immediately following the separation God gives revelation. It says in verse 11: "*Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from other*", and the word comes again in verse 14: "*And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him*". This word 'separation' is used three times, but im-

mediately after separation God can give revelation. You see, this pictures 'the Law of First Mention'. Now let us see how this works.

When Abraham said to Lot: "Is not the whole land before thee?" how much did Lot see? All Lot could see was the best watering-places and the best grazing land in the valley. Do you know who Lot was looking out for? Lot was looking out for Lot! That is why he chose the best, but he did not see the whole land. He only saw, out of his own appetite, what he wanted to see. People are so prone to say: 'If I don't look out for myself, who will?', but I want you to see who looks out for Abraham now. Immediately after Lot is separated from Abraham, God says to Abraham: "Now, Abraham, you look out. . . ."*Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward.*" I think this is wonderful, for it did seem as though Abraham had given the very best to Lot, but, you see, Abraham and Sarah had moved up to the mountains and they had a higher viewpoint. Looking out through God's eyes Abraham could see the whole land, in all four directions. It always works this way, but until there is a separating, we cannot see the fuller.

If we had a whole week on this we could see the seven separations in the life of Abraham, and how meaningful each one is. After he was separated from his family and country, God gave revelation. Separated then from his father, Terah, at Haran, God unveiled a little more. Was it not good of the Lord to allow Abraham to have Lot as a prop to lean upon for a little while? But there always comes a time when He must take away the thing we are leaning upon that we may learn to lean more upon Him. Oh, how often have I seen a group of saved young people together, but as soon as some of them begin to press further on to the thing that God wants, there is a separating. I want you to notice that Lot did not move all of a sudden down to Sodom; he just pitched his tent toward Sodom. There have been times when I have had to put my arm round a dear brother and say: 'You are pitching your tent toward Sodom.' He has not taken a big move away: he is just casting his eye a bit in that direction. Then after this separation from Lot we find Lot falling into captivity to the nations, or the tribes, down in the valley. When Abraham gets word of this he arms his household, goes down, and wins the battle to liberate Lot. On his way back he meets Melchizedek, and the king of Sodom, who says: 'Give me all the people you have taken captive, but, Abraham, you take all the possessions.' I like this separation now! "*And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the*

Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich." In this separation we see that Abraham is not grasping for material things. Could mere things ever really satisfy him? Because of this separation, immediately, in chapter xv. i, we read of the revelation that God gives him: "*After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*"

Do you see this? If Abraham could have been satisfied with the mere possessions, it would have meant nothing to him for the Lord to say: "*I am thy exceeding great reward.*" Oh, I have seen some of the Lord's people have things taken away from them, only afterward to have them say: 'Lord, You are so much more wonderful now!'

You may study these separations for yourselves. There are at least seven of them, but there are that many unveilings of God's purpose to Abraham. We see him being separated from Ishmael, a son whom he loved after the flesh, but it is after he takes Isaac up to the mount and is separated from him that the blossom seems to open the widest.

But I want you to see something else very wonderful. Every time Abraham has a fuller unveiling, or revelation, he builds something. In Genesis xiii we read in verses 14 to 17 about what Abraham sees, and then in verse 18 we read: "Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, *and built there an altar unto the Lord.*" What is an altar for? Altars are always for worship. Let us see that revelation is never for itself, but is always unto something. Every crisis that the Lord takes us through, in which there is a separating, is His opportunity to reveal more of Himself to us. Oh, that we had time to follow through these earlier chapters where we see God revealing Himself in new names! Each new significant name flows out through some new unveiling of Himself. Did you ever meet someone and enjoy fellowship with them at first, but as you began to plumb the depth of their inner being you saw certain things that caused you to disdain? But with another person, the more you saw into the depth of their being the more you saw quality, character and virtue? The English word 'worship' is a combination of 'worth-ship'. I am finding this difficult to explain, but the Lord must help you to see that He is bringing us to see how much more worthy He is than we ever realized. Each new separation brings a further revealing, that there might be a fuller worship unto the Lord. Remember that everything

in the Bible is working toward the Book of Revelation, and what is the one thing the people are doing there? They gather around the throne and, because they have had a revelation, they are saying: "Worthy is the Lamb!"

In earlier days, when I would see a group of people gathered in a meeting, I wanted to scold them because they could not worship better, but, you see, worship can only be a form unless we have had new separations, bringing new revelations, allowing fuller worship.

However, we must see that it is not merely outward separations that God is after, but inward separations. In the book of Hebrews, chapters 3 and 4, we have a picture of Israel and God's longing for her to enter into His rest. You see, Israel lived in the plane where she saw the miraculous acts of the Lord, but Moses had been enrolled in God's schoolroom and lived on the plane where he could see the ways of the Lord. Psalm ciii. says: "He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel" (verse 7). Some people think it is quite spiritual if they can see the acts of God. If He were to put a pillar of fire over this room, or let manna fall, this morning, we would have a big crowd tonight! But tomorrow they would come back and say: 'Lord, let us have two pillars!' In America we have so many people who live on the 'acts' level, but I trust we have all been in Moses' schoolroom, learning the ways of the Lord.

We read in Hebrews iii. 8: "Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works (or acts) forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with this generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest." We saw last time how Israel wanted just to be at ease, but they did not enter into real rest.

Now in chapter iv we will see this work of separating which is so necessary. In verses 11 and 12 we read: "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

First, we have the separation, or the dividing, of soul and spirit. There are so many people who think

they are worshipping God, but it is only with their mentality. They try to think themselves, or feel themselves, or will themselves, into the presence of God. That is merely of the soul. I must confess that for many years, when I came to the Lord's Table, I did not know how to worship in spirit. It was not just new thoughts about the Lord that I needed, but a further unveiling of Himself by the Spirit. Do you see how this separating of soul from spirit can help bring about real revelation? And then the High Priest takes His knife, as though to cut down and sever joint from marrow. Can you see that a mere knife could never get the marrow out of the joints? Doctors tell me that the marrow is so in the bone that it can only be boiled out. But there is something much more wonderful than that here, for all the blood is made by, or in the marrow. The marrow is the factory of the blood. Now the joint is always moving for activity, but because all the life is in the blood, there is something else that should be the source of activity. I see so many people who are bundles of busy, busy activity. What they need to have revealed is the real life source that should control the joint. Activity of itself is mere motion, but God sits in the marrow to control the joints from there. The Lord will have to reveal that to you!

But there is a third separating here. It says that the word "is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart". Here is my thought, but hidden at the back of it is the real purpose, or the intention. Have you ever had the Holy Spirit take His knife, after you have said one thing, and say: 'But you meant something else'? Only God can reveal, or help us to see the difference between this thought and this intent. I have sensed through the years in meetings that there is sometimes a strange and wonderful cutting, separating, dividing power which can never be accomplished by the natural man.

I must close, but what we must remember is that it is not merely separation from. Separation from things is only that we might move unto the Lord more fully. You can always tell a separation from, for the person is talking about: 'Poor me! How much I have had to give up!' But the one who has been separated unto has seen something, and he can only say: 'Oh! How wonderful!' What did Abraham lose to Lot? Nothing! God just lifted him up to the larger viewpoint where he could see in all four directions.

DEV. F.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

TO BE A PILGRIM

THE Pilgrims were tired. They were walking against time. And now they had lost their way. There were five of them and they were not really pilgrims but campers. There were five tents in the Boys' Holiday Camp which their Bible Class had organized for them. Each tent held five boys and each tent had a name. So there were Sowers, Heralds, Warriors, and Ambassadors as well as Pilgrims, and, of course, there was much rivalry between them.

In addition to the ordinary games and fun which made their camp such a happy place there were occasional special competitions between the different tents. At the moment the Heralds seemed to have the edge on the other four, but the Pilgrims were coming up from behind and making a tremendous effort to become the champions.

Today had been the day of the final Pathfinder contest. If the Pilgrims could win this they would finish as the champion tent. For the contest each leader had been handed a map and a route, with various landmarks and points of call. The five routes were all different, but the distances were equal and the first party home would be adjudged winners. They had been given packed lunches and set off after breakfast. Now it was late afternoon and the Pilgrims were on almost the last lap of their journey. They had left Westlake some way behind, and were pressing on towards Northfield, their last place of call before the final rush home to camp. Time was all important and they were tired.

They had reached a place where five paths intersected, and had expected to find there a signpost which would show which of these paths led to Northfield. But they had been disappointed. At first it seemed from a distance as if there were no signpost at all, but as they drew nearer they saw that it was there, but it lay flat on the ground. The post had rotted and either the wind had blown it down, or some mischievous person had given it a last push and made it useless. Whatever the cause, there it lay, and no one could tell which of the paths was the right one.

John, who was in charge of the party, asked for the opinions of the other four. First to speak—as usual—was Peter. "I feel sure that it is straight on," he said. "Hurry up! Let's get moving at once or the Heralds will beat us." "You may be wrong, Peter," said John, "you often are. We mustn't rush the

matter." "Come on," urged Peter, "let's get moving. If we find that it is wrong we may find another sign, or we can come back and start again." John turned to Stephen who gave his opinion that the correct path was the first on the left, which was enough to ensure that James would declare his view that it was the one on the right. Just like James, John thought, he always has to be contrary. Of course, he may be right. In any case this left only Andrew and himself, so he turned to him and asked, "What about it? Is it first left, right or straight on?" Whether John would have accepted a two to one majority or not, we do not know, for Andrew also had his own ideas and thought that it was the second on the left. "Oh dear!" exclaimed John, "what shall we do? Every one of you wants to go a different way. There are four chaps and four paths. Which is the right one?" "No" interjected Peter, who liked his little joke, "there are five chaps and five ways! Which one will you choose, John, the one we have just come along?"

At first John was a bit nettled by this and told Peter not to be an ass, but then an idea struck him. "Right," he shouted, "that is one thing we do know. We know the path which comes from Westlake. Come on boys, lift up the signpost and swivel it round until the arm marked WESTLAKE points back along the path we have come by. No, move it round a bit more! Hold it!" They held it, and all looked up at the five arms of the post. There was NORTHFIELD on the arm pointing second to the left. "Come on," cried Andrew, letting go of the post again, "I win!" "This is the way," said John, "but we must hurry if any of us are going to win. No more talking, you chaps. Walk! And keep on walking!"

Great was the rejoicing that evening in the Pilgrims' tent. They had just made it. And of course the whole camp had to hear of John's detective act with the signpost. It had been done in the nick of time. If they had waited to argue or to investigate further they would have been too late. But the Pilgrims were champions. And they were very proud of it.

At least they were until the Camp-fire Service after supper. For in his message the Leader spoke on looking back and read the verse about the men who were "strangers and pilgrims" which said "And if indeed they had been mindful of that

country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better country . . ." (Hebrews xi. 15). The Leader said that on the whole looking back was a bad thing, at least if it included a desire to go back. "But there are times," he said, "when a remembrance of where we have come from may help to keep us on the right road. Abraham may have seen a signpost sometimes which pointed to UR. It was the way back. That was the place of the old life, the place of idols and an empty heart. He had left that behind. And then if he turned his back to Ur he would be facing the right direction to walk with God. Israel often saw signposts pointing to EGYPT where they had come from. It was the land of their slavery and their shame. When they turned their backs on Egypt, Isaiah and other prophets told them, then they would be able to walk in the ways of God."

"And how about the Pilgrims?" asked the Leader—John and Peter and the other three. Had they

learned their lesson? All true Christians have turned towards Christ, and that means turning their back on the world. He asked the boys what they would do after the camp when they got back to their ordinary life and saw the many signposts which pointed back to sin and self. Would they remember that this was the way of living which they had left behind? If they did, it would help them to keep moving in the right direction. Pilgrims, yes and Sowers and Heralds and Warriors and Ambassadors too, all of them should keep their old life at their backs and look straight forward to the way of life and blessing in Christ!

Did we say that the Pilgrims were no longer proud of their exploit with the signpost? Perhaps that would not be quite true. But more than proud, they were grateful. Grateful to be reminded never to look back, except to gain fresh help for moving forward. That is the way for pilgrims. And that is the way in which pilgrims become champions.

H. F.

THE SILENCE OF SOVEREIGNTY AND THE ACTION OF FAITH

"And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice" (I Kings xix. 11, 12).

"And he said, Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of trenches. For thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain, yet that valley shall be filled with water: and ye shall drink, both ye and your cattle and your beasts. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord: he will also deliver the Moabites into your hand" (II Kings iii. 16-18).

THESE are two very well-known stories and you have had many messages from the Lord based on them. There are truly many things in the whole of these two incidents of considerable spiritual value, but for now I want to concentrate upon one thing alone which will not be new to you, but which has a new and stronger emphasis in my own heart. It is, I believe, something of preciousness, wrapped up in a great deal more in these records.

A CRISIS BROUGHT ABOUT BY HUMAN FAILURE

In both of the instances from which we have read there was a crisis. In the first it was a crisis in the life of a prophet, and in the second a crisis in the life of a king. In both cases the crisis had been brought about by human weakness and failure. Elijah had inwardly collapsed and asked the Lord to take away his life. It was human weakness and failure. In the second case Jehoshaphat had made an alliance with Ahab's son. While Jehoshaphat himself was a man almost blameless in his own character and one of the outstanding men of truth for God in the difficult years of the divided kingdom, yet he did some unwise things and one of these was getting into touch with and allowing himself to be drawn into this conspiracy to go out in campaign against the Moabites. It was human failure which brought about the great difficulty and something which threatened absolute disaster.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE GRACE OF GOD

But while it is true that there was a crisis in both cases and in both cases a crisis brought about by the weakness of humanity, yet we see the triumph of the grace of God, a glorious issue from all just because of Divine grace.

THE SILENCE OF SOVEREIGNTY

Now the point upon which I am focusing at the moment is the silence of sovereignty and the sovereignty in Divine silence when the Lord's people are involved. There are times, of course, when the Lord breaks silence and comes out in a terrible manifestation of majesty, of might, unto destruction. But that is not His normal way and specially not His normal way with His people and with His servants. His normal way is silence. In both of these instances, as you see, there was a great silence which embodied tremendous power in which the mighty sovereignty of God was bound up. It is really a matter of the Holy Spirit in relation to the covenant purpose of God and in relation to the Lord's honour, for I take it that the still, small voice (or, as the margin has it, that voice of gentle stillness) is very typical of the Holy Spirit, if it was not the Holy Spirit Himself. I also take it that those waters which came down to save the situation in that terrible crisis in the life of Jehoshaphat are typical of the Holy Spirit, but how silently they came! He was not in the whirlwind, not in the hurricane, not in the earthquake, not in the fire—it must have been very tempestuous round about!—but in the voice of gentle stillness. "Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain", indeed, you will see nothing until it has happened.

How typical this is of very much of the mighty sovereign activity of the Holy Spirit! Take each of these instances. Elijah: well, the situation did seem to demand some tremendous demonstration of Divine power. Although there had been that wonderful demonstration on Mount Carmel, it did seem that Jezebel was even so in the place of greater power than Elijah at the moment. How strange a thing this human nature is, how deceptive and desperately sick these human hearts are! Even when we have seen much of the mighty works of God, how utterly despondent we can become after all. It is true, as James says, that "Elijah was a man of like passions with us" (v. 17), but put it round the other way and it is just as true, we are people of the same infirmities as Elijah. Human nature is the same everywhere and it did at any rate at this point seem as though a mighty demonstration of Divine power was the only thing that could result in survival for the servant of God and what he represented, the Lord's covenant purpose. Sometimes it seems that the indispensable necessity and irreducible minimum is some sovereign act, unmistakable in its clearness of definition, something that no one could fail to acknowledge as an act of God that has saved the situation. It needs God's intervention

for the situation to be saved and the vessel of the Lord to be vindicated. God must now do something that perhaps He had never done before. This can be true to our own personal spiritual experience, it may be true to the work of God with which we are bound up, it may be true as to the whole testimony of the Lord involved in the world. The situation might just now be something like that for many people on this earth with all going to the enemy, all being lost.

A CRISIS OF ENLARGEMENT

It seemed like the end for Elijah and I would not like to have been the man to argue with him at that point for I am perfectly sure that I could not have moved him or persuaded him that things were not as bad as they seemed. No, it was settled for him that this was an end. The best thing to do would be for him to pass out, to die. But what so strongly and desperately seemed like an end was really a crisis of enlargement. There is no doubt about it that the introduction of Elisha after this crisis was for enlargement. Elisha inherited a double portion of his master's spirit and carried on his work with mighty enlargement. And it all turned on this very point of apparent hopelessness!

How was this really a crisis of enlargement? It was not by a hurricane. God did not just sweep in at this point with the irresistible wind carrying all before it. It was not in the earthquake, upheaving and overturning everything, shattering and breaking. It was not in the fire, consuming and burning and destroying. The crisis of enlargement did not come in any of those ways or in anything like those things. It came in a voice of gentle stillness, a still small voice.

We pass on to the other incident in the life of Elisha. The emergency had arisen by reason of those who had embarked upon this campaign against the Moabites in the foolishness of an unequal yoke, a forbidden association, an alliance with the household of Ahab and with Samaria. Jehoshaphat and Jehoram went out to the wilderness, they went to the battle, and in the wilderness their water supplies gave out. Disaster threatened and was imminent. The whole of their army—and it would seem that that army was all that Israel could put into the field—and the whole nation was involved in this terrible threat. You know what happened. Jehoram said, 'God has brought us out to destroy us'. That is the reaction of unbelief. We need not put the blame objectively on to Jehoram. When we get into situations such as this, there is always that inside us which will say, 'The Lord is against us, He in-

tends to finish us now'. Jehoram took that attitude. But Jehoshaphat, a man of God, turned to the Lord, called for a prophet and the result was: 'The Lord will make this valley to be filled with water'.

THE CALL TO FAITH TO ACT

In such a situation the call is to faith to act. Faith is called upon to act when all seems hopeless, just to act. Here God is not accepting passive faith, He calls for action, the action of faith. The valley was there. What do you want more than a valley if you are going to have a river? The natural situation seemed to be sufficient to provide God with a channel, but God is not just taking that. He says, 'You dig even in the valley. There is something extra called for from you, make ditches in the valley.' That seems superfluous, unnecessary. Surely the situation itself is sufficient, it provides the Lord with a ground. No, that is passive. In this situation you have to do something about it in faith, to go the extra, to take action. I am sure you see the point. So often we are in a situation which seems to be most suitable for anything the Lord would do, a situation which is itself a ground for the Lord. What more does the Lord want? He wants some action on your part right in that situation, the action of faith.

How often a new practical committal has been God's way when all seems lost. Some of us remember how in the First World War when the whole situation seemed lost, when France was well-nigh overrun and the enemy was carrying everything before him and the slaughter was terrible, Field-Marshal Haig was asked, 'What are you going to do?' His answer was, 'I am going to take the offensive', and he did and turned the whole thing. When it seemed hopeless he took the offensive. Very often that is what the Lord calls for when things are like that. He calls on us to do something, not to throw up our hands and say that the day is lost, but in faith to do something. They had to make ditches in the valley.

The story is told and the lesson is very patent. A seemingly hopeless situation exists which can be put down to our foolishness, our folly, our weakness, our failure. There is a good deal for which we can blame ourselves if we want to, if we are so inclined, but the grace of God still abounds and the grace of God says, 'You are Mine, nothing is hopeless if you are Mine. If you are bound up with My covenant purpose, nothing is hopeless, I am going to fulfil it.' All that is left for you to do is to take the attitude of faith and to act upon it. However badly you may feel about your own weaknesses and

mistakes, however badly you may feel about the situation as an impossible and hopeless one, you belong to the Lord and His covenant purpose is bound up with you and therefore nothing is finally hopeless. But you must believe that and you must do something about your belief. You must act in faith, rise up and act.

So these people, these soldiers, turned to digging, digging ditches in a valley, doing something that seemed to be unnecessary, and the result was that there came waters. Where from? Well, there came waters, that is all. There was no sound of rain, no seeing of rain, no sound of wind, nothing ocular and nothing aural, just a quiet, silent movement of the Spirit of God. It just happened. And our history is going to be very largely like that.

Why am I saying this? Because we are so often found looking for, praying for, expecting, some mighty shattering intervention of God in our situation, the evidence and the proof that God is with us, something that we can lay hold of, something to which we can point, something that we can report on. But it does not happen and again and again when we have passed most critical points in our history, when we have turned most serious corners, we have to ask ourselves how we did it, how it came to pass. Well, it just happened. It undoubtedly involved very great power on the part of God and there is no doubt that if He had not done it, there would have been disaster. But it is done. How? We thought this and that, we thought the Lord must come this way or that way, we were showing Him the way, telling Him what He must do, and He never came our way, He never did it like that at all. It just, so to speak, happened. We are going on like that. It may be from time to time that the Lord will show His hand. He is the God of the sudden leap as much as He is the God of the long process, but normally the way of faith is this way: silently—almost imperceptibly—without any power to detect that He is doing it, it is being done.

It is not just that we get over the stile and continue across another field until we come to another stile. This is a way of enlargement and God is enlarging in this way, silently, almost imperceptibly. He is going on with His covenant purpose. That is the larger part of the Church's history. If we could write the whole history of the Church now, or read it, we should find that while there have been times when God broke in in wonderful ways, they are much fewer than those periods in which God silently and hiddenly worked and did marvellous things, kept His Church going, but kept His Church on the way of enlargement. And that is the story of our own inner experiences.

I feel this may be a word for us as a people and perhaps for some in their own spiritual life. If you are expecting the Lord to do some extraordinary, miraculous thing in your situation, it may never happen. What God does intend and has intended will happen, if we will believe Him and act on our belief. That does sometimes mean launching out on to water where it would be easy to sink if it were not for the Lord. "Ye shall not see wind, neither

shall ye see rain, yet that valley shall be filled with water: and ye shall drink . . ." and "there came water". That is all. Not in the hurricane, the earthquake or the fire, but in the voice of gentle stillness they turned the corner and got through the crisis. For Elijah it was followed by the command of God to anoint Elisha. God's answer to such situations is enlargement, not less but more.

"THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM"

10. THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S GRACE IN JESUS CHRIST.

Reading: Psalm li.

"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star" (Revelation xxii. 16).

I THINK it is a very wonderful thing that the Bible almost finishes with a word about David, and I think that you will agree with me. Here, right at the end, our Lord is saying: "I Jesus . . . am the root and the offspring of David." 'As the root, David came from Me. As the offspring I came from David.' That is why the Lord here calls Himself by the simple name of Jesus. He says: "I Jesus have sent mine angel." Now the Apostles and New Testament teachers very rarely used that name, for they almost always spoke of Him as the *Lord Jesus*, or *Jesus Christ our Lord*. It was very rare for them just to use His name 'Jesus', because that was the name before His resurrection and exaltation. 'Jesus' was the name of His humiliation, the name of the One who died for us, the One who was made sin in our place. 'Jesus' was the name of the Saviour: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew i. 21). 'Jesus' was the name of the One who "humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (Philippians ii. 8). And here, right at the end of everything, He says: "I Jesus"—"I Jesus . . . am the root and offspring of David."

David! That name brings back many things to us. David was the greatest king that Israel ever had, but what was his greatness based upon? We have read that Psalm, but did you notice the inscription at the head of it? Here it is:

"A Psalm of David: when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba."

This Psalm is one of the most terrible things in the Bible! It is the Psalm of a man whose heart is broken because of his sin and because of the terrible nature of it. Do you remember the story?

There was a man named Uriah and he had a very beautiful wife. At a time when Israel went out to battle David, instead of going out with his forces, went up on to the housetop, and from there he saw this very beautiful woman. His passions rose within him and he said: 'I must have that woman! She is already married to Uriah, but I must have her somehow.' So he said to his captains: 'I want you to put Uriah in the front rank of the army and then go forward to meet the enemy. Then, when the enemy attacks, let the army fall back and leave Uriah alone.' That is what they did and, of course, the plan succeeded. Uriah was killed, and then David's captains came back and said: 'Uriah is dead.' David sent to Uriah's wife, Bath-sheba, and said: 'Uriah is dead. Come and be my wife.' So David got Bath-sheba, as he had planned, but the Lord said to Nathan, the prophet: 'Go to David and tell him a parable of a poor man who had but one sheep, and of another man who had many sheep, but this man who had the many sheep stole the one little sheep belonging to the poor man.' And as David listened to the story his wrath rose within him and he said: 'The man who would do a thing like that is worthy of death. He shall die!' And Nathan said: 'Thou art the man!' David had committed murder by planning to do so, and, do you know, by doing that he had put himself right out-

side of all the Lord's sacrifices for sin. The laws of God through Moses had provided for a sacrifice for every other kind of sin. There was even a sacrifice for the man who killed somebody by accident, for the man who did kill somebody but had never intended to do so, but for the man who thought it out and planned it, then carried it out, there was no sacrifice. That was called 'blood-guiltiness', and there was no sacrifice provided by God for that. Such a man might bring his offerings, his sacrifice and his burnt offerings, but God would take no pleasure in them, and that is where David was in Psalm li:

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness. . . . Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. . . . My sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight. . . . Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. . . . Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. . . . Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation. . . . Thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it: thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering."

David is saying: 'I have not anything that I can offer. I have put myself outside of all God's provision. My condition is absolutely hopeless, but for one thing, and that one thing is Thy grace.'

Do you think now that it is a wonderful thing that the Bible ends with: "I am the root and offspring of David"? To put that in another way, the Bible ends by saying that God's grace is greater than the greatest sin, and is sufficient for the man who has no hope. I think it is a wonderful thing that after this God did make David so great, so that his name is one of the greatest names in history.

Solomon was the second son of that woman Bathsheba, and the very name 'Solomon' means for us the greatest glory in the Bible. Jesus Himself will

acknowledge that. He spoke of "even Solomon in all his glory" (Matthew vi. 29), but "a greater than Solomon is here" (Matthew xii. 42). First of all, you have this wonderful greatness of Solomon from a man who had sinned like David. How can you explain that? It is explained because a "greater than Solomon is here". In what way is Jesus greater than Solomon? Because He will take someone who has gone to the deepest depths of sin and raise them to the highest place in glory. That is greatness indeed! It is the greatness of the grace of God which has been brought to us in Jesus.

"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churchas." What is the greatest testimony of Jesus in the Church? It is what Paul calls "the exceeding riches of his grace" (Ephesians ii. 7).

So we end our studies in Revelation upon this very high and glorious note. Jesus says: "I am . . . the root and offspring of *David*". Fancy Jesus associating Himself with David! That is grace indeed!

But remember that there was something in David. 'If there is no sacrifice provided by Moses for my sin, there is a sacrifice provided by Jesus.' David said: "Thou delightest not in sacrifice . . . thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

The message speaks for itself. It is too great, too wonderful for words! How great is the grace of God in Jesus Christ! And the way into that grace is not by any works that we can do, nor by any offering that we can make. It is by a broken and a contrite heart that comes to the cross of Jesus and sees there God's sacrifice for sin which no other sacrifice can put away.

And so we sing:

"Plenteous grace with Thee is found;
Grace to cover all my sin."

(Concluded)

DIVINE ORDER—IN CHRIST (I)

WE have opened our meeting with the singing of a very old hymn—"Tell me the old, old story". And when we have sung "Tell me the old, old story" so heartily, we are confronted with the most difficult thing that has ever been called for by angels and men. To put the story of Jesus and His love to music is to employ the whole range and compass of

every note of every octave, and then to want more notes. It reaches the highest; it goes down to the deepest. It is the very range and compass of His Person and His work that show how great He is; so much greater greatness than all others. It is the universality of the Lord Jesus that is His supremacy. There is no language or tongue in all human

speech into which that story cannot be interpreted, which cannot grasp something of its meaning. That has been proved, and is being proved continually—it compasses all language and all languages. Although it has taxed and over-taxed the greatest intellects of all the ages, it is enjoyed, appreciated and loved by the simplest and the most unlearned. It meets the problems and difficulties of the mature and the aged, and yet it is the delight of little children. Of all the various temperaments into which the human race is classified, there is no temperament that does not find in Him something to meet its own peculiar problems and demands. Jesus and His love are an ocean of the profoundest mysteries and treasures. **He is a mine of inexhaustible wealth.** In a word, **it is going to take** all eternity to reveal His fullness. That is what we are up against when we so easily sing: 'Tell me the old, old story.' It just cannot be told!

But it may be that in these hours of our fellowship together a little more of the light of that story will break upon our hearts. There is a phrase in the Word: 'Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty; they shall behold the land of far distances', and that two-fold statement can quite truly, and rightly, be applied to Him. He is the King in His beauty; and He is also the Land of Far Distances.

Now, to come into a living relationship with the Lord Jesus is to come, sooner or later, to the impasse of the incomprehensible, and we just have to say: 'Lord, You are beyond me! Lord, I cannot comprehend; You are too much for me!' That, of course, on the one side, means difficulties, for it puts us into a difficult position in that we cannot trace Him, follow Him, and understand Him. But, on the other side, we would not have it otherwise; we would not have a 'little' Christ whom we could comprehend and altogether understand with our little minds. No, He is beyond us altogether, and what you and I, as His people, are destined to come to if we go on with Him, is just this: that He is ever reaching farther and farther beyond us, and drawing us out beyond ourselves, beyond our resources of mind and will, yet drawing us on, and making us know that we have got to go on. We just cannot stand still; we have to go on.

Now, dear friends, the Bible rests upon one tremendous affirmation, upon a truth which it affirms in a thousand different ways, and that truth is this: that everything related to the great destiny for which man was created is bound up inseparably with the knowledge of Christ. You have two tremendous things there: the greatness of the destiny for which man was created—and the Bible has a very great deal to say about that. That destiny, that great

Divine purpose in creation, demands for its realization the knowledge of Jesus Christ; it is bound up with the knowledge of God's Son. Within that compass of Divine purpose we have man's creation, man's redemption and salvation, man's transformation, man's glorification, and then man's eternal vocation. These are all features of the great purpose of man's creation and I repeat them: salvation, transformation, glorification, and eternal vocation, and all that rests upon the knowledge of Jesus Christ. None of it is possible without knowing Him.

We look at a little child from the day that it comes into this world, and the one thing the parents are watching for continually, and waiting for, is the sign of intelligence. For the normal development of a human life is marked by growing intelligence; that is; in the first place, the ability to identify objects. It is very simple, but very real, when, first of all, the parent is able to recognize that the child knows him or her—the child identifies. And so its development of its very life is marked by this growing intelligence, this ability to identify objects, and then to interpret and grasp their meaning. It comes so slowly, and yet it is there. To apply those recognized, identified objects to practical value, to turn them to account, to know that they mean this, and that they are meant for this or that; the application of their intelligence to practical needs or situations—I say these are the indications of normal development and it is along the line of growing intelligence.

If that is true in the natural, it is equally true in the spiritual. The mark of spiritual growth, the growth of the spiritual life, is this power to recognize the meaning of Christ; to identify Him in things; to interpret Him—the power to interpret Him and to explain Him; and then to apply Him to practical situations, our own and others. That is 'knowing' the Lord. And I say again, that is the way of spiritual growth to full manhood, to the fulfillment of the ultimate vocation. And let it be recognized at once that what is true in the natural is true in the spiritual in this sense—God created man with an object. A life has missed its way and purpose if it fulfils no vocation and if it becomes an end in itself. Vocation is the object, the end, of all life and all development. That is true in the spiritual life. The Bible reveals progress toward eternal vocation, and essentially along the line of spiritual intelligence, or the knowing of Christ.

THE PRE-EMINENT FACTOR IN LIFE

God has placed supreme importance upon this very basis. Hear His Word: 'Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither

let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me.' Above all other things in which men do or may glory, God puts this, with His tremendous emphasis: *Thus saith the Lord*. The supreme thing with Him is to understand and to know Him.

We have read how the Lord Jesus put this matter in relation to the most vital thing, even that of eternal life, and there is no more vital thing than that. In one sense eternal life is the key to the Bible. 'And this is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, Jesus Christ' (John xvii. 3). Life eternal, with the Lord Jesus, is placed upon this basis of *knowing Him*. That man Paul, Paul the aged, with a long life of *learning* Christ, and of perhaps incomparable revelation of Jesus Christ, is now standing at the gate of eternity and crying: ". . . that I may know Him. . . ." You might say that that was *the cry* with which Paul entered into heaven. And alongside of that, you remember, he said: "I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians iii. 8). Not to *learn*, dear friends, is to stop growing, for growing is along that line. The knowledge of Christ is the beginning of salvation; the knowledge of Christ is the whole meaning of the Christian life; the knowledge of Christ is God's motive in all discipline and training. You and I find ourselves in the hands of the "Father of our spirits", who is putting us through a hard school, and on a difficult way. And the one question which should always be in our hearts is not 'Why?' as to His dealings with us in a general sense, nor any murmuring, but: 'What do you want me to learn by this? What is here of Christ that I am to understand by this means?' For, I repeat, all the dealings of God with us have but this one thing in view: our education as to Christ, the knowledge of Christ. The very essence of glory will be the knowledge of Christ. Perhaps that sounds a strange word, but it is not so difficult to understand. When at last we see in Him the answer to all our questions and our problems, and He becomes the answer to every cry of our need and heart, we see Him as He is, and He fills all the vacuum of our longing, that will be glory. It is now in the smallest ways, is it not? If, after a very difficult time when we have been brought through deep and terrible suffering, we have our eyes open to see something of Christ that meets our need, that is glory! *He* becomes our glory. Glory is not just something of an external, shining radiance—it is a state of heart, it is full satisfaction, full ratification, and possession of a full explanation

and understanding. That will be wonderful! So the knowledge of Christ will be the very essence of glory.

But having said all that, mark you, this is not, in the first place, a knowledge in the reason, nor the satisfying of the natural mind and intelligence. This knowledge of Christ is essentially, in the first place, spiritual knowledge. It is what we might call 'life-knowledge'. It means life; it brings life; it is life; we know by life. We may not yet be able to interpret it in human language, even to our own satisfaction, or be able to explain it, but we have come into a knowledge of the Lord which has brought life and which is life. "This is life . . . that they may know." This kind of knowing is life-knowledge and is altogether deeper than natural intelligence. We do not say, in the first place, that now we know because the thing has been explained. We say: 'I know because that meets my heart need, because something has happened in me through that. It has brought me into life.' That is spiritual knowledge.

And it is by way of experience. The Lord's school of instruction, training, teaching, is not to tell us things, or to write them in a book for us to study and memorize, and then say: 'We know now!' This is not a manual education at all. It is the education, the knowledge, that comes by experience, and experience simply means that something has been done *in* us by a certain process. We know in that way. We know the Lord in our constitution, and how much better it is to know Him constitutionally—that is, in our being. He has become a part of our being, and not just something explained to our minds.

That is the way in which we *learn* Christ. It is very practical—deeply practical.

CHRIST, THE EMBODIMENT OF HEAVENLY ORDER

That is all by way of leading up to our present particular consideration. You will realize, in the light of this little that has been said, that Christ is many-sided, vari-sided. He is far too great to be comprehended, though we spent all our days trying to do so. And we can only look at Him from time to time from particular standpoints.

In the light of the situation in the world, and in the Church, and churches, I have been very greatly exercised about one thing. I have put it aside as being too difficult, but I am compelled to face it. It is concerning Divine order. Of all the ways in which Christ is to be known unto life and unto growth, there is one way in the Word of God which, we might be tempted to say, is supremely important—though we could say that of every way in which He

is to be known. However, that one way is this: To rightly understand Christ is to see that He relates to a heavenly and eternal order of things.

That word 'order' lies right at the back of everything in the Bible. Everything that the Bible has to say to us is related to an eternal order that God intended to obtain in this universe. And His key to that order, without which nothing of all His glorious purpose is possible, is Christ. The Person of Christ is the very embodiment of all the principles of a universal order. If we could comprehend, discern, understand and know Christ, we should see that in that one universal Person are gathered up all the laws of a great heavenly order.

We are told that "in Him, through Him, by Him, and unto Him were all things created". His creative activity at work is marked by a marvellous order, and we shall say more about this as we go on. Creation, as it comes from His hand, as it is projected by Him, is a marvellous system of co-ordinated forces and objects in a wonderful relatedness and harmony. Everything is in its own place, everything is in its own time and everything has its own function. And so you could go on, but, I repeat, we will come back to it.

His redemptive work, the whole of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus has this one thing in mind: the recovery of a lost order. He stands in His Person, in His creative work, and in His redemptive work, related to this whole matter of an eternal, heavenly order.

Let me pause here with a parenthesis lest you should be as near despair as I have been in this matter.

Everything seems positively to contradict what I am saying, especially concerning the Holy Spirit; that is, that the Holy Spirit, who is the custodian of the whole purpose of God concerning His Son, is occupied with this matter pre-eminently—a heavenly order; the will of God as it is done in Heaven to be done eventually on this earth in like manner. If you want to know the meaning of the Holy Spirit—and this will perhaps be a suggestion to you if you turn again to the Word—the answer is here. The Holy Spirit is meticulous about order, He will not overlook disorder. For Divine order to be overlooked, violated, ignored or frustrated, is to perpetuate the loss, the suffering, the disappointment and the despair of the creation, for the hope of the creation lies in the direction of God having it according to His order. This is the matter with which the Holy Spirit is supremely concerned.

You might well interject: "Is that really true, seeing that things are as they are, everywhere and in everything?" The answer is twofold. Firstly, the

fact is proved by the condition. Where the Divine order has been violated, a condition arises which clearly indicates arrested maturity and a limitation of spiritual measure. It shows that what could and should have been, and what God intended, has been missed and lost. There may be the illusion—the seemingly pleasant illusion—of a false liberty and freedom to do as you *like*, but, in truth, things are less and other than God meant. The New Testament includes for our instruction for all time a document which is the classic on immaturity due to disorder. It is the First Letter to the Corinthians. The situation is summed up in a sentence: "I . . . could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not with meat; for ye were not yet able" (iii. 1, 2). Then there follows the explanation of that arrested growth. Twice the Apostle uses the word "for", meaning 'because', 'for these reasons', and the reasons? disorder. The rest of the whole letter is occupied with the disorders and the Apostle's labour to correct them. It would be quite difficult to find in the New Testament a stronger proof of this fact that spiritual maturity is governed by Divine order.

The second thing to include in our judgment of things is that eternity is governing this matter. While the Lord wants as much as can be of Heavenly order in time, especially in the Church, the churches and the individual, and there can only be limitation of Christ in each if His order is ignored, violated and disregarded (undoubtedly this explains the poor level of Christian life), it will be in eternity that *measure* will be the criterion of position and vocation. The Apostle tries to say something about this eternal difference in glory and position hereafter in chapter xv.

We may be responsible for the upsetting or contravening of God's order and seem to get away with it, but no Christian believes that what we do in this life is the end. We have always to reckon with Romans xiv. 10 and II Corinthians v. 10. The Apostle includes himself: "*we . . . all*".

So eternity bears down upon time, and time is revealed in eternity. When God's Kingdom comes, it will be perfect order!

Now we return to our main line: God is a God of order. But there is a personal evil intelligence in this universe who is God's arch-enemy and, as such, is the instigator of all disorder. He is called "the god of this world" (or age) and "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (what an enlightening phrase—"children of disobedience"). The hall-mark of all satanic rule and influence is disorder. That rule is rapidly moving to its fullness

and final judgment. The test of the measure of Christ is spiritual order under His government.

Important as a fuller consideration of this matter is, so as not to overload you at one time, I will break off for the time being by reiterating the four main points:

1. God is a God of order.
2. Satan is the instigator of all disorder.

3. Christ in Person and work is the embodiment of the Divine order.

4. The Church is the elect vessel in which and through which that Divine order is to be manifested and administered in the ages to come.

We might add that God's disciplinary work with us is with a view to measure and position in the ultimate order.

(To be continued)

TAKING THE END BY FAITH

Reading: I Peter 1:1-12

WE are here in the presence of the great transition, the great change, which had taken place in the case of Peter and the Apostles and of all who had believed. Before the Cross all their hopes and expectations, their entire mentality and horizon were on this earth. They were looking for the realization of a kingdom, a Messianic kingdom of a temporal kind centred in Jerusalem and bringing with it all manner of temporal benefits and advantages, with God working along that line, concentrating His power to show His favour in a temporal way, all the blessings being temporal blessings. The Cross had changed that entire outlook and swept it all away as in a flood for the dispensation. With the resurrection of the Lord Jesus it was shown that God's intention was quite different from what they were expecting, for the time being, and that everything for this dispensation is of a spiritual and heavenly character, requiring a complete transformation of their conceptions and judgments and outlook.

Before the resurrection it was a devastating experience for them. Everything had gone with the death of the Lord Jesus, but Peter says, "God . . . negat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead", proving that the afterward which came in with the resurrection was far beyond and transcendent over what they had lost. The terms of this Letter are very clear. "Ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory", showing that they came to see that it was not loss but really gain through the Cross. That, then, is the background of this Letter: the tremendous change of realm and of form of Divine blessing. According to verse 5, the power of God in this dispensation is through faith.

We need to note the link between several fragments here: "*Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls, concerning which salva-*

tion the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you" (verses 9, 10). Which salvation? "The end of your faith . . . the salvation of your souls." The end is the salvation of your souls. "Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently" to discover the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls.

That may not be very clear as it is stated like that, but just lay hold of it for a moment. The statement is quite definite. The prophets sought diligently to know, to discover something, to discover a salvation, and Peter says that salvation is "the salvation of your souls". And he says further that that is not the beginning of your faith but the end of your faith. We place salvation right at the beginning, Peter places salvation right at the end. That does not mean that we are not saved now; it does not mean that we are not being saved now; but it does mean that full salvation, salvation in its full meaning, is future. Soul salvation is the end of our faith. That is one thing.

"*Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you . . . wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ"* (verses 10, 13). That does not mean that we have not received grace, nor that we are not receiving grace. But there is a grace intimated to the prophets by the Holy Spirit who, as it says here, "was in them", a grace that is to come at the end, at the revelation of Jesus Christ. "Set your hope . . ." "Hope that is seen is not hope" (Rom. viii. 24). Hope relates to something future. "Set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." The apocalypse, the presence in manifestation of Jesus Christ, that is the grace that is to come to you.

Now the third thing which brings us right into touch with that is this: "*Searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them*" (verse 11). The Spirit of Christ in them testified to the sufferings of Christ that should follow. It is remarkable how Israel, the Jews, the Jewish interpreters and teachers, almost entirely overlooked and failed to see that the Messiah was to be a suffering Messiah. All the hopes of Israel concerning the Messiah were hopes of glory, but of temporal glory, glory on this earth. They seem to have entirely missed all that the prophets were saying about the sufferings of the Messiah.

But the prophets found two things going on in them by the Spirit of Christ. In the first instance He was making them know that the Messiah would be a suffering Messiah and He was making them know, not only by informing them, but by their own experience. You cannot read those Messianic prophecies and Psalms without knowing that the writers went through experiences which had to be interpreted, not as the common experiences of man in everyday life, but as something prophetic, something with fuller, further and future meaning. Hear David speak: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Psalm xxii. 1). There is something more in that than just the ordinary experience of a man. The Spirit was making them know that the Messiah would be a suffering Messiah. The Jews missed that and fastened upon the other side, the glories. The Spirit was making the prophets know what the glories would be and the Jews fastened upon the glories alone. There would be the glories, but they would follow the suffering, be consequent upon the sufferings.

The glories are coming with the manifestation or revelation of the Messiah who suffered. That manifestation of the suffering glorified Christ is the grace that is to come to us. "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him" (Romans viii. 17). That is the consummation of grace.

This whole Letter of Peter, as you notice, focuses upon the trials and sufferings and afflictions of Christians in this dispensation. Now in this dispensation it is partnership with Christ in His sufferings and a Divine government of those sufferings in the salvation of our souls. Through trial and testing and by way of faith our souls are brought to complete deliverance from the grip of Satan and self over them, bringing them into fellowship with Christ and out of fellowship with Satan, bringing deliverance from the self-principle which was

brought into the soul by Adam's decision. That is the salvation of our souls.

It will be a grand thing and this is what these scattered believers to whom Peter was writing had grasped. The language may sound extravagant—"ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory"—but they have grasped something. What have they grasped? They have seen that the time is coming when all this wretched, horrid, beastly self-principle that is in the creation, causing all this trouble in every one of us, will have been finally rooted out and replaced by the Christ-principle of utter selflessness where we are never affected or influenced by our own feelings, our own interests and how things touch us, but where we shall be completely delivered from our own souls, these souls which are a curse to us every day, our feelings, our ideas, our wants and our wills. If only we could be completely oblivious of ourselves, be completely free from ourselves, how happy we would be! These people grasped that the time was coming when it would be like that, their faith had laid hold of it and they rejoiced with joy unspeakable. That is the grace which is coming with the revelation of Jesus Christ. That is the prospect, and the trials and sufferings of the present time are working toward that—to get us free from ourselves, to turn us out from ourselves. They had grasped that and they laid hold of the end of their faith. By faith they received the end of their faith and they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

If we are oppressed by our own souls and bothered by our own souls, let us at least turn our thoughts and praise God that the day is coming when we shall be completely emancipated from ourselves. It might be that if only we could take that attitude of faith and lay hold of that by faith, the joy would spring up now. This is not just eschatology or optimism. The Holy Spirit did this in the prophets and in these believers of the dispersion to whom Peter is writing. He said to them, "Ye see him not", 'you never saw Him in the flesh, you have nothing to go upon; the Gospel has been preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; you have nothing of material evidence to prove this; we saw Him—you never had anything like that, but you received it by faith when it was preached to you and the Holy Ghost ratified it and you rejoice.' It is a wonderful picture of what taking by faith, taking the Gospel by faith, taking Christ by faith, taking the end by faith, can do. They rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

In the meantime, "the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire" is working the salvation of your

souls, to bring in the fullness and finality of the grace of God, the glories that do follow. I do not know what sort of glories you are expecting. For me, there is very little appeal in the idea of having literal material thrones and crowns, or anything like that. But what does appeal to me is the prospect of

being freed from this accursed self, then I shall be happy. That will be a kingdom that is worth everything. Well, that is the end of your faith and that is the outcome of your trial of faith. You have to read the whole Letter in the light of that, but there you have it summed up in the first chapter.

WORK IN THE GROANING CREATION (IV)

Reading: John viii. 12-51.

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (verse 32).

"If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (verse 36).

THESE verses speak to us of freedom by knowledge of the truth. You will notice that the declaration made by the Lord Jesus in these words about the truth making free immediately raised in those to whom He was speaking the whole question of bondage. Their instant reaction to His words was to repudiate the suggestion that they were in bondage. They said: "We . . . have never yet been in bondage to any man", and in so saying they gave themselves away very thoroughly. They showed how utterly blind they were, and they completely justified the words with which this portion commences: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness." There is no need for a light if there is no darkness. The Lord Jesus made the statement that He was the Light. He knew right well how deep the darkness was, but they were not aware of that darkness and therefore they saw no need for Him. They were not aware of bondage and therefore they saw no need for liberation. It is just wonderful how this whole chapter justifies Him in declaring Himself as the Light and as the Liberator, because of the existing darkness and bondage, although those to whom He spoke were unconscious of it.

This chapter brings out the fact and the nature of the darkness and the bondage and then shows the way of deliverance, and that way is the Lord Jesus Himself. They said: "We . . . have never yet been in bondage". He will show them four ways at least in which they were in bondage and, inasmuch as they did not recognize any one of them, it is proved how utter the darkness is.

First of all, He will make it perfectly clear that they were in bondage to the law. That law stood over them as a master, as a judge, as something from which they could not get clear, from which there was no escape, to which they would have to

capitulate by compulsion. They were in that way in bondage to the law. The first eleven verses of this chapter are a remarkable parenthesis. We will note how they form a part of this general matter. You notice that these rulers brought the woman taken in sin and said to Him: "This woman hath been taken in adultery, in the very act. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such: what then sayest thou . . . ?" Of course, it was an utterly illegal act of theirs. They had a recognized court for such cases where the law was administered. They had no business to take it away from the proper quarter and bring it, as it were, to a private person, especially to one in whom they did not believe. But man will do anything to obtain an end upon which he is set and these rulers were out to entrap Him. They were trying to get Him to adjudicate and thus to bring Him into conflict with the Sanhedrin, the judicial court. We leave that, but notice the issue that arises: 'Moses said . . . what sayest thou?' Will He uphold Moses? If He does so, and pronounces judgment, He takes the place of the Sanhedrin and also immediately comes into conflict with the Roman authorities who, for the time being, have superseded Moses in the administration of the law. Will He set aside Moses? If He does, then He will be implicated in the sin, He will be condoning it, and will be a party to evil. It looks like a trap from which there is no escape.

He is sitting in the temple teaching and when they bring in the woman and make their charge and interrogate Him, He bends down from His seat and writes on the ground. They press Him with their question and all He says, lifting up His head, is: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone . . .", and then stoops down again. When He has been writing a little while He looks up, and they are all gone. The Word says: "They . . . went out one by one, beginning from the eldest, even unto the last". Do you say that they are not in bondage to the law? He has brought the law home to them which they were trying to bring home on this woman. He has turned the weapon on to the accusers, and they who thought that they stood well with Moses have come under the lash of Moses and

they cannot stand up to the law. If they could have stood up to the law of Moses, that woman would have been stoned, but they could not. The law judged them and condemned them. How proven was their state of bondage when they went out!

We make our application as we go along. Not only they but all are in bondage to the law in that way. God has uttered His law and has never taken one fragment away from that law. That law stands! It is comprehensive, detailed, it touches everything in life and in character. On the one hand, there is a whole comprehensive catalogue of: "Thou shalt not"! On the other hand, there is an equally comprehensive catalogue of: "Thou shalt"! And then the two sides are gathered up into one thing and if you are guilty of breaking the law at one point, you are guilty of the whole law. If you break down at one point, you are responsible for all the rest. We cannot stand up to that. We are in bondage by nature. God has spoken and we cannot get away from it. We are responsible for all that God has made known of His mind and His requirements on the side of "Thou shalt" and on the side of "Thou shalt not". We shall never get away from that for we shall have to answer for it one day. Every one of us will have to stand before God and answer to Him for His law, there is no escape. God will bring it home to us sooner or later and it will mean condemnation and judgment for every one. There is only one way of escape for we are all in bondage to the law by nature and we have all to answer for the law. Is there one who can say he has kept the whole law and never violated any bit of God's commandment? It is not a matter of how many sins. If you only commit one violation of God's commandment, you are guilty of all the rest before God. The law is broken, you are proved a sinner and you might just as well go the whole way as far as your standing before God is concerned. The fact of sin is established and whether it be sin, more or less, there is judgment. The violation of the law at one point just means that we are sinners with a sinful nature. It is not *sins*, but a *nature*.

Secondly, they were in bondage to sin. They said: "We . . . have never yet been in bondage to any man", but He said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin." Only a little while before they had been unable to stand up to that: "He that is without *sin* among you" (not "He that has not committed *this* particular sin"), "let him first cast a stone. . . ." These very people had walked out and in walking out had admitted that they were not without sin. Now He says: "Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin". So they were self-confessed

slaves of sin. Oh! they would not have said it in word, but it had come home to their consciences.

Now, leaving these Pharisees aside, that does not need a great deal of enforcing so far as we are concerned. I do not think we would be in the place of religious Pharisees who would in word repudiate any bondage to sin, that is, by nature. None of us would say that we were sinless. But I ask you: Have you ever tried to stop sinning? Have you tried never to sin? Have you started a day and, in starting it, said, 'I will not sin today'? How have you got on? You know quite well that you are in bondage to sin, and there is no option about it. It is not something over which you, if you are not saved and in Christ, have the mastery; it is your master. We know quite well that outside of Christ sin has dominion over us and we are in bondage to sin. That is what the Lord Jesus makes clear and brings home here.

The third thing which comes in here is that they were in bondage to the devil. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do." That is an awful thing to say, but He proved His case. And has it not proved that He was right? These religious Pharisees slew the Lord of Glory, and 2,000 years have proved that they did the devil's work, that the devil was behind it, that it was not the work of God and that what He said as recorded here was perfectly true, they were of their father the devil and they did the works of their father. They were, therefore, blindly in bondage to the devil.

This is a still deeper fact lying behind the state of every man and woman born into this world. They are under the tyranny of God's law, they are in the bondage of sin, but back of that there is the tyranny of the devil. What we have to recognize is that we are not merely dealing with sin, powerful as sin is in itself, but it is Satan himself back of the sin with whom we have to reckon. You cannot outwit the devil! You may try to take precautions against sinning, but you will find that you are up against—not some abstract thing but—a sinister, cunning intelligence who can trip you up just when you did not want to be, can get you at the time when you are off your guard, when you are tired and unable to stand up. It is all plotted, all thought out, all worked to a scheme. The devil is back of this sin business with his great intelligence as well as with his great power, and every man and woman outside of Christ is not only in bondage to sin, but in bondage to the devil. It is all very well for people to say that they are not going to sin again, that they are going to give up sinning. They cannot give up the devil like that. The devil is not going to be put off

like that. They are not dealing merely with some habit, something into which they slip from time to time. They are in the toils and grip and dominion of the devil, and they have not only to be saved from sin, they must be saved from him. Even religious Pharisees were in bondage to Satan.

Then the fourth thing is brought to light here by the Lord Jesus and that is that they were in bondage to judgment. Because of this other threefold bondage, judgment rested upon them, the judgment of God. "Ye shall die in your sins", but that is not merely going out, ceasing to be. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment" (Heb. ix: 27), and there is no escaping that. In bondage to judgment, that is, judgment stands as master of the situation for every sinner. So you see, what the Lord Jesus said about being in bondage is a very, very great thing, something which is true in all directions. When He said: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" and the whole question of being in bondage came up, instantly they repudiated the suggestion, the insinuation. He proved His case and showed that they were very much more in bondage than they had ever thought.

That is how we are, but He said: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. . . . If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." We have seen the one side: the bondage. Now we look at the other side: freedom by the truth. What truth makes free?

There are several sections to this Gospel by John. The first section has to do with life and the second section has to do with light. Each one of these sections circles round the Person of the Lord Jesus. When He is dealing with life, the central declaration is: "I am the life". and when He is dealing with light and truth, the central declaration is: "I am the light". So all that is being said focuses upon Him. "Ye shall know the truth"—"I am the truth"! It simply amounts to this: you shall know Me and you will be set free. What does it mean in this respect to know Him as the truth and to be made free? It is not just knowing the fact of the existence of the Lord Jesus. It is not just believing that there is such a Person. It is knowing what He stands for, what He means.

What is the truth in the Lord Jesus which stands over against the bondage of the law, by which we are made free from that bondage? It is this, that, while God never reduced His law by one fragment or one iota, the whole law was fulfilled by the Lord Jesus for us. Every one has been beaten by that law, but God has never said: 'You cannot fulfil that law, I will let you off'. No, He said: 'You must face it!'

That is impossible, so what is the way of escape? God will have His law fulfilled! The Lord Jesus came and said: 'I will fulfil it and when once it has been fulfilled it can be set aside.' It could never be set aside until it was utterly fulfilled and so He fulfilled the law to God's perfect satisfaction on our behalf. "Lo, I am come; In the roll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Psalm xl. 7, 8). And He did it perfectly and, having fulfilled the law and made it honourable, He put it out of the way and introduced the dispensation of grace so that now we can sing:

"Free from the law, oh, happy condition!

Jesus hath bled and *there* is remission!

Cursed by the law, and bruised by the Fall,

Grace hath redeemed us once for all."

The truth in Jesus by which we are made free is that He has satisfied God in the matter of the law.

The next point is sin: the truth in Jesus over against bondage to sin. "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf"; "Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin"; "Our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation"; "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed". The truth in Jesus by which we are set free from sin is that He has dealt with the whole sin question on our behalf, and that deliverance from the bondage of sin is a full deliverance in the Lord Jesus as the Sin-Bearer, but we must always keep the emphasis upon what *He is for us* and not upon what we are apart from Him!

The same thing is true in relation to the bondage of Satan, the grip and tyranny of the devil. In the words of the Lord Jesus prior to the Cross: "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out"; "the prince of this world hath been judged" (John xii. 31; xvi. 11). Later, the Apostle Paul, reflecting with Divine illumination upon what took place in the unseen at Calvary, writes: "having put off from himself the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Colossians ii. 15). And as the outcome of that the Apostle exclaims: "Thanks be unto God, which always leadeth us in triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest through us the savour of his knowledge in every place" (II Cor. ii. 14). Calvary was Christ's victory over the devil on our behalf and because of what He did there we are set free from the bondage of Satan. Remember again that it is a matter of abiding in Him by faith!

Then the bondage to judgment: If He took our place in sin, under the law, under the power of

Satan, and then destroyed all those, He has destroyed the consequences of all those, namely judgment. In His Cross He received our judgment and the judgment due to us was exhausted upon Him. Prophetically, the Psalmist put these words into His mouth: "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me" (Psalm xlii. 7). That was the judgment of God going over His soul as He represented us. Blessed be God, you and I in Christ do not have to face this judgment. It is past for us, but all these things remain for those who are outside of Christ.

There is one other thing which must be noted. "If . . . the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." "If the Son . . ." It is very impressive how often that title is used in the Gospel by John, and, alongside of it, "the Father". The name "Father" occurs one hundred and eleven times in the Gospel by John. "The Father" and "the Son" are familiar terms. Then it is impressive that, recognizing those familiar terms, at the beginning of the Gospel you have so much about being born again. "As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were *born*, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh . . ." To Nicodemus He said: "Ye must be born anew". That is a family thought. There is the Father, there is the Son, but

to be in that family you have to be born into it, and if the Son shall make you free that means that you are in the family. Jesus said: "The bondservant abideth not in the house . . . the son abideth" (John viii. 35). If you are in bondage to the law, you have no place in this family. This is a family of the free ones, of the free-born. How are we to be set free from the bondage to sin, to Satan, to judgment? By being born again. The Son makes free. It is given to the Son to give eternal life to as many as He will, and we receive eternal life when we are born again. That is the gift which Christ, the Son, gives us. It is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. How are we set free? By being born again and brought into the family. We become members of a family of those who are free from all these things which speak of bondage.

If we are rejoicing in that great liberty which is ours in Christ, then our great desire is that others should come into it too. We do not know and we do not judge anyone—that is for each one to decide—but our desire is that we should *all* know the truth and that the truth should make us free. If you do not understand those terms, let me put it this way: you should know the Lord Jesus in a saving way and then you will be set free from the law, free from sin, free from Satan and free from judgment.

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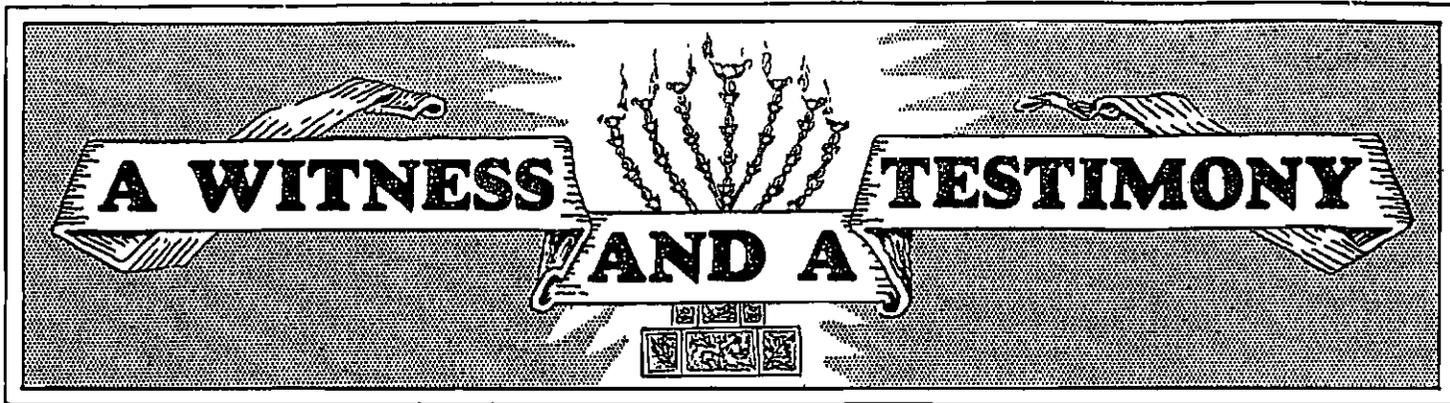
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GATHERING HOME

FROM time to time in the course of the years we have had, with regret, to tell of the home-call of friends and fellow-workers who have been our partners in this ministry. A third such one in recent times is our beloved sister, Madame Ducommun. We first met her when we used to go to Paris to minister in conferences of the ‘White Russian’ refugees. A link of fellowship was then formed which has borne much fruit. Our sister had made it her main ministry to translate the printed ministry into French, and these translations have gone from her little room in Paris, not only all over France,

but to many other French-speaking areas. A number of friends have met regularly in her room every week for prayer. She has truly been a ‘Mother in Israel’ to them and to others. We shall miss her at our conferences in Switzerland.

This is one of whom it can be truly said: ‘Her works do follow her.’ Will you pray for those who will miss her most in Paris, and that guidance may be given as to the carrying on of that ministry.

Madame Ducommun passed into the presence of the Lord quite peacefully on Sunday, May 26th.

(See note on literature at foot of page 92.)

“A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLE”

Reading: II Chronicles vi; Isaiah lvi. 6-7; Mark xi. 17; Ephesians vi. 18.

“My house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.”

THE sixth chapter of the second book of Chronicles is a magnificent example and illustration of these words of the Prophet. In the dedication of the House by Solomon, prayer of a universal kind inaugurated the ministry of the House, introducing its

function. The characteristic words of that chapter are: "This house" and "thy name". "When they shall pray toward *this house*, because of *thy name* which is upon it. . . ."

You will remember the words of the Apostle concerning certain people, that they 'blasphemed that holy name which was called upon you'. The House is the link between the two passages historically and spiritually, and the Name called upon the House.

What was true of the temple of Solomon, as the House with the Name called upon it, is true of the Church, the Church of Christ, with the Lord's Name upon it. We have no difficulty in identifying the anti-type of Solomon's temple as being the Church. You are no doubt sufficiently acquainted with the Word to make it unnecessary to quote Scripture in this connection. Many passages will come to your mind which bear out that statement. The Church is God's House; "whose house are we", says the writer of the letter to the Hebrews; "a spiritual house to offer up spiritual sacrifices", says Peter. The identification is not at all difficult. And that the Name is upon the House is also quite clear. It was because of the Name which they bore at the beginning that the Church was so mighty in its going forth. The power of the Name was ever manifesting itself in their ministry. That is all very simple and needs no labouring. Then there are these other factors.

SONSHIP MARKING THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

The temple of Solomon was really the temple of David. It came in in revelation through David, and in realization in sonship, David's son. We know that in the Word both David and Solomon are types of the Lord Jesus, that He is great David's greater Son, and that He combines all that is spiritually represented by David and Solomon of sovereignty, kingship, exaltation, universal triumph and glory. You will remember how the Lord sent Nathan to David, to tell him that though he himself should not build the House, he was nevertheless to be the one to gather all that was necessary for it, and so be the instrument of making it possible. This so satisfied David that in the inspiration of it, and the tremendous stimulus of it, he went out and subdued all those nations which had been historic thorns in the side of Israel. And when he had subdued all the nations round about, and a universal triumph had been established, then the House came into being through Solomon.

We carry that forward into the triumph of the

Lord Jesus by His Cross. He possesses the universal victory. He is exalted, enthroned, in virtue of all His enemies being overthrown by His Cross, and on resurrection ground the declaration is made: "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten thee." A fresh declaration of sonship is made, by reason of resurrection, and in resurrection, and in that sonship He builds the House, and the Spirit of sonship enters into every member of that House, and it becomes a 'sonship House' (Acts xiii. 33; Galatians iv. 6).

THE MINISTRY AND VOCATION OF THE HOUSE

That all leads the way to this particular thing, namely, the ministry and vocation of the House, of the Church. The House itself has to provide the Lord with a place, a sphere, a realm, a vessel, through which He can reach all people. That is the working outwards; that is God securing to Himself a means of universal blessing. God moves universally through His House, and therefore He must have a House constituted on a prayer basis. Do you notice the two movements in this chapter of II Chronicles vi? There is a movement outwards, and a movement inwards. The outward is through the House, with Solomon, so to speak, ministering the Lord. He is, as it were, bringing out from heaven the gracious goodness of God, the interventions, the undertakings and resources of God, world-wide. He is making the House the vehicle of what God is, and what God has, unto all peoples. When you reach a certain point in the chapter the movement changes, and you see people coming to the House because of the Name. That is the movement inwards. They shall "pray toward this house, because of thy great name", said Solomon. That means that the circumference is going to find, not a direct access to God, but its blessing through the House of the Lord.

I suggest to you that those two things very greatly govern the New Testament revelation of the Church, and the Church's vocation. The one thing which embraces all is that God in Christ has bound Himself up with His Church, the Body of Christ, for this world's good, and that the fullness of the Lord will never be known nor entered into in an individual or individualistic way; that anything like mere individualism, separatism, will mean limitation. Any kind of detachment and isolation leads to being deprived of the larger fullnesses of the Lord, or, to put it the other way, to come into the fullness of the Lord we have to come into the fellowship of His people as the House of God. That is one law, and that is established.

That is the line which is more severe. There is a frown, perhaps, about that. It sounds hard. But it is the warning note which is very necessary, and especially in the light of the fact that there is a continuous, unceasing, incessant drive of the adversary in the direction of separation, isolation and detachment. It seems that at times the devil releases his forces and concentrates them upon people, to get them to run away, to get out of it, to break away, to quit because the strain seems so intense. Their whole inclination is to get away alone. They think that they are going to get an advantage by that. They are sometimes deceived into thinking that it will be for their good if only they get right away alone. They sometimes put it in this way: that they 'want to get away and think it all out'. Beware of the peril of thinking it all out! You can never think out spiritual problems. The only way of solving them is to live through them. If you have tried to square down to your spiritual problems, and bring your mind to bear upon them, and to solve them by 'thinking it all out', you know that you never get anywhere, and that the Lord does not meet you in that way. Spiritual things have to be lived through to clearness. We can only get through to clearness in spiritual things by living through them. If you do not understand that now, you probably will understand when you come up against another experience of this kind. Thus one aspect of the enemy's drive is to get you to run away. Why does the enemy want us to get away? Why is it that this whole force, this whole pressure, is to make us quit? He has a very good reason. He knows that it means loss and limitation. The Lord, to put it in a word, has bound up all His greater fullnesses with *spiritual* relatedness, and there can be nothing but grievous loss in failing to recognize the House-law of God, the fellowship-law, the family-law. There can only be loss if we *take ourselves* out of God's appointed relatedness. Be very much aware of any kind of movement or tendency which is in the direction of either detachment or putting you into a place where you are apart. The enemy has many ways of getting his end. If he cannot drive us out from the midst of the Lord's people, he very often tries to give us a too prominent place in the midst of them. He can isolate us just as much by our being too much in the limelight, and we at once become uncovered, exposed. There is no more dangerous place than to be made too much fuss of, to be *someone*. There is such a thing as finding a hiding within the House of God.

But our particular consideration at the present time is this vocation and its outward direction, the House of prayer for all peoples. The Church, the

Lord's people, form for him a ministering instrument by which He has ordained to reach out to all the ends of the earth, a universal instrument wherever gathered together, even when represented only by two or three. The test of any company of the Lord's people, and of our position, is this vocation.

THE FACT OF REPRESENTATION

You begin with the representative fact, the fact of representation. Representation begins with two or three, and that immediately swings us completely clear of all earthly grounds of judging and estimating. It indicates the essential heavenly nature of the Church. In the Lord Jesus, every member of the Church is included. If Christ comes, the whole Church comes. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the whole Body, uniting all the members in one. You cannot be in the spirit and in Christ anywhere but what you are there in the *spiritual realm*, in the *heavenly realm*, with the whole Body, and the whole Body is there spiritually. Two or three? "There am I"! The whole Body, then, is bound up with the two or three. The fact evidences the heavenliness of the Church, the Body of Christ. This is not a possibility on the earth. You cannot bring the whole Church together in any one place on this earth literally. It is not the Lord's way, and it cannot be done. The Church is scattered worldwide, so far as the earthly aspect is concerned. And yet the Church is a heavenly thing gathered up in Christ, its Head, by one Spirit baptized into one Body, and when we come into the Spirit, into the heavenly realm, we are in the presence of the whole Body; not with earthly intelligence, that is, the whole Body is not conscious of the fact from the earthly standpoint, but spiritually it is true. That is the whole Church represented in the two or three if truly "in the Name". What the two or three may do in the Holy Ghost becomes a universal thing.

THE PRAYER MEETING

What we are seeking to press home is that this is so different from having a local prayer meeting, in the usually accepted meaning of that term. Suppose that where such an outlook obtains the announcement is made: 'We will have a prayer meeting on Monday night.' Who will come to that prayer meeting? People will say among themselves: 'Shall we go to the prayer meeting?' or, perhaps: 'Well, it is only a prayer meeting!' That is one way to look at it, as a local thing in a certain place at a certain

time. But if I were to say: 'Will you come and minister to the whole Church of Christ universally in such-and-such a place at a certain time, and your business is to go and minister in that range to the whole Church!' that puts another point of view. It gives an altogether new conception of what we are called to. Let your imagination take flight, if you like, and see the whole Church from the ends of the earth literally gathered together, needing to be ministered to, and the Lord saying to you: 'Now you come and minister to the whole Church! Thousands of thousands, and tens of thousands gathered together, and I want you to minister to them. I have placed the resource at your disposal and will enable you to do it.' Perhaps you might shrink, and be fearful, but you would see the tremendous significance. You would not stay away because you were unimpressed with the importance of it.

This is not exaggeration. We are not straining the point. We are seeking to get to the heart of this ministry which is ours. When two or three are gathered together in any place, and they pray in the Holy Ghost, that is what is possible and it happens. They represent the whole Church, and become the House of prayer, functioning for all peoples, a universal ministry. We need to lift the prayer business on to a higher level. When we see the range, the significance, the value of a time of prayer together in the Name of the Lord, we shall stop our trivialities and take things seriously. We shall come together saying: 'Now, here are nations to be entered into tonight, and things which are world-wide and of tremendous significance to the Lord Jesus, and we are called to deal with them in this place!' There is no greater ministry. It is a tremendous thing to have a ministry like that.

It all comes back to asking whether this is true of the Church. What does this mean? Is it merely a passage of Scripture? Is it a nice idea, but falling short of any real meaning? What is the meaning of: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people"? It certainly does not mean that the whole Church can literally be gathered together in one place to pray, and it certainly cannot literally mean that the whole Church can pray together at the same time, though scattered. The situation is different in all countries. Day and night govern different parts of the world, and other factors come in. It is necessary to get away from the earth to explain this. And if you get off the earth and see that where two or three are gathered together into the Name all the rest are represented, and because the one Spirit is there the whole is therefore touched through that one Spirit, as well as involved, then

the possibilities are tremendous. "A house of prayer for all peoples" is God's ordained way of ministry.

THE NEED FOR PRAYER MINISTRY

Leaving the great spiritual truth, and coming to what is immediate, so far as one's own heart is concerned, in this word, I do feel that there has to be a fresh registration in our hearts of a call to this ministry and the need for it. We may pray a lot, but I feel that we have to take this matter of the prayer ministry even more seriously, to regard it as our supreme ministry. The order is *everything by prayer*; not everything and then prayer, but everything by prayer. Prayer comes first. Everything comes by prayer. Prayer is the basis of everything; and nothing else must be attempted or touched except on the ground of prayer. We have to gather into our prayer the universal interests of the Name of the Lord. "Because of thy name"! The Name is in view, and is involved. It is the interests of the Name which govern the functioning of the House, and all the interests of the Name of the Lord have to become the definite and solid prayer business of the Lord's people. Oh, the Lord cut clean across that thing which makes us so casual, and which makes corporate prayer times so optional, and bring into our hearts, with a strong, deep, set conviction, the witness that prayer is universal business, and that we are called to it!

It may be that before long there will be very little else that we can do. It may be that before long the Lord's people world-wide will find that their other activities are brought to a standstill, and they are shut up. What is going to happen then to the Lord's interests? Is that the end of ministry? Is that the end of functioning, of value, of effectiveness? It may be that before long the Lord's people in all the earth will need, as they have never needed before, the prayer co-operation of other members. It may be that the Lord's Name has suffered because we have not regarded this ministry as we ought to have done. We are not blaming anyone, but simply saying that there is room for far more serious entering into this tremendous thing which the Lord has appointed for us. Only to dwell upon the words quietly and thoughtfully will surely mean that their implication will come upon our hearts? The Lord has not said that He is going to move directly out to the universe. He has said: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." To put that in other words we might state it thus: 'I have ordained to meet universal need through an instrument, through a vessel, and My people, My

Church, form that vessel. That is My appointed way. If My Church fails Me, if My instrument does not take this matter seriously, is occupied with itself rather than with the great world-wide needs of My Name, then I am failed indeed!

Now this means that we must recognize that where but two or three gather into the Name, where it cannot be more, there is nothing merely local about such coming together in prayer, but that the farthest ranges of the Lord's interests can be advanced, helped, ministered to, by the twos and threes. If it is possible for more to gather, then the Lord desires that, but it is ministry to the Lord by prayer for which He looks to us. We must see to it that it is our first, our primary business to pray. It is strange that so many more will come to conference meetings than to prayer meetings! Is the mentality behind that, that it is far more important to hear teaching than it is to pray? Would it not be a great day and represent some tremendous advance spiritually, something unique, if the prayer gatherings were bigger than the biggest conference gatherings, or at least as big as the biggest?

Let us lay this to heart! Remember that the enemy is always seeking to destroy the essential purpose of the House of God. "Ye have made it a

den of robbers." That was one attempt of his to put out the real purpose by changing the whole character of things. God forbid that anything like that should be true in our case, but it is just possible to allow the primary thing to take a secondary place. The primary thing is prayer for all peoples. That, the Lord says, is what His House is for, and that is our real ministry. We cannot all be in the ministry of the Word, but we can all be in this ministry. We can all be in spirit out to the Lord for the interests of His Name.

There seems to be weakness and failure along this line: that we are not functioning in prayer to the point of seeing things through. We pray about many things, and we preach many things; but we do not see them through in prayer, and the Lord's Name is involved in that. You will know whether the Lord is speaking to your own heart. I believe this is a fresh call to the primary ministry which is so very, very much needed. All those who go out into the nations need very strong prayer support. If we fail them we do not know what may happen. They may be in all kinds of difficulties which they need not get into if we were wholly faithful in this prayer ministry. The Lord lay it upon our hearts as a burden!

THE CUP AND THE FIRE

1. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CUP AND THE SCATTERED FIRE

Reading: Mark x. 35-39; Matthew xxvi. 27, 28, 39, 42; Luke xxii. 20; John xviii. 11; I Corinthians x. 16; xi. 26.

"I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke xii. 49—R.S.V., 50).

WITH the passages that we have read fresh in our minds, I think that we are able to see that this last passage gathers them all into itself, and that what they all bring before us is the relationship between the cup of the Lord and the scattering of the fire in the earth. The Lord joined these two things together, and showed their relationship; indicating that the scattering of the fire in the earth was dependent upon the drinking of the cup. And in so doing, He only indicated and established a law, a law which history has demonstrated and proved—

either negatively or positively—so deeply, so mightily. Where there has been no cup there has been no fire: where there has been the cup, there has always been the fire. It is the story of all the persecutions, all the sufferings of the people of God, which have issued in the progress of the Gospel. It is something that we have to recognize very clearly and to accept quite definitely, that, right at the very heart of everything in the purpose of God, there is a cup; and only by the drinking of that cup is any kind of real spiritual progress, enlargement, possible. But, to put that in another way, the drinking of that cup will always issue in spiritual progress or increase or enlargement or deepening. It is always gain.

AN APPARENT CONTRADICTION

Now here we have to pause to clear up the difficulty that is always present to confuse our minds in

this matter, a fundamental conflict or confusion. On the one side, the Christian life ought to be characterized by joy, by peace, by rest, by hope, by life. On the other side, the same Christian life—without any contradiction to that—not only can be, but should be, characterized by suffering. The Lord Jesus mingled those two things in the moment when He took the cup. “He took the cup, and gave thanks”—He *gave thanks*. There should be, I say, no contradiction between these two things: joy and sorrow mingled; rest and peace and hope in the very presence of suffering, adversity and affliction.

If we do not clear up this matter in our minds we are going to get into difficulty. We are going to argue that the Christian life ought to be one continuous, unbroken song, joyfulness and exuberance, enthusiasm and lightheartedness, with no ‘wrong’ or sombre elements whatever. If you think like that, you have misread your New Testament! On the other hand, it is possible for us to regard the sufferings and the trials, the difficulties and adversities, as the marks of a kind of holy Christian life, which must exclude anything exuberant and joyful and glad. Some people nurse that kind of complex: they are afraid of joy; they are afraid even of spiritual laughter!

We have to recognize that we are not speaking about natural things now. There is that sublime, that wonderful, that Divine paradox—“sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing” (II Corinthians vi. 10), in the midst of afflictions and trials; “in manifold trials”, Peter says, yet “rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (I Peter i. 6–8). Somehow that has got to be recognized, or we shall be in trouble. The true apprehension of the Christian life is not that of frivolity and superficiality. It is something, as we have said, that has a cup right at the heart of it. The true apprehension of the cup is not something morbid, something morose; is not eternal sadness.

The peril of having a contradiction in the back of our minds in this matter is far more real than perhaps we recognize. Suppose we are meeting those who are having a very good time. They are in one of those phases of the Christian life where all is good—it is spring-time, or it is summer-time—there are no clouds in their sky, and they are inclined to ‘down’ the person who is having a bad time, perhaps passing through some temporary darkness or eclipse, and to feel that there is something wrong with their Christianity. On the other side, if it is we who are having the difficult time, let us be very, very patient with those who are not. Let us reconcile these things and see that they may only represent two aspects of one thing and not be contradictory at all.

THE CUP OF THE LORD

We all know that the cup of the Lord is central and basic to the life of the Church, and to our lives as Christians. It represents the very centre, the very focal point, both of the Church’s life and of the believer’s life. That is where the Word of God puts it, that is the place that the Scriptures give to it: it is the gathering centre of the people of God, the foundation of their life individually and collectively. But there is, so to speak, a division in the cup, which we must recognize immediately: that is, there is His side and there is ours. Let us get this cleared up before we go further.

There is the side of the Lord Jesus in that cup, with which we **have nothing to do**, so far as the drinking of it is concerned. It is uniquely His; it is His alone. It has to do, as we know, with our redemption. It has to do with our sin, it has to do with our judgment under the wrath of God; it has to do with the final outworking of sin and judgment, it has to do with death. And it has to do with the remission of sins: ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for the remission of sins’ (Matthew xxvi. 28, Luke xxii. 20). It has to do with our justification before God, our setting in the position of the Righteous One; it has to do with our very life—“the eternal life” (I John i. 2). In all that, you and I have no part, except to receive it by faith. In drinking the cup we do not, of course, work out our redemption, or have any part or place in that great atoning, substitutionary, representative work for us: that is isolated to Him. No one can go that path with the Lord in His sufferings; that is His path. Our sufferings with the Lord are not vicarious as His were.

But then there is *our* path. We are brought in to share the cup, but our part is in another realm. It is that of sharing His reproach. It is because we are standing with Him for His rights which are being disputed and challenged and terribly fought against in this universe and in this world; it is because the Holy Spirit is doing something in us in relation to the character of the Lord Jesus. You know very well that, no sooner is there the slightest sign of any Christlikeness in an individual, than something seems to be provoked: and antagonism breaks out, which says, in effect, ‘You must not be like Christ!’ Unseen forces ‘take knowledge that we have been with Jesus’, and they counsel to put us to death.

It is something, you see, in the spiritual realm which hates this character of Jesus, because its presence is an exposure and a condemnation of sin. Evil hates good and cannot bear its presence—the very presence of good causes misery and suffering.

And it is in that, just in being Christlike, that we are involved in His cup. It is because we have taken sides with Him against a great enemy, His age-long, sworn enemy, who, with all his vicious malignity, is determined that the last semblance and trace of this One shall be blotted out, if he can do it! You and I are intended to be present here in this world as a semblance of Christ, and we come under those evil counsels. That is our part. We are partners with Him in His position in this world, and that involves the drinking of His cup, the cup of suffering.

That is where we begin with the cup. It is there as our ground: the ground of our salvation, of our redemption, our justification, our life. We stand on that ground. We take the cup gratefully and with thanksgiving. But, in doing so, we commit ourselves to this side of the cup. We become involved in this side of His sufferings, and there is no evading, or avoiding, or getting away from it. This is something to be clearly recognized and definitely and deliberately accepted, right at the outset, and to be kept continually in mind.

THE CUP MARKS A SEPARATION

But then there are other things about the cup. This cup sets forth and represents the absolute holiness and apartness of Christ, and of all that is related to Christ. You remember I Corinthians x: 'You cannot drink of the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons' (verse 21); you cannot bring these together. It betokens a failure to recognize the utter apartness of two whole realms. This cup speaks of that apartness, that holiness, that separateness of Christ and all that is Christ's. It marks the difference, the fundamental and radical difference, between the Christian and everyone else.

That is the whole argument of the first letter to the Corinthians. Throughout that letter we have an unlawful bringing together of things, focused in that unlawful bringing together at the Lord's Table. It is a terrible letter, which really does centre in this matter of the cup. What the Apostle is doing is seeking to point out that there is a discrimination that must be exercised, a difference that must be discerned. It is a question, not of degrees of Christian life, but of the very basis and nature of the Christian life—that a Christian is *this*, and not that. These things are separated by the cup. The cup is something very holy, something very separate, something very different; and if you and I drink the cup, we are supposed to be different from everyone else, that is, from everyone who is not the Lord's. There is a character required by this cup, a char-

acter that is different; there is a life that is different, there is a person that is different. The cup declares that. It challenges everything that does not belong to Christ: it stands against that, because that is against the cup. This is a holy thing.

No wonder the Apostle was so strong on this matter—and no wonder that distressing and tragic things were happening in Corinth! "For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep" (v. 30)—through not discriminating at the Lord's Table. It is searching.

But note again, this cup deals with and removes all the ground of Satan. Satan's ground, of course, is the ground of nature: your nature and mine—what we are in ourselves. That is the playground of Satan. The cup deals with that and takes Satan's ground from him; it puts him out. That is why Judas had to go: the cup drove him out. The very significance of the cup meant that he was not of it: he was of another; he must go. He is Satan's ground in the holy circle, and he must be eliminated.

THE UNIFYING WORK OF THE CUP

But then again, the cup is the great unifying factor for the Lord's own. It is in the first place the great means of unification with Himself, for it is our common participation with Him. The cup links us with Him. It not only distinguishes us as His, as different, but it declares a relationship which is—to use the symbolism—most truly a blood-relationship. In the second place, it establishes a relationship of that kind between all who are joined to the Lord. The cup is that which unifies His own.

These may sound simple things, but they are profoundly challenging. Let us look again at this first letter to the Corinthians, chapter x, verse 16: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of (*mg.*, a participation in) the blood of Christ?" Now look just over the next chapter (of course it is a continuous narrative in the original letter). We come to this: "First of all, when ye come together in the church" (or: "in assembly"), "I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it" (xi. 18). You see the contradiction? It is not just that we participate with Christ, but together we are on common ground in our participation: it is collective, it is corporate—a *common* participation, a *together* participation, a *one* participation. It is the Church. 'Now when you come together as the Church, there are divisions among you'—that is a contradiction, it is a violation of the very meaning of that cup.

You know, when you go back to the beginning of

that letter the Apostle has much more to say about this matter of divisions. He so early opens up the matter of divisions (i. 10-13). 'There are contentions among you: one says, I am of Paul' (you can put what name you like there), 'and I am of Apollos, and I am of Cephas'. It represents parties, does it not? Parties in the Church. The point is this, that the Apostle is steadily working his way towards the matter of the Table, and he makes that the climax. He is saying, in effect: 'You cannot have the Table in reality while it is like that—the reality of the Table is impossible—the *reality* of it—while it is like that! It is a contradiction, it is a denial, it is a mockery; it is the fundamental subverting of the very meaning of the cup, if it is like that. You cannot have it in reality—but you can have it to your own undoing and judgment.'

You see, this cup, the cup of the Lord, above all things speaks of *love*—the love of the Father, the love of the Son, the love of the Spirit, and the mutual love of believers.

THE CUP NEEDED FOR THE FIRE

"I have a baptism to be baptized with. . . ." "Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink? or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Mark x. 33). What the Lord was really saying, in other words, was this: 'I have a cup to drink; and, until I have drunk it, that very purpose for which I have come is in suspense. I have come to scatter fire into the earth.' The two things go together.

We shall perhaps see later the fire scattered. You see, we are all very interested in the scattering of the fire—put that how you will: if you like, the progress of the Gospel, the extension of the Kingdom, the salvation of souls, the expansion of testimony. It is all the same thing; it is the scattering of the fire. The earth has got to feel the touch of something from Christ—to register something burning, something living, something consuming, something against which it cannot stand. 'I am come to scatter fire in the earth.'

But note—that is all dependent upon the cup, from first to last, and upon all that the cup implies. You notice that II Corinthians entirely rests upon those two things. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound unto us . . ." (i. 5): there is the cup. "Therefore seeing we have this ministry . . ." (iv. 1): the ministry rests upon the cup. This second letter is, as you know, the letter of the ministry, but notice that it begins with the sufferings of Christ *abounding* unto us. The scattering of the fire, the fulfilment of the ministry, the service of the

Lord, the expansion of the Gospel—however we may put it—rests upon the cup: and not merely upon the cup as for our salvation, but the cup in all those other aspects of a holy life, of an inward separateness, of something apart for the Lord.

And it rests upon, not only our oneness with Him, but our oneness *in* Him. Souls will not be saved while there is disruption in the instrument; souls will not be saved while there are divisions amongst those who are seeking their salvation. The work will not grow and expand and enlarge if Satan is allowed a place to divide the people of God. Christ Himself has pointed to the established law; we cannot get away from it. We may try, make our efforts, do all that we can, but they are just not getting there: What is the matter? The matter is, that there is sin somewhere, or there is division somewhere. There is some circling around people, or making parties; and we are simply destroying our own work if it is like that.

You see, this is *corporate*—it is the *Church* that the Apostle is talking about and writing to. He is speaking about the Church again and again in these Corinthian letters. 'When you come together as the assembly, as the Church . . .' This fellowship in the cup, for the scattering of the fire, is a corporate matter.

We need to ask ourselves: Have we a right to have the table, to have the cup? Have we the ground for this? We have got to get our basis, our foundation right, before we can have anything else. It would be lovely to go on with the scattering of the fire, to see the thing working out on the side of the glory and the power. Yes, we would like to be caught up in that; but we have got to get our basis right, and the basis is the cup.

There is no doubt that the ruin of the Church's testimony and ministry is so often resultant from either or both of these two things: either a contradiction to the cup right in its midst, or else an avoidance of the cup—trying not to face the cup and accept the involvement in the sufferings. We will have a good time, and make everything like that; but the cup—no. The ruination of testimony and ministry comes as much by avoiding the cup as by contradicting it. But the cup is there: you cannot move it. It is established in all its meaning; it has to be taken.

I think those two disciples were a little frivolous. How profoundly and terribly right the Lord was when He said: 'You know not what you ask.' 'We are able', they said. 'Very well, you shall.' The first one of those was the prototype martyr of the New Testament. We shall think about him perhaps later. He drank the cup. Herod killed James with the

sword. 'You shall . . . you shall . . .' This is something very real. Nevertheless, we shall see that it worked out for the furtherance of the Gospel.

If our attitude to the cup is right, the other will follow. It will follow quite naturally, quite spontaneously. The cup leads to the scattered fire; the

scattered fire waits for the cup. 'He took the cup and gave it to them and said . . . Take . . . drink . . . drink ye all of it.'

Let us ask the Lord just how this word applies, where it applies, what it means. May He give us grace to receive it!

(To be continued)

"WAIT ON THE LORD"

I WANT at this time, not so much to say anything new, but just to underline some of the things that have been said:

I think we have been realizing through the years that God is wanting to enlarge and stretch our inner man, by which I mean the stretching of the inner spirit and the renewing of the soul, and we are going to see what David says about this in Psalm xxvii. First we will read verse 14:

"Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."

The word 'wait' in the Hebrew is an interesting one, for, as you know, the Hebrew is a picture language. When they write this word they are making a picture of a man making rope. Can you see him taking one strand, taking another strand, and another, and twisting them, and finally getting a strong rope? When God first makes a connection to our life, the strand is rather thin and flimsy, but through the years He is strengthening this connection and enlarging us so that there might be a greater flow of His life to us.

Now, beginning with verse 1 of this Psalm, let us see the secrets of which David speaks and by which this enlargement takes place:

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

NOT AN EXPERIENCE—BUT A LIVING RELATIONSHIP

I want us to get hold of this first of all. People so often think of the Lord's working in their lives as a mere touch, or an experience that they have, but God's way is to bring us into a living union, a living relationship with Himself. If we merely have a good experience, we are relating something to the past, but if we catch what this entering into a living relationship means, everything changes. I used to in-

terpret this verse as: 'The Lord gives me light and salvation', but what it says is: 'The Lord *is*—continually—my light and my salvation.' You see, if you come to the conference and merely have a good and refreshing experience while here, then I will worry about you when I get home; but if you discover the secret of a living union, a living relationship, then you go home with something that will keep you. Before I discovered this wonderful secret I used to get down and pray that the Lord would give me a message for the people—like a package coming from heaven. Then I began to see that it was not something that He gives, but He just wants me to start, as it were, with a sense that He will give as I go along—He is my light continually.

All light that the Lord shares, or becomes to us, comes in two ways. First we learn the regulating law of life as it is revealed in His Word, but then He also gives the anointing which continually works to give direction. In the Old Testament they had the law and the prophets for direction, but now we have the inner law written in our hearts and the anointing (which works like the prophets) continually giving us the sense of direction.

Well, there will be no enlargement until we discover that there is this living relationship by which the Lord imparts Himself to us, and just as surely as we enter into this phase of life, everything seems to crowd in to try and break that connection.

"When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident" (verses 2 and 3).

NOT MERE TRIALS—BUT CONFIRMATION

So it is that God begins to enlarge a little further, and we must see that the trials and testings are the Lord's means of confirming Himself to us.

Exodus xvii gives us a picture of this. Moses has just led the children of Israel across the Red Sea, and now they are wanting some water to drink. In verse 2 they come to Moses and say: "Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?" You see, when we begin to walk with the Lord and He brings us to a 'no water' experience, we are prone to think that we have missed His will. I want to ask you a question about this: At this point had the people missed God's will, or were they where He wanted them to be? I think we know that God had led them right to this point. He wanted to confirm Himself to them, but it was a stretching time:

Has God ever led you to a time of no water? No job, no money, no friends, no help, or something else like that? How easy it is to imagine that we have missed God's way when this comes, but He wants to confirm the verse: "My God shall supply all your need" (Philippians iv. 19). That is a mere verse until He confirms it to us.

I remember several years ago, when I was ministering on the West coast of America, I arrived at my friend's place and he handed me a whole schedule for the week. He had me running from place to place all day long—ten minutes here, twelve minutes there, thirteen minutes somewhere else. I looked at my brother and said: 'Oh, you know me better than this! I can't fit into this schedule. Brother, I can't even read my text in twelve minutes!' But when I went to my bedside to ask for the Lord's help, He showed me this portion about the children of Israel. I knew about other kinds of 'no water', but not the limiting of myself to a few minutes, so I had to cry out for His strength and help.

Now I can tell you that that is the way I felt in coming here and having to speak with two interpreters!

You see, it is interesting that just before this the people of Israel had had the experience of the bitter water at Marah, but God is not just taking us back to another Marah each time. In verses 3 and 4 of chapter xvii it says: "And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me." God has no delight in just taking us through testings, but it is the only way He can confirm His Word or His promises to us. Every time He unveils a new promise there is a stretching to make it real. We might

get to the place where we would like to have all the verses confirmed to us, but God does not want the diffusion of our energies on just verses.

NOT HUMAN ENERGY—BUT DIVINE PRIORITY

In the next verse of our Psalm we get the thing toward which God is stretching us. There are many of the Lord's children who would expend themselves in doing so many good and needful things. I know what it is to look around and see needs in every place, but here will come a very difficult stretching for us: God wants to work into us a sense of priority. Every need does not constitute a call. People can be so busy giving themselves to good activity but they miss the real priority that God wants. The prophet Hosea said of Ephraim: "Strangers have devoured his strength" (Hosea vii. 9), and how meaningful this should be to the Lord's children who feel pulled in every direction by the needs which they see! Listen to the sense of priority in this verse, as David tells us:

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple" (Psalm xxvii. 4).

Beloved, I do not believe that one can go on very far in inward stretching without this one thing, this Divine priority, becoming very real. The Apostle Paul said: "This one thing I do . . .", and Jesus said of Mary, who was sitting at His feet, "Mary hath chosen that good part" (Luke x. 42).

What is this 'one thing' of which David is speaking? Oh, how our soul-life will pull at us to get us into busy activity for God! I know a little bit of what it is like to have our emotions touched by the suffering of people, and you can expect this kind of inner argument to go on. Your inner spirit will say: 'It is time to be quiet and dwell,' while your soul is rising up to say: 'Get to work! Look at all the needy people!' Listen to this verse where the spirit is speaking to the soul: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?" (Psalm xlii. 5). In my own words I would say: 'Soul, you be quiet and listen to the spirit!' You see, the soul wants to run away and act independently of the inner spirit, but God made the soul to be subservient to the spirit, so he ends it by saying: 'Soul, you be quiet now and give praise for the help of the Lord.'

Now, remember, when we talk about 'waiting' we are not speaking of passive waiting, but an active waiting. Oh, how many of the Lord's children are wasting their strength with just activity!

I remember how a few years ago the Lord taught me this lesson in a very real way. I had been away from my family, about two thousand miles from home, for ten weeks, and oh! how I was looking forward to being home! As I drove in that afternoon I met my wife and my little boy in the drive, and I hugged them and thought: 'Oh, it is so wonderful to be home!' but in about a minute my little boy was gone. I said to my wife: 'Where is De Von? I am home and I want to be with him.' So I walked to the garage door, where I heard him, and said: 'Son, Daddy's home. Don't you want to be with him?' His little voice answered back: 'Oh, Daddy, I am so busy!' and I realized that you cannot force fellowship when it is not wanted! So I began to get busy myself, but I was hurting deep within. The next morning, as was our custom, we went up town to the Post Office, for he always loved to come with me. But, as I was coming down the steps of the Post Office, I chanced to see the other side of my car, which I had not been able to see when I got into it. It looked so strange that I wondered if it really was my car! There, plastered all over the side of the car, were pieces of paper and cardboard, attached with my best insulating tape! Then it was that I realized what he had been so busy doing, and when he saw that I was observing all his handiwork, he looked up at me with such glee, as if to say: 'Don't you like it, Daddy?' I was about to scold him, and then the Lord spoke to me. He seemed to say: 'This is the same trouble that I have with you, My son. You get so busy doing things I have not asked you to do.' So all I could do was to pick De Von up and say: 'Daddy likes it.' But from that day on the Lord began to make this sense of priority much more real.

It is so easy to be busy going from here to there, preaching and teaching and doing, but what is the one thing that the Lord wants most? It is to know intimate fellowship with the Lord. I do believe that if this priority becomes very real in us, God will cut off a lot of good and apparently important things—but how do things really measure up in the light of eternity? This can apply to us in so many ways. For over twenty years I have gone here and there, holding meetings, but more and more the Lord is saying: 'A sharper focus on priority.' About the time that we sense the flow of life we feel that we really want to go out to help, but it is quite a stretching thing when the Lord begins to restrain us to this one thing. I believe that 'to dwell in the spirit' means for our spirit to be very sensitive to the Holy Spirit instead of to all the pulling of the soul.

It is very strange, but about the time we decide: 'Oh, Lord, this is a wonderful priority!', it is then

that the Lord will say to us: 'No, I don't want you to stay on your knees all the time!'

NOT LOPSIDED INTENSITY—BUT BALANCE

We are such creatures of extremes! If a thing is good, why, we just do that all the time. So it is not lopsided intensity, but balance that the Lord has to work out. There are some people who, because of their temperaments, would like to become hermits, and for these people I am now saying that this intensity can become lopsided. Hosea, in the chapter from which we have already quoted, says that Ephraim is like a cake half baked. He is burned down one side, but raw on the other. Now, don't misunderstand: this priority of giving ourselves wholly to dwelling with Him is very wonderful. I have seen mothers who determined they were going to give some hours each day to waiting before the Lord, but more things happen to the children about that time. Everything tries to hinder us from this sharpening of priority, but about the time we would like to live the hidden life with the Lord, He says: 'Now I want to use you.' And we are so prone to say: 'Lord, I am content just to dwell with You,' but He does not want a cake raw on one side.

Let us go back to our Psalm, where we read in verses 5 and 6:

"For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord."

About the time we would like to know the hiding away, God says: 'No, now is the time to set you on a rock, for I want to use you.'

We go back to Exodus xvii, when the people of Israel had no water and Moses cried out to the Lord for help. 'Lord, what shall I do? This people are almost ready to stone me!' And do you know what the Lord says to Moses? 'Moses, you get up on that rock over there.' 'But, Lord, I will just be a better target for their stones!' But this is the way that God demonstrates through a life. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock. . . ." Can you see that this is the way that we can get water for others? God has a way of stretching us until we become fruitful and can meet

the need of others. “. . . Thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it.”

So you can be sure that when you become too intense in one thing, the Lord has a way of balancing the other side.

NOT STRIVING AFTER JESUS—BUT OCCUPATION

Finally we come to the cry of the heart:

“When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek” (Psalm xxvii. 8).

The Lord is concerned for one thing, and that is that we learn to be occupied with His lovely self. It is not a striving to express the Lord Jesus, but when I am occupied with *His* face something happens to *my* face. You can tell what people look at continually: When people are looking at the dark, dangerous and fearful side of life, the lines are written all over their faces, but you can always tell when someone has been occupied with the joyful, the bright and the living side. Have you ever noticed that when a husband and wife look at one another for fifty years across the table they begin to look more and more alike? I wish I could say that they always look like the prettier of the two! Really, you would be surprised how many of you here are beginning to look alike. It is the law, for it says in the Bible: “As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man” (Proverbs xxvii. 19). Seriously, now, I have met some who have really reflected the loveliness of the Lord Jesus. John says: “We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (I John iii. 2).

Several years ago I was privileged to meet an elderly saint, who was then about eighty-seven. For over fifty years she had been an invalid and confined to her room, but if ever I saw anyone who lived face to face with the Lord, she did. Dozens of pastors throughout that whole valley made their way to this humble little cottage. The first time I went into her room, I had only been there about ten

minutes when I fell on my face on the floor, for the glory of the Lord was so real and all I could say was: ‘Lord, I am unclean!’ It seemed that every other phrase that she spoke was praise to the Lord. She adopted me as one of her sons. It was strange how, when she read something from the Word of God, things that I had known so well suddenly became piercing. She kept reading from a special book when I went to visit her, and one day I said: ‘Mother, you may not be here too much longer. Would you give me this book when you are gone?’ Every time she read from it it seemed that God just cut my heart open. One day when I went into her room I said: ‘Mother, it is a shame that you sit here like this. Don’t you know that God heals people?’ She looked up at me with such sympathy, and replied: ‘Oh, yes, my boy, I know God would have healed me a long time ago,’ and then in her broken English she said: ‘And den I would have runned around like all de oder womans!’ She had no desire to be in any other place, but just dwelling with God and seeking His face, and I believe she had a ministry that touched more people than many others I have known.

One day a package came to my home by mail, and when I looked at the ‘return address’ in the corner I knew what had happened. I was sorry that she had gone, but my heart leaped: at last I had this wonderful book! I got alone by myself and started to read—and I am ashamed to admit this. I discovered that it was not the book, but the person who made the difference. I read the book, but it does not speak to me as it did.

Let me just say in closing, dear friends: God wants to stretch our inner life, but it will only be as we learn to wait, and wait . . . and wait. It will only begin with a living relationship, through confirmation, by new priority, a real balance, and pre-occupation with Himself. If you go away from here with more than an experience, with a living relationship, then my heart shall rejoice.

DeV. F.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

IN STEP WITH GOD

IT was Saturday morning and Mr. Masters had planned to walk over to his mother’s cottage, which was about four miles from his home. He had four children, all boys, and as he always tried to do something with them on Saturdays, he suggested

after breakfast that they should all go over together. The eldest, Jack, replied that he did not think he would go, not if it were to Grandmother’s. Had it been to his uncle’s farm he would have been glad to go, but as it was to his grandmother’s, he

asked to be excused. 'All right,' his father answered, 'the rest of us can go. Come on, boys!' So the other three began to get ready, but just as they were about to leave, Father remarked that they would not take the usual road but go across the fields. Dick, the second son, objected to this. He hated going that way round and asked his father to change his route and go by the road. Mr. Masters replied that this was impossible. He particularly wanted to go by the cross-country path so that he could buy some flowers for his old mother. Dick answered: 'Then please leave me out. I don't think that I will go.'

This left Albert and Eric, the two younger boys, and the three of them set out happily together. At least, they went happily for a short time, but then Albert seemed to get restive. 'Anything the matter?' asked Father. Albert answered with a question as to whether they could not walk faster. They seemed to be crawling! The truth was that he wanted to go to the next village to visit a school friend, so he was restive at the steady pace which his father took. As a matter of fact, Eric, the youngest, would have liked to have gone faster; indeed, he would have liked to run, but he said nothing and kept close to his father. At last Albert could stand it no longer. 'Do you mind if I hurry on, Father?' he asked, and then, without waiting for an answer, he went striding along on his own.

Father was rather sad. He now had only one son walking with him, but still he was grateful for Eric's company, and they walked and chatted happily together. At last they reached old Mrs. Masters' cottage and were warmly welcomed by her.

After a while she asked where the other three boys were, and Father had to make excuses for them. 'Ah, well,' commented Grandmother, 'it was good that Eric walked with his father.' 'Eric walked with his father!' That reminded Mr. Masters of something. What was it? Oh yes, it was his morning reading: "Enoch walked with God" (Genesis v. 24).

When he had read that chapter in the morning he had been rather irritated with Enoch. Why had he been singled out like that? What about all the others? They were older than Enoch. Did they not walk with God, too? He felt quite critical and closed his Bible impatiently. Enoch walked with God, indeed! What about all the rest? Now it suddenly dawned on him why the others had not done so. In fact, the truth was that he had ceased to walk with God himself and that was why he was irritable. His three sons had not walked with him for different reasons. Jack did not want to go to the same place, Dick did not like the route he had chosen, and Albert had grown impatient with his timing. It was a sad thing that he had missed their companionship, and it made him wonder if God was sad that he had chosen his own way and grown impatient with God's seeming slowness.

Only Eric walked with his father.

Only Enoch walked with God.

God wants me to walk with Him.

This is true. It is also true that if God is to have our companionship and we the joy of pleasing Him, then we must go His way and accept His timing. How about you?

H. F.

DIVINE ORDER—IN CHRIST (II)

TO those who have a knowledge of the Bible it is evident that the whole of the Scriptures open up along the four lines that we have indicated; namely that

1. God is a God of order;
2. Satan is the prince of a world under Divine judgment, and the nature of that judgment is confusion;
3. Christ, in Person and work, is the embodiment of Divine order;
4. The Church is the elect vessel in which, and through which, that Divine order is to be manifested and administered in the ages to come.

The end of God is glory as against chaos, and the Bible shows—comprehensively—that glory is in-

separable from order; Divine order is the way to glory. The Bible should be read in that light. On the contrary, confusion always leads to shame. This, then, is *the* great issue of the Bible.

Perhaps you are wondering, or asking in your mind: What does this mean where we, simple believers, are concerned? It is all very wonderful, very great, but here we are, a little company of Christian people—how is this a message for us? Will you be patient, dear friends? This is of most vital account to you and to me. We are a part of a great whole. We are not just fragments that have shot off into space, with an independent and unrelated life. We are called by the grace and sovereign will of God into a great purpose. And what is true

of the whole is true of every part. You and I are going to learn, if we learn anything about Christ, that we are a part of the disruption of the Divine order, and that grace, *grace*, in its deepest and grandest interpretation, is to bring order out of our chaos, is to introduce Heaven into us and us into Heaven, and is to conform us to that which obtains in Heaven. Oh, yes, we are going to learn in many, many different ways that what God is doing with us, and has called us into, is just this: to conform us to the image of His Son. But that is not only conformity to a Person, it is conformity to a Divine order. His Son is an *order* of God, the *order* of Heaven.

I do not know how you read the four Gospels. Perhaps you read them as the life of Jesus here on earth, what He did and what He said—purely as a historic record. I suggest to you that you go back to those Gospels with this one thought: Here is the embodiment of another 'order' of things, in constitution and in behaviour, in ways of life and in laws and principles governing the life. Here is Heaven in evidence. Here is Heaven in control. Here is another world embodied: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world"—here is another world that has come in in this Person. Read the Gospels in the light of that, and you will begin to see that He does not do and speak as the people of this world would, even the wisest of them. He is getting everything from Heaven; He is getting every word from Heaven; He is governed by Heaven. That is the meaning of the so-oft repeated phrase: 'the Kingdom of Heaven'—the rule of the heavens. 'The Kingdom of God'—the rule of God. As we learn Christ, so we pass more and more from this world in our inward life, and find ourselves more and more in conflict with it, and incapable of accommodating ourselves to it or being at home and happy in it. It becomes more and more a 'far country'—something to which we do not belong. That is true in the consciousness of the true child of God, but growingly so. The true child of God, as he or she goes on in this inner, spiritual change of knowing Christ, will often ask the question: 'What is happening to me? I used to be able to do this and that, but I cannot now. At one time I had no qualms or difficulties, but today I have a question.' I think if we stayed here long enough we would find this world an utterly impossible place to live in spiritually. We could only live in it as Heaven came down to help us stay here at all. Well, that is a way of putting things—we are just 'going home' all the time.

Now, to refer again to our great interpreter of these things, the man who had such a full and exact knowledge of the Scriptures in the first place and,

added to that, the one to whom was given that peculiar and that so great revelation of heavenly things, especially of Christ. To that man the great issue of all things was this very thing—the recovery of a lost Divine order in this universe. He has stated that. Here is one fragment of that great statement: ". . . unto a dispensation (an order, an economy, a government, a rule) of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth" (Ephesians i. 10). Here we are faced with a tremendous statement. There is a word here which is almost an unspeakable word in our language. In the Greek it requires no less than nineteen letters! It is a compound which is translated 'to sum up', but in its original meaning, is this: 'to bring back and centre in One, all things'. To bring back, to recover, and to centre in One, all things. To gather up all that which has been lost and focus it, embody it, in Christ. First of all, the implication is that there was an order once obtaining in God's universe—a perfect order. Secondly, that that order has been lost; a great disruption has taken place in the universe. And thirdly, the re-gathering, the recovery, the re-storing of that lost order in Christ. That is what Paul saw to be the significance of Christ. What a range! What an interpretation of everything! What a word! To gather up all the fragments of this shattered vessel, all the parts of this disrupted and confused universe, to repair the damage and make of it all one beautiful expression of Heavenly order! That is the work of the Person of Christ in redemption. Paul uses a word so often—"to *reconcile* all things unto Himself"—to reconcile, implying that the situation is such as to find God not in a state of conciliation with it, and it not in conciliation with God. Everything has gone to pieces, and is under a terrible strain where God is concerned because things have broken down—the Divine order has been shattered. This One, Jesus Christ, came into this world, in the first place embodying in His own Person that which He is going to recover, objectively. He cannot be deflected from that for a moment on any consideration, by any bribe, or by any suffering. He is going through with what He calls the Will of God. And, dear friends, while we use that phrase, sometimes glibly, sometimes seriously, we do not always recognize—if we ever do—that the Will of God is the expression of this perfect order of God. "Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven." If only we knew how things are done in Heaven we would see a beautiful harmony, a complete accord, and the utter absence of any janglings, confusions, contradiction or inconsistency. That is God's will. He came for that. It

could only be, as we shall see later, by the Cross, in which He had to take hold of this enormous force of disruption and confusion, and break it for ever, and produce, or reproduce that order, which we find *commencing* in the New Testament. We must leave that for the moment.

To rightly understand and know Christ is to see that He stands related to this of which we are speaking—this universal, beautiful order of God in the creation. Christ Himself is the Seed of that order. You take your seeds, or your bulbs, and if you get the bulb of the hyacinth and place it in the earth, you do not expect a cabbage to appear! Within that small organism there is the order of hyacinths. That is the nature, the life, the species, the kind of thing that is there. So it is in every organic creation. Every seed has its own life, producing after its own kind. That is Scripture, is it not?—‘after its own kind’. Christ is the Seed of a heavenly order. In Him is implicit that order of God: the life is in Him; the order, or the ‘form’ is in Him; the ‘nature’ of that is in Him. The order requires a kind of nature. (Oh, for language, for words, for ability to explain!) A disposition, the kind of Person that He is. He is so different! We are always crying and praying to be ‘like Christ’! Yes, in Him is the nature which, when it becomes universal, will be seen in a certain perfect harmony and order. He is the constitution of everything. Paul finds himself beggared for words in this very thing, and he is a master of language and languages. He speaks about Christ ‘filling all things’, and ‘all things filled into Christ’. You cannot grasp that? It is just this. He is going to be the constitution of everything, and that ‘everything’ is to be an expression of this ‘mind of God’, *how* things should be, *what* things should be, and how they should behave. You and I behave as we do because we have a certain constitution. We are made like that. Make the whole creation like Christ and it will behave like Christ, the nature, the constitution of a great Divine system.

God is a God of order. If there is one thing that the Bible reveals about God, it is that. On the other hand, the Bible is a tremendous testimony all the way through against disorder. If you want to see what it is all about, what it means, why this and why that, it is this conflict between a Divine order, and a disorder. It is like that all the way through, and that is the battle.

And I say again, before we are through it has got to come down to our own lives in a very intimate way. But take the great truth, for it is capable of having a tremendous effect upon us. Dear friends, we must make it our business—if this is *the* business of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, *the* meaning of the Cross—to come under the rule of Heaven; the rule of Christ, the rule of the Holy Spirit, so that all the discords and conflicts go out of our individual life and of our collective life; that we are more and more an expression of Him, whose life, character, work and ways have no inconsistencies, no contradictions and no conflicts in Himself. He is the sum of this beautiful harmony.

Do believe this, amongst other things and whatever else it means, that when that great Song about which we read in the Book of the Revelation is sung by a great multitude out of every language, every tongue and nation and kindred and people, the one thing about it will be that there is not one discordant note! It will be the most marvellous harmony. Why? Because the Centre of it all is one Person, who pervades all. It is the Lamb. His work is done; He has redeemed by His Blood out of every nation. He has brought together all the broken pieces, all the shattered plan of God, and here it is, redeemed. And the mark of His work is this: that out of all the divided peoples of this earth, divided by language, divided by colour, divided by temperament, divided in a score of different ways, He has made *one* harmonious whole, singing one song, with no discord. It is the mark of ‘order’ that is the mark of His redemption! ‘Babel’, which means confusion, is undone!

(To be continued)

LITERATURE NOTICE

By the time this issue is mailed we hope to have supplies of the following three booklets:

(a) CHRIST—ALL, AND IN ALL: a reprint of the 32-page booklet which has already been widely circulated over a period of many years and which continues to be in demand.

Price: 8d. (\$0.15) per copy, plus postage.

(b) THE SUPREME VOCATION: this message which was reprinted in the September, 1967, issue of *A Witness and A Testimony* now available again in booklet form.

(c) A GOOD WARFARE: printed in booklet form for the first time.

Price of (b) and (c): 6d. (\$0.10) per copy, or 5/- (\$1.00) per dozen—plus postage.

“THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER”

4. THE KINGDOM AND THE CROSS

WE have explained that the word ‘Kingdom’ means the sovereign rule of God, and because the words ‘the Kingdom of God’ occur so frequently in the New Testament I am sure no one will think that the sovereign rule of God only began in New Testament times. The Kingdom of God, which is the sovereign rule of God, has three phases in the Bible, and has the tenses of the past, the present, and the future.

PAST

The Kingdom of God, or the sovereign rule of God, was as much in the Old Testament as it is in the New, but its form was different from what it is in the New Testament. In the past it was outward and temporal. The Kingdom of God then was something which had to do, in an outward way, with the kingdoms of this world. God was ruling amongst and over the nations of this world, and, in a sense, the nations of this world were directly under what is called a theocracy. You will call to mind some of the things that Nebuchadnezzar said about this matter, and Daniel told those heathen kings that they had to learn that God rules in the kingdoms of men. So God’s sovereign rule was over the nations in the past. It would be a very interesting and profitable study to see how God was dealing with the nations, but we should need a very large volume for that!

But while the sovereign rule of God was *over* the nations in the Old Testament, it was centred in and concerning one nation—Israel. You will remember that when Israel asked that they might have a king “like unto the nations”, Samuel was very distressed and cried to the Lord, and the Lord said: “They have not rejected *you*, but they have rejected *Me* from being King.”

The kingdom in the Old Testament, though, was largely a forecast, or a foreshadowing, of the Kingdom that was coming. That is another big subject by itself, so we just mention it and move on; but you will remember that Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, told the people that David was a type of the Lord Jesus.

That is enough to indicate that the Kingdom was in the Old Testament, that is, in the past.

PRESENT

Now we come into the present—the new phase and aspect of the Kingdom which came with the Lord Jesus. Jesus said: “The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you” (Luke x. 9), and “The Kingdom of God is in the midst of you” (Luke xvii, 21—R.V. margin). The change is that from outside it has come right inside—the sovereign rule of God is now amongst us in this dispensation. Jesus preached the Kingdom of God in relation to Himself. In His own person the sovereign rule of God had entered into this world, and He demonstrated that by many mighty miracles and signs. He said: “If I, by the finger of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you” (Luke xi. 20—R.V. margin). But the earthly life of the Lord Jesus was only a parenthetical period, that is, it was something in parenthesis.

On the Day of Pentecost the Kingdom came into this world in power, and this dispensation is the dispensation of the Kingdom amongst us. This is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, that is, in the interests of the Kingdom of God.

FUTURE

We just take a glance at the future aspect, and then we come back to this present. The Kingdom of God is in progress in this dispensation, and in the future it will be in *fullness* and in finality. With the coming again of the Lord Jesus the third aspect of the Kingdom will begin. Nations shall be gathered to judgment, and all that offends the will of God will be cast outside of this creation. Then, with the new heaven and the new earth, righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and in the Book of the Revelation we have the cry: “Now is come . . . the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ” (xii. 10). “Thine is the kingdom . . . for ever and ever.”

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE CENTRED IN THE CROSS

But all this, past, present and future, is centred in one thing. The sovereign rule of God, or the Kingdom of God, is centred in the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. For the full realization of that Kingdom everything of the past has been moving

toward the Cross. Have you noticed that every new sovereign movement of God in the Old Testament was marked by the Cross? The Cross throughout the whole of the Old Testament was represented by the altar, so you have an altar with Abel, an altar with Noah, an altar with Abraham, an altar with Israel. Every movement of God is marked by the altar, or by the Cross, all pointing toward the great Altar—the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and all future movements of the sovereignty of God begin at, and move from, the Cross.

I want you to grasp this truth. There is no movement of God forward at any time in any matter except on the ground of the Cross. Do you want to go forward with God? Then you must learn something more of the Cross. Do you want to take another step under the government of God? Very well, you must learn something more of the Cross. God's movement forward with His Kingdom is always by way of the Cross.

Now we must bring that nearer home, and to explain it we must come back to the baptism of the Lord Jesus. You remember that John the Baptist was baptizing in the River Jordan, and then Jesus came to him and asked him to baptize Him, but John would have forbidden Him, saying: "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? But Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew iii. 14, 15). And then it says: "Then he suffereth him." In other words, John baptized Him. And then it says that Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened to Him, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove rested upon Him, and a voice out of heaven said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." You have all that in the third chapter of the Gospel by Matthew, and let me remind you that the Gospel by Matthew is the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Well, what have we here in the baptism of Jesus? We have four things, and may I say here that these things apply as much to us as they did to the Lord Jesus. They may have a special meaning in His case, but the principle applies to us. That is what the New Testament teaches. What are the four things that we have here?

1. THE KING IDENTIFIED

First of all, the King is identified by heaven—"A voice out of the heavens, saying, This is my beloved Son," the destined King of the universe, the King promised from of old, the Son of Man to whom God has committed the dominion of this world. The King is identified from heaven. God and

heaven mark Him out: "This is . . ." What an immense amount is gathered into those words: "My Son"! It will take us all eternity to exhaust that. Paul says that we have been 'delivered out of the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of his love', and that is why I said that this applies to us also, for we are translated *into* the kingdom of this Son.

2. THE KING COMMITTING HIMSELF

Secondly, the King committing Himself, and there you have the very heart of the meaning of His baptism, and of baptism. This was the great committal of the King to secure the Kingdom, and the Kingdom is the Kingdom of the will of God—"Thy kingdom come. Thy *will* be done, as in heaven, so on earth" (Matthew vi. 10). And Jesus stands there by the Jordan with His feet upon the earth and the heaven open above Him. In His own person He unites heaven and earth, and He says: 'I come to do Thy will, O God. Thou hast prepared a body for Me, and I come into that body to do Thy will' (Hebrews x. 5, 7). To use the words of the Apostle Paul, He presented His body "a living sacrifice unto God" (Romans xii. 1). What is the meaning of a body? The body is not you and me. This body is not me. Unless the Lord comes, this body will be put in a coffin in the ground, but I shall not be in that coffin. I shall be with the Lord—at least, that is my hope. But what is this body? It is the vessel in which something is to be done for God, and, therefore, the body is given for a vocation. Oh, how the devil is using human bodies for an evil vocation, stealing vessels from God! The body is therefore a vessel for a vocation, and that vocation is the will of God here as in heaven. The body, then, is the means in which a mission is to be fulfilled, and in His baptism the Lord Jesus presented His body for this great mission that He had come to fulfil. As He went down into the waters of Jordan He meant: 'I die from now onward to everything but the will of God', and when He came up out of the water He meant: 'Now life for Me only means the will of God, and nothing else.' He was separated, consecrated and sanctified unto the will of God, and when it is like that the anointing can come upon the life.

The King identified: the King committing Himself—oh, may I stop just a moment before I go on. You see, this is what the Kingdom of God is. It is made up of those who have wholly committed themselves to God. Has everyone here wholly committed himself or herself to God? Have you reached

the point of no turning back? Is yours a committed life? Have you said: 'Here, Lord, I give myself away. It is all that I can do'? Or have you still got some ties with the shore? You have pushed a little way out in your boat in Christianity, but you still are playing for safety—you have got your rope tied to the shore so that if it gets a bit stormy you can easily get back. When Jesus was baptized He cut all His ropes. He was wholly committed to His Father 'for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part'. You see, I have just quoted the English Marriage Service. No, death will never part us from Him! But is that how you are married to the Lord? We shall never get very far with all the teaching until we are wholly committed.

3. THE KING ANOINTED

The third thing: on the ground of His committal, the anointing by the Holy Spirit.

Anointing in the Bible is particularly related to vocation. It is the giving of the Holy Spirit on the ground of total consecration. Now there are not two works of the Holy Spirit; that is, there is not just a Holy Spirit to be a Christian and then another Holy Spirit to be a Christian worker. The Holy Spirit is one, and with one object. He is only given for vocation. You know that that is definitely stated in the Book of the Acts. A little boy was once asked if his father was a Christian, and he replied: 'Yes, I think Father is a Christian, but he is not working at it now!' In England just now there are more than half a million unemployed people, but there is no such thing in the mind of God as an unemployed Christian. The Corinthians were not very good Christians, but even to them the Apostle said: "Now he that stablisheth us with you in Christ, and anointed us, is God" (II Corinthians i. 21).

The anointing of the Holy Spirit is unto vocation. I cannot tell you what it meant to me when I came to realize this many years ago. I wanted to be a servant of God, but there were all kinds of things that made me realize that I was not fit to be. The work of God is a very great thing. I had known of the gifts that are necessary for the work of God, but I was just without all the things that I felt were necessary. I had never had any of the advantages which I thought were necessary. I was very fond of reading biographies, and I tried to read the biographies of men who had been greatly used of God, but as I took them up I had not got very far before I read that this man who had been so greatly used had a very wonderful Christian home. His father and his grandfather were very godly people, and he

inherited some of their godliness, and a great ability to be a servant of God. I would not like to tell you how many biographies were never finished! I said: 'That is not me. I can never be a great servant of God!' Then I discovered the Holy Spirit and I came to see that He makes up for all that we have not got which is necessary to God. The Holy Spirit is the *extra* to me. He is other than I am, and all that was required of me was that I should present my body a living sacrifice, and the Holy Spirit would do the rest. I cannot tell you what that discovery meant to me! Now, please do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that I have become a great servant of the Lord, but I am saying that if the Lord has been able to do anything at all with me, it was the Holy Spirit that did it, and not I. It is the anointing that qualifies us for vocation.

There is a wonderful statement even about Jesus, and I think it is very wonderful when you think who Jesus was. It says: "Jesus of Nazareth, how that God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil" (Acts x. 38). Even Jesus depended upon the anointing, and it was after the anointing, and not until then, that Jesus embarked upon the mission of God. At the beginning of his Gospel Mark says: "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel" (Mark i. 14, 15). It was immediately after the baptism and the anointing that He began His ministry concerning the Kingdom of God.

Now a few words on the fourth thing, and then I close for the present.

4. THE KING GOING FORTH TO BATTLE

Immediately Jesus had committed Himself and been baptized, and was anointed with the Holy Spirit, He was driven into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Now the meaning of the baptism, that is, the committal, the consecration and the anointing, is going to be challenged by the other kingdom. Jesus said: "The prince of this world cometh" (John xiv. 30), and the prince of this world, the leader of this other kingdom, came to him right there in the wilderness. The right of Jesus to reign was going to be challenged and disputed by the whole kingdom of Satan.

Now note this particularly. We have said that Jesus consecrated Himself wholly to the Father. He took the ground of 'Not My will, but Thy will. Not Myself, but Thyself.' What was the point of the

attack by the devil? It was upon the self-life. Self-interest, self-pity, self-realization, self in all its forms, and every form of the self-life was included in the three temptations in the wilderness. I am not going to deal with all that, except to give you the main features and factors.

'You have been anointed with the Holy Spirit and have therefore been given Divine power. Use your Divine gifts for your own ends!' You look at those three temptations again and you see it all summed up in that. 'You have been said to be the Son of God, and therefore you have been put into a very great position. As belonging to God, and being owned by Him, you are in a wonderful position. Use your position for your own glory! You have an ambition and a vision of world dominion. You are committed to the Kingdom of God. Use your position to get worldly recognition, but remember, Jesus, you will never get world recognition unless you compromise somewhere, so,' says Satan, 'worship me and I will give you all the kingdoms of this world'.

Now every one of those temptations could be enlarged tremendously. Although you may not recognize the various aspects and applications, will

you tell me that our battle with the devil is not centred in our own self-life? The devil does not come with a long tail and fire coming out of his mouth. He just comes and says: 'Consider yourself. Be sorry for yourself,' or in one of a thousand ways he brings up self-interest, and do not forget that Jesus was tempted in that way. The greatest servant that God ever had was Jesus Christ, and He was tempted in that way.

The only way through, dear friends, the only way of victory, and the only way of "Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory" is the Cross. Years ago I preached only on the Cross. I thought I knew something about the meaning of the Cross and I was always talking about it, but today, after all these years of learning something of the Cross, I have to say to you that this battle with the self-life is far more severe than ever it was before.

I leave this with you. The men and the women who are most greatly used by God and have most of the power of God are the men and the women who know most of the Cross. The Kingdom, the power, and the glory are centred in the Cross, and the Cross more and more applied to the self-life.

(To be continued)

WORK IN THE GROANING CREATION (V)

THE HOUSE NOT MADE WITH HANDS

"Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain. Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe" (Hebrews xii. 26-28).

THERE is a sense in which those three verses summarize this letter, and indicate precisely the object of the letter. The statement about the 'things which can be shaken' covers the whole ground of the typology and earthly representation of heavenly things in the Mosaic system. The 'things which cannot be shaken' are the spiritual meaning of those things, that to which they point and embody as abiding spiritual and heavenly realities. The Apostle

is saying that a shaking is about to take place, and the result of that shaking will be that all those things will be displaced, upset and overturned, and that system will be disintegrated.

That, to some extent, fixes the time of the writing of this letter as being prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. The Temple and all its service was going on at the time, but the writer knew that ere long that whole system would be shaken to its foundation and collapse, and would be broken to pieces. That took place shortly after with the destruction of Jerusalem. The probability is that this letter was written about the year A.D. 64, and the destruction of Jerusalem took place in the year A.D. 70. These very Jewish believers to whom this letter was written probably lived to that day and saw the fulfilment of this prophecy. As they were inclined to go back from Christ, in all the spiritual fullness which He embodied, to the outward, historical, traditional system, the Apostle wrote this letter to save them from the awful disaster to their faith which

would inevitably take place if they were solely bound up with that system and had no more. He wrote to woo them from the transient and the passing to the abiding and the permanent, and to bring them into the things which *cannot be* shaken.

You go through the letter and mark each step, right from the first chapter, as to what can be shaken and what cannot be shaken. The eternal sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ cannot be shaken. Our sonship in Him cannot be shaken. Is it the blood of the covenant? It is the Blood of the *everlasting* covenant, and it cannot be shaken! Is it the Priesthood of the Lord Jesus? It is after the order of Melchizedek; not merely after the order of Aaron, which passes, but after the power of an endless life, which cannot be shaken! Whatever there is in this letter has two sides. There is the outward form used to express something, and that will pass. And then there is the inward thing being expressed, and that will not pass. So the call is to be bound up with the unshakable things, the eternal things and the heavenly things which are always the spiritual things, as differing from the temporal things.

The types represented the earthly, physical body of the Lord Jesus before the Cross and the resurrection. Paul tells us in his letter to the Philippians that He was "found in fashion as a man", and we know that that word 'fashion' in the Greek means something which is passing. The Greek word 'schema' is something which is transient, which does not come to stay. It is the same word that Paul uses at the beginning of Romans xii: "Be not fashioned according to this world", this age. The fashion of this age passes so quickly. "He was found in fashion as a man", that is, He took a form which was not His permanent form. His permanent form is found after the resurrection, when He had a body of humanity, but different from the form, the fashion, of His precifixion body.

That body concealed an eternal, spiritual reality, and no one was able to discern or perceive that inward, eternal, spiritual reality of the Person of Christ apart from the operation of the Holy Spirit. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God . . . Blessed art thou, Simon . . . flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee but my Father which is in heaven." We know how blind the religious people of His day were as to who He was. That body, that fashion, concealed, hid an eternal, spiritual reality. That is "the mystery", as Paul calls it. It is that which was associated with the ark of the covenant, the mystic secret of God, into which the Philistines wanted to peer, and which they were so anxious to possess, for when the ark came into a situation it

represented some power. It was the secret of Israel's glory, and they were always seeking to get hold of the secret of Israel's glory. God was there. That ark was a type of Christ, but it is an ark of acacia wood—a humanity. It is overlaid with gold, it is true, which means that Deity is associated with it, but its purpose, its meaning, is not in the combination of those materials—wood and gold—but in the Spirit that is embodied in that. That was the mystery of Christ.

The disciples were wont to regard that earthly body as the essential and indispensable thing. Whenever the Lord Jesus referred to His Cross or to His going away, a cloud came over them, and they became overwhelmed with a sense of foreboding, almost of despair. They were greatly troubled. To them the physical presence of the Lord Jesus was essential, indispensable. If He went away, that represented the losing of Him. It was in that way that the Jews, the Hebrews, regarded the typical system. That Mosaic order and system were their very being; they were bound up with them.

In relation to the body of Christ which was prepared for Him to fulfil an eternal purpose, and also in the whole Jewish, or Mosaic, system of types, which was provided as a means to an end, the fashion had to be broken, shattered, in order to bring the reality out. It is the difference between the flesh and the spirit—not merely the flesh in its evil sense now, but simply the natural life, and the spiritual. One has to be broken to make way for the other. The way into the 'naos', the very presence of God, was through the sundered flesh of Christ, just as the way into the Most Holy Place, the very Sanctuary, was through the veil of the Temple or the Tabernacle. But that way was not open to all until it was rent from top to bottom, and the veil of the Temple, or the Tabernacle, was that upon which everything else hung. All was gathered up into it. There was God's side, and there was man's side, represented in that veil, and the whole system had its focal point in the veil. The priests, as representing all the people, could go as far as that veil, but they could go no further, and that means that the people could go no further. God was on the other side of that, and He came, as it were, to that veil, but there was no way through. Once every year the High Priest went in, but there was no such thing for abiding fellowship or continuous union. When God split that veil from top to bottom He opened the way for all right into His own presence.

In the flesh of the Lord Jesus there was the meeting place of God and man. On the one side—God; on the other side—man. But there was the veil, and we know quite well how that veil did hang between

them. When the Lord Jesus went to the Cross and *that body* was broken, then the innermost secret of His Person was revealed—*God* was manifest. That is why you must have Christ crucified in order to know the wisdom and the power of God. You never get through to know the power of God except by Christ crucified.

This letter to the Hebrews says that the shattering of this whole typical system is to make way for the spiritual reality to become predominant, just as the breaking of that body of Christ led to the yielding up of the eternal heavenly secret of His Person. It will always be so. Not only is it true in relation to the destruction of Jerusalem in the year A.D. 70, but it will be true again at the end, when all that is merely external in representation will be shaken, broken, and proved to be temporary, transient, imperfect, and never leading through to the reality. When that happens, those whose lives are bound up with it will go with it. So there is some point in our stressing the necessity for an apprehension of what is heavenly and what is spiritual, and our coming into it.

These words are introductory and lead to something quite concrete. We have said that this shaking relates to an earthly system of representation and types. That, then, leads on to the bringing into view of the heavenly system. (System is not a wrong word. God is systematic. He is a God of order and has arranged this universe as a marvellous system. The evil is in making what is earthly take the place of what it is only intended to represent.) There is a counterpart of all that is in this letter. The thing that is brought in with this letter—not discussed as such, but mentioned and taken very largely for granted—is what comes in with chapter iii, verses 3 to 6.

It is assumed in this letter that the House of God is represented by everything here. It seems to come, in so far as the phrase itself is concerned, in quite a casual way, which implies that it is taken for granted. It is not something detached or unrelated. It is the thing which gathers up everything else. All that is taking place here is taking place in the House of God. It begins with the "Son"; it goes on with the "sons", the "brethren", the "children"; then the priestly ministry in the House; and before it closes it will speak about the Father's discipline in the House, the child-training of the sons; and the very subject of the inheritance and heirship is something which has to do with the House, the family, the household. The bare mention of the House of God does not suggest another subject, but it suggests the inclusiveness of everything here in the House. That House of God is the heavenly system

of which the house of Israel was but a type, a foreshadowing.

THE NECESSITY FOR THE HOUSE OF GOD

It is necessary to all the Lord's purposes which are gathered up into that which we have been considering—the bringing of children unto the full meaning of sonship—to have the House, for all that development takes place in, and because of, the House of the Lord. Wherever you fail to get that which truly represents the House of the Lord, and which is in accordance with the spiritual House of God, you will get immaturity. This House of God, fully constituted, is essential to spiritual maturity, and if you have not got it you find that Christians are immature. In what way is it essential? To begin with, there is nothing like a properly, spiritually ordered House for spiritual training. All the lessons that you need to learn can be learned in a properly ordered assembly, and the ordered assembly provides the background for the learning of those lessons. There are spiritual laws which govern the House of God, laws of relationships, laws of position, laws which the Lord enforces and demands shall be observed, which take away from us all our independence, and which definitely hold us into mutual responsibility. There is all the difference between a spiritual assembly as an organism, and the congregation. A congregation is a company of units. They come and go, and may do so for years, for decades, yet responsibility for one another spiritually never arises. But in a spiritually ordered and governed assembly the whole question and law of mutual responsibility for the spiritual lives of one another is demanded, is incumbent, is essential. Everything is relative. In that organism, if one member suffers all the members suffer, so very closely related spiritually are the members. In that organism there is no such thing as independence of action for life. The whole goes with the part, and the part demands the whole. In so far as that law breaks down, then the Testimony breaks down, the life breaks down, and God does not get what He is after, that is, spiritual maturity.

Read the letter to the Ephesians, the Colossian letter and the Corinthian letter, and you will see that that is running strongly through the whole, and wherever that law is not observed there is immaturity. In Corinth it was: "I am of Paul", "I am of Apollos", "I am of Peter". That is sectionalism, departmentalism, independence, detachment, fragmentary-ness, and the fruit is immaturity. The true spiritual fellowship is essential to spiritual growth, to maturity, and that is what is meant spiritually by the House of God.

It is there that we get our training. If you come under the government of the Holy Spirit you immediately are related by that one Spirit—by whom we are all baptized into one Body—and are made responsible for other believers. If something comes up between you and other believers with whom the Holy Spirit has linked you spiritually, you cannot snap your fingers and say: 'Let them get on with it! I go my way and they can go their way.' The Holy Ghost sees to it that you cannot get on! It is like the dislocation of a joint in your physical body. You will be suffering in your soul and in your spirit. There will be an ache, and you will know that you have not got freedom of action and restfulness of heart. There will be something all the time which is working against the free, spontaneous expression of your spiritual life. This thing will be there all the time. What has happened? The Holy Ghost is witnessing against that and life is arrested. Why? Because of the fact that the law of the House of God has been violated. When you come into that realm and know that you are getting some training, you are learning that it is not only necessary to have fellowship and maintain fellowship, but that increase of spiritual life is that way, and increase of spiritual power is that way, that the Body builds itself up in love that way, that prayer becomes mighty that way, testimony becomes effectual that way, and everything for the Lord's ultimate purpose depends upon that. Unless you recognize that, all these things are weakened and destroyed. And so the Lord brings saints together and relates them in groups, smaller or larger, for the spiritual purpose of representing His House, and in order that the spiritual laws of the House should operate there. It is so different from organizing a 'church', and having a 'church' roll and 'church' services. It is something which is a spiritual order, and a representation of a whole heavenly system, or, rather, the heavenly system itself in operation. Can you see the difference between the Body of Christ and what is called 'the church' today? One is an organized system; the other is a spiritual, living organism. The one will pass; the other is eternal, indestructible, heavenly, spiritual. The House of God is essential.

The House of God represents an order. Just as truly and fully as Israel's life was ordered, so is the House of God. If you read the book of Numbers you get but the type and representation of the House of God as ordered. Then you look into the New Testament and you will find the spiritual principles which are embodied in the book of Numbers. You do not organize the Church according to the book of Numbers, but you find that the Holy Ghost

orders the Church according to the book of Numbers.

You will have representative members. In the book of Numbers they are princes and heads of fathers' houses. Carry that into the New Testament and what does that mean? It means men who have been brought to a place of spiritual wealth and spiritual dignity in the House of God, and can take responsibility. Moses (as God, mark you: "Thou shalt be to him—Aaron—as God"—Exodus iv. 16) there at the door, and then all the fathers' houses gathered representatively at that door in these princes and these heads of fathers' houses, and God spoke from that door to all the households through these representative members.

Princeliness and headship are spiritual principles. Princeliness speaks of wealth and dignity. Headship speaks of authority and government. In the New Testament the ministry is the ministry of those who already have spiritual wealth and spiritual dignity, and have therefore, by spiritual maturity, come to a place of *spiritual* (not ecclesiastical) authority. They are not appointed officially, for you can never appoint people to be full of dignity, nor appoint anyone to spiritual wealth by a formal act.

That is a part of the heavenly order, and God takes great pains, when He gets things into His own hands, to see that that is how things are. The Lord is very jealous for princeliness. His people must be able to look up to those who represent the Lord's higher interests amongst them as their overseers, their leaders. That is a household thing, a Temple thing, a thing which is to have its expression amongst the Lord's people corporately, and a thing which means strength, growth and development. It is a great thing for young Christians to have had the advantage of having seen princeliness in their leaders, when those leaders were under provocation, were in suffering, affliction and trial, and to have seen the wonderful grace, graciousness, steadiness and dignity of the Holy Spirit, of *the Prince Himself*, reproduced in them. There is no small significance associated with that title of the Lord Jesus: "*A Prince* and a Saviour." Watch Him and see the princeliness! That, by the Holy Spirit, is reproduced in the House of God for the good of the House. It is not enough that there should be only one prince in a household. The Lord wants to develop that as a spiritual thing in all the members of the household—to develop spiritual responsibility. Responsibility only comes to those of spiritual means and spiritual dignity; otherwise it is merely official and will lack something.

The order of God's House is many sided. There are the princes of fathers' houses; there are priests,

and Levites, and much more; all signifying the Divine, the heavenly system.

If only the Lord's people would recognize more that they are responsible for one another, there would be development and maturity. That is too long delayed so often. You remember the word which seems to touch this aspect of things most directly, from Ephesians iv: "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto (or amongst) men . . . and he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ." That passage has been grievously mutilated by words being put in which are not there: "He gave some *to be* apostles." The word is: "He gave some apostles", that is, amongst men He gave them apostles, pastors and teachers. What did He give them for? For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry. If you put a break between those two sentences you upset the sense. It does not say or mean that He gave them for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the Body of Christ. It says that He gave them for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the

ministry. Leave the responsibility with those gifts, and the building up will not take place. It is only when the saints come into the work of the ministry that the building up takes place. When the saints are growing, being perfected, and taking up the work of ministry, the Body grows. If you use a definite article there and say: 'For the perfecting of the saints for the work of *the* ministry', you are in danger of making *the ministry* something apart from everything else. It is ". . . the work of ministering". The ministry is a general thing amongst the saints. All the saints have to be in the ministry, and it is only as they are in it that the Body is built up. Are you in the ministry? Are you leaving the ministry with the people whom you call 'the ministers'? If so, the Body is being deprived of something. If you are growing, in the sense of that word "being perfected", that is simply 'for the making complete of the saints'. If you are being made complete progressively, then that ought to be expressing itself in ministry, and that will result in the building up of the Body of Christ.

You see how the order of God's House is necessary to God's end; how the House is necessary because it embodies an order which is fruitful in the purpose of God.

(To be continued)

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EDITORIAL

“Christ! I am Christ’s! and let the name suffice
me,
Ay, and for me He greatly hath sufficed;
Yea, thro’ life, death, thro’ sorrow and thro’
sinning
He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed:
Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,
Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.”
F. W. H. M.

FEW words more aptly express the motive and object of the ministry which this little paper has sought to express through these many years. As we get nearer to His coming, and the conclusion of the ministry, there is an increasing burden and urge to bring *Him* more and more into view. We believe that the books of the last things, e.g. ‘Revelation’ and John’s Letters, indicate that, with the coming of Anti-Christ the Spirit’s movement will be a concentration and intensification of focus on Christ

Himself. Surely this is the *deepest* movement of the Spirit today! So many of God’s people are feeling, if not saying: ‘We do not want systems of teaching, nor your techniques and particular forms; we do not want your orientations of Christianity; but “we would see Jesus”!’ They are using the word ‘Reality’, but what they mean is Christ! The non-Christian world is turning out and repudiating Christianity as a system, but it cannot turn Christ out where He is a life and a spiritual power. The Church began by a ‘seeing of Jesus’, and its apostleship and expansion was essentially through that spiritual vision and *seeing*. The chief Apostle based his whole life and ministry upon his having had God’s Son revealed in him. If there is to be, what so many are praying for, revival, we are convinced that it can, and must, only come by a new seeing of Jesus; a new apprehension of His significance in the Divine economy. If individuals are to come into an enlargement of spiritual life, and if the Church and churches are to recover, or enter upon, a state of fuller life and power, unto more effective testi-

ly, it will only be by a new and fuller seeing of Christ unto a new captivation by Him.

The writer of the poem quoted at the head of this editorial has a stanza which contains the essential feature of this 'seeing':

"Oh, could I tell, ye surely would believe it!
Oh, could I only say what I have seen!
How should I tell or how can ye receive it,
How, till He bringeth you where I have been?"

If it is true that 'Christianity is Christ', and that the Church is Christ in corporate expansion, then, not from without, by forms and organization, by human efforts, but by a Holy Spirit work of inward eye-opening and inward revelation of Christ will Christianity be what it really is in the mind of God. We cannot do this, but our labours may, and must, be to provide the Holy Spirit ground to work upon by seeking to 'present' Christ in His greater fullness

to the Lord's people in these serious times. This will we do, by His grace and enabling. So help us, Lord!

Do pray that this ministry may be maintained in this vision and vocation until the Lord sees that its need is no more. We are much exercised about the continuance of the ministry, when the present personal channels are called to 'higher service', and we would ask your prayers concerning this. 'He takes His workers, but carries on His work.'

Thank you for your wonderful co-operation and fellowship. We often feel that we would like all our faithful helpers to share the many letters from far and near telling of the help received through this ministry. This is not possible, but we want you to know that "your labours are not in vain in the Lord".

May He bless you yet more!

Yours in His grace,

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.

THE CUP AND THE FIRE

2. THE CONFLICT OF THE AGES

Reading: Acts xii.

"I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke xii. 49, 50).

IN our first message we were mainly occupied with the cup and its consequence in the scattering of the fire, with a view to taking fresh account of the relationship between those two things: that there is no scattering of the fire, and all that that means of the progress of the Gospel and the growth of the Church, except in so far as the meaning of the cup is established as the foundation of everything, right at the very heart of the life of the people of God.

We are now going to look at the twelfth chapter of the book of the Acts, for this chapter is a microcosm of the history of the cup and the fire. That, of course, is true of the whole of this book: it is the cup, undoubtedly—the Church in suffering relationship with the Lord. But it is also the book of the scattered fire. This chapter, as I have said, is a miniature of that whole great truth; indeed, it is a miniature of the struggle of the ages between the powers of evil and the invincible spiritual forces which eventually triumph. The tremendous amount

of history and truth packed into this chapter never fails to move and stir us when we read it. I wonder whether there is a chapter in the Bible so pregnant with phrases and clauses, piled one upon another, every one of which could, without exaggeration, occupy our whole chapter.

Take some of these clauses, only a few of the many: "Now about that time . . ." What a key that is, and what a lot that key opens if you stay with it! We shall probably make use of it presently. "Herod the king . . ." There is far more in that than you recognize. "To vex certain of the church . . ." The vexation of the Church or the attempted vexation of the Church. "Killed James . . ." We pointed out previously that it was this James and John who came to the Lord requesting places on the right hand and on the left in glory, to whom the Lord immediately uttered the challenge: 'Are you able to drink of the cup that I drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized?' And they said: 'We are able.' 'You shall . . .' "And he killed James with the sword. . . ." "When he saw that it pleased the Jews . . ." 'It pleased the Jews!' There is a lot in that. "He proceeded further . . ." And so we might go on. The whole chapter is full of phrases and clauses like that which are just packed with meaning.

Let us look at the message of this chapter. "Now about that time . . ." About what time? It is full of significance to put your finger on that and note the time. The answer is a very large one, but it has two main features. There is the answer lying within Herod himself, and there is the answer which lies behind Herod, much more deeply—the answer of Satan. Let us consider the answer in Herod.

"Herod the king" (verse 1). There were six Herods in the Bible. All of them were Idumaeen in origin: they are gathered under that symbolic name of 'Edom'. That is, they were descendants of Esau, not of Israel. All that is very significant. This man before us was the first and the last of them properly to hold this title of 'king'. None of them up to him had officially held that title; and after he died the title of 'king' was taken away.

We are witnessing here the heading up of a long history. The prophecies of Obadiah should be read in order really to get the substance of this—this historic antagonism between the flesh and the Spirit, between heaven and hell, between Esau and Israel. There is a long history here, headed right up to this man who now takes the title of 'king'. What irony that the Jews should come to be ruled by a descendant of Esau and not of Israel, and that that ruler should be appointed by pagan Rome! It is something to think about. We are in the presence of a tremendous drama here, profoundly fascinating—but oh, how deeply instructive!

"About that time Herod the king put forth his hands to afflict certain of the church. . . . And when he saw that it pleased the Jews . . ." (verses 1, 3). Now why should Herod do this Jew-pleasing thing at that time? It might look just like a human story, it might seem to be something very simple, but we are in the unfolding of this much deeper thing. Satan, as we know, is very deep, but God is deeper still, and that is what is happening here. If you look back to the chapter before this, you will find that there was a great famine. "Now in these days there came down prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great famine over all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius. . . . Now about that time . . ." (Acts xi. 27, 28; xii. 1).

The simple answer is this: the Jews were a very difficult people to rule. That is perfectly clear, of course; we know that. But add to the normal, usual, common difficulty a famine. You know there is nothing that leads to revolution more quickly than famine and hunger. We are told later in the story that the people of Tyre and Sidon, in Phoenicia, were fed from King Herod's province (verse 20).

It is a question of food, and it has become very acute. There is a seething and surging and a rising, and Herod must do something to get these people diverted from their troubles, get them preoccupied. Something must be done for them; there must be some diversion. He cannot provide the food and avoid the famine; it has come, it is a fact. Then, if he is going to maintain his position and hold these people and keep them in check, he must do something to please them. And there is your answer!

It sounds like a human story, a bit of trickery, politics, or whatever you like to call it; but that is one part of the answer. "Now about *that time* . . ." Why must he please the Jews? Well, that is the answer. How will he please the Jews? He knows their hatred for the Christians—that is a long story, too—and so he will "put forth his hands to afflict certain of the church". The Christians were being used to buttress up this ramshackle, false kingdom of Herod, to keep his throne intact. He is using them for his own ends. Well, that is only part of the answer—Herod's part. It is a very simple one.

But let us get behind Herod, because Herod is not acting alone. There is something more, something deeper. The deeper and the more real answer to the question is found in the satanic realm behind the man. Let us look at chapter xi again, verse 19: "*They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to Jews.*"

"They . . . that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen . . ." That is a profoundly inclusive word. There is something happening. Oh, what a lot has been happening! That takes us back to chapter vii—the martyrdom of Stephen. Stephen is stoned; that is the cup. It looks like an immense triumph for the devil. Stephen was a mighty man of the Spirit; there were tremendous hopes for the Church bound up with the life of that young man. Some have said, after reading his discourse and studying it, that he was the equal of Saul of Tarsus at least. And there he is, murdered. It looks as though Satan has really triumphed.

But what after that? From that very point there was a scattering of the believers far and wide, and they went everywhere, testifying. Saul of Tarsus is converted, and what a tremendous thing that is! Peter is led to the house of Cornelius, away up there in the north; and we know what happened there—the door is opened to the Gentiles. Things of the greatest significance are coming out of the cup, the cup of the Lord; out of the baptism and passion into which the Church has been baptized.

Believers were constantly added to the Church (ix. 31, 42; xi. 21, 24). The thing is growing. The fire is spreading; Satan's kingdom is being shaken. The kingdom of Satan is being stirred to its depths, and something must be done about it.

Someone tersely put it: 'The men that have turned the world upside down have come hither' (xvii. 6). "Now about *that* time Herod the king . . ." You see? That is the explanation. Out of this baptism of the passion of the Lord into which the Church has been brought, the fire is spreading; but the enemy is moved—deeply moved. Herod 'puts forth his hand'—and there is a hand behind that hand—"to afflict certain of the church. And he killed James . . . with the sword. And when he saw that it pleased the Jews . . ." he proceeded further: "I would like to stay with all those fragments, because there is a message in every one of them. Herod is carried on by his own momentum. Have a little success, and see what it will do for you!

However, we turn away from that for a moment to the other side—the aspect of this that we may call a drama indeed, that of the sovereign Kingship of the Lord. It is all summed up in three things: "Herod . . . put forth his hands to afflict . . . an angel of the Lord smote him . . . But the word of God grew and multiplied" (xii. 1, 23, 24). That is tremendous, is it not? We begin the story with Herod putting forth his hands; we end the story with Herod eaten of worms and giving up the ghost. You begin with the Church a victim and martyr; you end with the Word of God growing and multiplying. This is the story of another King. It is the story of two kings pitting themselves against each other. It is, as I said at the beginning, the microcosm of this long history of the conflict between the forces of evil and those invincible forces of the Spirit, which always triumph in the long run.

But here a pressing question arises. When you think of the beginning—that he killed James with the sword, and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also—the question that clamours for an answer is: Why does God allow this kind of thing? Why did He not intervene before James was killed with the sword? Why did He not stop this thing before Peter was thrown into prison? Ah, that is another key to another large history, is it not? The mystery of God's permissive will: God allowing His servants, His so useful servants, to be killed or cast into prison; allowing the Church to suffer like this. Why does God allow it?

The answer lies deep down within the cup. If you get deep enough into the cup, you will find

the answer. Let me put it the other way—it is deep within the Cross. God, in the mystery of His will and His ways, uses the Church as He used Israel, to draw out the evil forces to their own destruction. 'God moves in a mysterious way . . .' Is it the Church, or is it the forces against it, that are destroyed eventually? You see the answer in history. It is here in this chapter in representation. Here you have Israel in Egypt. What a tremendous extending of Pharaoh—drawing him out, drawing him to the limit of his own resources to give an answer through the magicians, and then going on and going on, further and yet further; all Pharaoh's resources are exhausted, and then God smashes him. The sum total of his whole resource is broken and destroyed—and God has used a suffering people to draw it all out. That is the story here. In the mystery of God's ways the Church suffers, but its suffering comes from the enemy, whom God is drawing out by means of the Church—drawing him out and extending him. And when his cup of iniquity is full, God will smash him beyond repair. That is the issue of Herod. It is the Church that has brought this about. It is the sufferings of James and Peter and the Church in these days that have accomplished that. But is that not found right in the Cross? Look at the Cross! Is the Cross the extending of all the powers of evil in earth and in hell? It is that! When you see Him there on the Cross, dead, and know how it is brought about, and all that has gone to bring it about—the whole story of human and satanic malice and spite—you ask: Is there anything more that they can do? No! What is the answer? The scattered fire! That is the answer. It is in the cup, it is in the Cross; it is an integral part of this whole matter. The sufferings of Christ which abound unto us, unto the Church, are working Satan's undoing—and for us a 'far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory' (II Corinthians iv. 17).

Why does God allow it? Wait, if you can, in patience and in faith. "Here is the patience of the saints" (Revelation xiii. 10, xiv. 12). Do you remember that word? If you can wait, you will see that, on the one side, your suffering, or your sufferings, wrought havoc in the kingdom of Satan, brought him to an end of his power: they drew him out, they were the marks of his coming out. On the other side, the sufferings have worked glory for you. And in the meantime there has been spiritual increase, spiritual progress, scattered fire.

God uses the work of Satan for Satan's undoing. But it is the Church and it is the saints who are the instrument. It is in their soul that this battle is fought out. "Now unto the principalities and the

powers in the heavenlies . . . made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians iii. 10). Something is happening in the unseen.

The progress of the Word of God is a costly thing. It involves much suffering—it involves the cup; but that is His way. Here, then, we see God using Satan's work—on the one side for Satan's own undoing and overthrow, and on the other side for the progress of the Word, for the Church's advance and for the glory of God. All that is wrapped up in this anguish of fellowship with His sufferings.

You and I have had a good deal of difficulty in understanding why Paul should long to know the fellowship of His sufferings. It is one of the most difficult prayers for us to pray, is it not? But Paul knew this secret; that is the way of the progress of the Gospel, that is the way for the destruction of this that is set against it: the fellowship of His sufferings; for that is the heart of the Cross of the Lord Jesus Himself.

And all this is inherent in the cup. The cup ceases to be an object, it ceases to be just a thing: it becomes something living, something potent. That cup is a mighty force in this universe. When you and I come to the Lord's Table next time, may God give us some larger conception of what a tremendous thing is there, touching every realm in His universe. It is the representation of something living. This blood speaks, this blood tells, this blood counts. Blood is vital; it is a terrific force in this universe. When we take the cup, and thereby accept the baptism, the passion, let us recognize that in faith we take also the tremendous victory that it sets forth. It is costly!

Let us now see where this was all wrought out. On the one side, Herod—wicked, wicked Herod, with all the cruelty of his long history, going back to Esau; the Jews, delighted that action was being taken against the followers of Jesus; the prison, the chains, the strong guard within and without—four quaternions of soldiers. These are things that represent great forces and great difficulty—all the things which are against. They are not just words; they are tremendous things, all of them, viewed from the natural standpoint. That is on the one side. On the other side, "an angel of the Lord": and Herod, and the Jews, and the prison, and the chains, and the guard, are as nothing.

Where is it wrought out? In a prayer meeting, as it were right in between those two. Between the forces of hell and of heaven was the Church at prayer. The thing would not have happened otherwise. Those forces of evil would not have yielded to the heavenly authority of the ascended Christ

through an angel, if it had not been for what was going on in that room. "But," it says, "prayer was made . . . of the church. . . ." But . . . But . . . Away all the forces! Calculate them, take their full strength and meaning, and then put one word over it all—'But'. 'The Church prayed. . . .' And in response to that the angel—and all the other was as nothing.

The Church at prayer. What do you think about that? It says that "prayer was made *earnestly*", but that English word does not really convey the force of it at all. The Greek word means literally 'extendedly', 'stretched out'. The Church prayed in a stretched out way; the Church was extended. Satan was extended, heaven was extended, and these two powers came into collision because the Church was extended. It will never come about in any other way; it is just like that. What a tremendous thing is wrapped up with the Church at prayer!

As I dwell upon this story, many, many thoughts that are not in the story crowd into my mind. How different it might have been if the Church, instead of getting together and focusing upon the situation in oneness and in prayer like this, had said: 'Oh, if only Stephen had not said those things! If only so-and-so had been a little more discreet. . . . If only . . . !' and a thousand other things of blame: blaming one and another and holding people responsible for this and putting it down to that, and that, turning in on themselves until they had got a whole situation of questions and reproaches and recriminations, and a 'case'. And the whole thing is sabotaged! Dear brothers and sisters, whenever this kind of thing happens we must look deeper. Behind all that is the strategy of Herod to frustrate the scattering of the fire. When the devil can get us turned in on ourselves and on our own problems, and upon one another's faults and weaknesses and failures, and so on, he has defeated the whole business of the Lord. You may pray and pray and pray, but if there is the contradiction of division in the background, you pray in vain. The Lord will not come in.

They prayed as the Church in this 'stretched out' way. There is no other thing in mind; they are of one mind and heart. They are concentrated upon a satanic issue. There is a lesson in that. Oh, how our prayer is paralysed by a thousand and one things which, if we only knew the truth, are not really the trouble—they are things that Satan has got hold of. There may be faults. Was any one of the Apostles faultless? There may be weaknesses; but if only you are on the Lord's business, the Lord takes action.

It has been said, concerning the disciples' dis-

puting with Rhoda about Peter, that they had prayed and prayed and prayed all night, and then when their prayer was answered they did not believe it; and some people have said that they could not have prayed in faith. But there are other points of view. Some of us pray with all our might about a dear brother now in prison. I beg to suggest that, if someone came to us and said: 'Brother . . . is at the door!' we should say: 'He can't be!' We should want a good deal of verification—not because we did not believe that the Lord could do it or would do it; but, somehow or other, when the Lord does the very thing that we ask for, our breath is taken away and we cannot believe it. Have mercy upon these believers, and do not impute unbelief. The fact is, that, though they may have prayed like that, and though there may have been faults and weaknesses, they were on the business, and they were one in it, and the Lord moved in.

How much came out of this! They saw through the whole situation and got to the real issue; they pushed aside all other considerations, and out of their travail something was born. You remember what follows after chapter twelve. In the previous chapter (xi. 19–30) Antioch had come into view:

and now from Antioch Paul and Barnabas are sent forth, and on and on you go. The fire is scattered to the ends of the earth—out of this: *The Church prayed.*

It is a wonderful story, but I find much difficulty in seeking to convey it. It is so true to life. There is always so much room for the mystery of God's ways. Why? Why? Why? If you stay with the 'why's' of God's wisdom, you will be paralysed. Let me recall what we were saying at the beginning of our first message. Here is a law enunciated, declared, established—that there is no scattered fire without the cup, and that cup is always a mystery. It always expresses itself in ways concerning which you can say: 'Why this . . . ?' 'Why that . . . ?' 'Why does He allow this . . . ?' Those 'why's' will paralyse you if you have not reached the established, settled position, that the cup has come to stay; it will be with us to the end.

But, in the mystery of suffering permitted by God, and in all that that cup means in a crucified Son of God and a crucified Church—in all that is the way of Satan's undoing and the establishment of the heavenly Kingdom. May God settle it in us, and give us grace!

(To be continued)

THE LIVING WAY OR THE LEGAL WAY?

Message as spoken by Mr. DeVern Fromke at the Aeschi Conference 1967

I BELIEVE that we have reached a place in our conference where we do one of three things. We will either break *out* in rebellion and say 'No!', or we will break *down* in despair and say 'It is too difficult!', or we will break *through* into the life in the Spirit. You know, as you move around various companies of the Lord's people you find some who have learned the secret of a spiritual edge to their life, but even among so many who say they really love the Lord there is such a tendency to a spiritual sag, or let-down. I want to share with you this morning a principle which I believe will help us to live with a keen, sensitive edge to our spiritual life.

I will begin with a story about Billy. One morning, when Mother was leaving home, she turned to her son, Billy, and said: 'I have made some candy

which you may cut when it is hard, but be sure to save twenty-four pieces for a party I am going to tonight.' At last the candy was ready to cut, and Billy cut some big pieces, but, after eating and eating, he counted and there were only twenty pieces left. He said: 'It is good that I cut such big pieces. If I cut them in half there will be forty pieces left, and I can still eat sixteen more!' After he had done all this there seemed so few on the plate, so he decided to spread them out a little. When Mother came home he could rest in the confidence that he had fulfilled the law—there were twenty-four pieces. He kept looking at his mother all the afternoon, wondering if she would say something. That night, just as she was about to leave for the party with the candy, he came running up to her in tears, saying: 'Mother, my conscience

doesn't bother me, but something else deep within tells me that I am so selfish!

With this story as background, I want you to turn to I Corinthians viii. We want now to see how many Christians there are who are content to live in the place where their conscience cannot bother them, but they hardly move up into the place where they live with a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, so we will look at a problem in the church at Corinth. There were some younger believers who were saying: 'Oh, we could not eat meat that has been sacrificed to the idols in the temple!' They kept thinking of these idols as a reality, so their conscience, wrongly trained, bothered them. Then there were the other group who had more understanding; but they were very selfish. These older Christians were saying: 'We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and if we want to eat this meat we are at liberty to do so.' Thus we see a conflict between those who were more or less ignorant and those who were more or less selfish. Here this may be a problem that deals with the eating of meat sacrificed to idols, but the principle will fit into all the practices of the Church.

We must see that there are three levels, so to speak, where people can live. At the bottom there are those who want to break out all the time and they have to have the law, or something that *forbids* them. Then there are those who live in the middle plane, where they fulfil all that their conscience demands, saying: 'It is *lawful*.' Then there are those who push up to live in the '*expedient*' level, and we shall see what that is.

How does Paul deal with this problem in Corinth? There are those who would like him to write a little book of laws, saying: 'Thou shalt not do this!' They are the ones who would fit into the bottom group; but Paul writes to these weaker believers who are ignorant, and to these others who are selfish, and let us see what he says in verse 1 of this chapter: "*Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up.*" Remember that we were saying last time that there is a knowledge that the mind can get hold of, and it is this knowledge that 'puffs up', but we are going to see now that there is a fuller, inward knowledge. These weaker believers had this outer knowledge. They knew some things about God, but they were still very conscious of idols. These others who had been going on with the Lord longer had a fuller inward knowledge that an idol was nothing in the world. In verse 7 Paul says: "*There is not in every man that inward knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat as a thing*

offered unto the idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled." He sums up the conflict by saying: 'It is true that you have this fuller knowledge, and you have liberty to eat this meat', but I want you to notice what Paul says now. He seems to say: 'I do not live in the middle, "lawful" plane, taking my liberty. While I could have my liberty, I move up to a plane where I am *His* love-slave.'

You see, the way that Paul teaches them is not the legal way of imposing restrictions, but it is the living way of love. Can you not see how some of them who had an inward knowledge were even using this revelation for their own selfish interests? They would say: 'Oh, we have had a revelation. The idol is nothing in the world, so we can eat this meat.' The one who talks in this way is still the centre of his little world, making every good thing just serve himself. Paul sums up the situation in verse 13: "*If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.*" People are always saying: 'Oh, this teaching gets people under bondage.' Well, there is the bondage of the rebellious mind, but there is the wonderful bondage of love.

Now we move to chapter ix and see the very same principle in operation. These people could not understand the strange, poured-out life of the Apostle Paul, and in verse 3 Paul says: "*Mine answer to them that do examine me is this:*" Briefly he is saying: 'I have my rights as a servant of the Lord', and then he names three rights that he has. In verse 4 he says: 'I have the right to enjoy normal food like others.' In verse 5 he says: 'I have the right to have normal relationships, a family and children', and in verse 6 and onwards he is saying: 'I have the right to have normal remuneration as a servant of the Lord.' Now he is going to prove that these are his rights. In verse 8 he says: 'Do I not say these things as a man, or does not the law also say the same?' In verse 9: "*For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?*" Look at the oxen as they are treading out the grains on the threshing floor! They were not permitted to put a muzzle on the mouth of these oxen. Why? Because when they went around treading out, they could stoop down and eat some of the grain. And does God just give rights to the oxen, or does He also give rights to the servant of the Lord? And if other servants of the Lord partake of their rights, does not Paul also have that privilege?

But now Paul drops his bombshell. Listen to what he says in verse 12: 'If others be partakers

of this right over you, do I not have this right also? Nevertheless, we have not used this right; but suffer all things lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.'

You see, in chapter ix Paul is saying: 'I do not live in this "lawful" plane, claiming *my* rights, but I have moved up to the "expedient" plane, where all I am concerned about is His rights in me.' He goes to great length here to prove that he has his rights. In verse 14 he says: "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel", and goes on in verse 15 to say: 'But I have not claimed any of my rights, neither am I hinting now that you should give me my rights.'

I think we must see that in the Old Testament there were two kinds of servants. There was the hired servant who had his rights and certain recourse when he was wronged, but there was also the bond-slave, who had no rights, no remuneration, and no recourse when he was wronged. The Hebrew people were never allowed to make bond-slaves of their own people, but they could go out and capture other nations and make bond-slaves of them. It is so wonderful how the Lord Jesus laid aside all His heavenly rights and came down to earth to become a bond-slave; and now Paul uses this very same Greek word in verse 19: "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself a *bond-slave* unto all."

Can you not see, in the midst of our fellowship with one another, how often folks say: 'I know my rights!?' And when people live in 'My liberty' or in 'My rights' on the 'lawful' plane the conscience cannot get at them. Look at a tree with its fruits, for a moment. The fruits on the tree are the things that I do. The conscience works in the higher plane to tell me that what I do is wrong, but it cannot get below the soil to the roots of the tree. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to show me, not so much what I *do*, but what I *am*. Paul says of the Corinthians that some of them had a weak conscience because they only lived by the outer mind, but when the Holy Spirit comes to work alongside of my conscience with enlightenment, then I can have a good conscience working on the basis of the inner seeing, or the inner revelation. Oh, there are so many people today who are saying: 'My conscience does not bother me. I know my liberty and I know my rights.' They are the centre of their little world and they relate everything to themselves; but when we break through into the higher level, where God is our centre and everything is related to Him, then even the questions we begin to ask are different.

I remember one morning, after I had spoken along this line at a meeting, a young Bible College girl came to me. She asked: 'Do you think it all right for me to go to such-and-such a place? Is it all right for me to do this, or that? Is it all right for me to wear this or that?' I did not say anything, but I just stood there and smiled. She looked up and said: 'Well, what is wrong with my questions?' I replied: 'Have I wasted the *whole* morning? Don't you see that the very questions you ask tell me the level on which you live? Can't you see how you are the centre and you are relating everything to yourself?' Tears ran down her cheeks and she walked away.

Now in chapter x we will see the reason for this. There is so much here, but we will begin with verse 23. Now please notice that when Paul says, "All things", he is talking about all this eating of meat, all 'my liberty' and 'my rights'. All that is in the context here. There are some things that are definitely forbidden in the Scripture, but in this verse he is saying: "This eating of meat, and my rights, are permissible, are lawful for me, but they are not expedient. All these things are lawful, but they do not build up my spiritual life. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's welfare.' And so he would say: 'I do not live in my liberty, for my rights, or just for my gain, but I am primarily concerned with *His* gain in me.' Verse 31 shows us how he relates everything to God: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, *do all to the glory of God*", and in verse 33 he says "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit (or gain), but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

Oh, how my heart goes out to people when I see them so often settling down just to enjoy their liberty, their rights, and what they gain out of the Gospel. You see, if we are very legal we say: 'My conscience doesn't bother me', but this is a conscience that only works on the mind in the soul. I do believe that an enlightened conscience, sensitive to the Holy Spirit, will sense this gnawing within that something is wrong. On this higher level, then, the conscience is working on the law of the spirit of life, the inner law. There have been times when I have been in a church where there was a spiritual awakening, and people were really giving of themselves and I have anticipated that when I go back the next year they will have gone on with great fruitfulness unto the Lord, but when I got into the first meeting I sensed that the spiritual edge had gone, and they were wondering why the convicting power of the Holy Spirit was not in their midst. The constraining love of the Lord Jesus was

not really gripping them. They had been content to settle down as the objects of God's blessing instead of being a channel of His blessing. Through the years I have learned that whenever the edge seems to have gone in my own life the Holy Spirit is pointing and saying: 'You have just settled down to the "lawful" level.'

Is it not wonderful that no one ever *demand*s that you must move up to the higher level? Paul says, and I think it is with real gladness, "I made *myself* a bond-slave." You see, it is when we have really seen something of the Lord that our whole being goes out to satisfy His heart. I think I have been like little Billy so many times—just fulfilling the

requirements, and I could say: 'There are just twenty-four pieces. Mother said I was at liberty to eat, and I had my rights, so I enjoyed my gain.' But all the time I was talking with my lips there was something else speaking deep within. The Holy Spirit, who unveils the roots of the tree, is always saying: 'Give! Give!'

I hope that when we go back to our church, or the people with whom we have fellowship, this will become a living principle in us. The living way is the way of real joy. The legal way is the way of inward hurting all the time, because we know that we are not living unto the fullness that God expects.

DEV. F.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

SAYING "THANK YOU"

ON Saturday, June 29th, a Frenchman arrived at Ballykelly Air Station in Northern Ireland and asked to see Squadron-Leader John Bulloch. He had travelled all the way from France to say two words. He felt so full of gratitude that he could not be content with writing a "thank you" letter, and no wonder, for he was thanking the Squadron-Leader for saving his life. You see, his name was Joan de Kat, and he had been in danger of perishing when his trimaran broke up in the Atlantic. His appeal for help had been picked up and a tremendous sea search was set in motion, with planes and ships from various parts of the world joining in the search. At last, and just in time, the Shackleton from the R.A.F. Station in Ireland had spotted him, and so he was saved from perishing. It was a costly operation, but the French yachtsman did not go to ask how much he owed for his rescue. This was just as well, for the estimated cost was £150,000, which would have meant that, even if he could have promised to pay £20 a week, he would have had to live for another 150 years to pay off the debt. No, he could never hope to pay for being saved, and he was not asked to do so. All he could do was to say those two words: "Thank you." That was enough.

That is all that we can do to thank God for sending His Son to save us from perishing. It is no use our trying to repay God, for the price He paid was much more than £150,000. He so loved us "that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him

should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). We can never begin to repay Him, but what we can and should do is to say "Thank you". We do not need to travel across the sea, as Joan de Kat did. All we need to do is to kneel down and thank Him for Christ the Saviour.

Of course, we cannot thank Him for salvation if we have not yet got it. When a missionary called Willie first went to Brazil he soon learned to say "Thank you" in Portuguese, but he had a shock when he tried to use his knowledge. It was in a café where he had given the waiter a large note to pay a small bill. Very soon the waiter brought him the change on a plate and he said "Thank you", expecting to have the money handed to him. To his surprise the overjoyed waiter no sooner heard him speak than he pocketed the change and went off, beaming with pleasure. Poor Willie! He had lost his money by saying "Thank you" too soon. In that country his action was the same as saying "No, thank you", so the waiter thought that he was being told to keep the change. Willie resolved that in future he would never say the words until he actually held the object in his hands.

This is the kind of "Thank you" that God wants from us. He wants us first to accept His forgiveness and love, and then to be sure to say "Thank you". And to keep on saying it by our devoted lives.

H. F.

DIVINE ORDER—IN CHRIST (III)

WE began these messages with a fresh contemplation of the greatness of Christ; and then we went on to remind ourselves that everything which has to do with the realization of God's purpose in creating man, and this world, and its universe, is a matter of *knowing God in Christ*, which, of course, means knowing Christ. Every aspect and detail of God's will and God's way and God's end is a matter of knowing the Lord Jesus. All progress, as all life, rests upon that—knowing Him. The Christian life here is meant to be one of continuous growth and development and progress, but that only takes place as we come to know more, and still more, of the meaning of the Lord Jesus. This progress will not stop when we leave this world, and when time gives place to eternity: "Of the increase of his kingdom there will be *no end*." Stagnation is no mark of life, and life there will be ever manifesting itself in new and more wonderful fullnesses and forms. Therefore, the knowledge of Christ which will, in time and eternity, be the secret of growth and progress, will continue in heaven, and it will take eternity to exhaust it. Well, that was our next thing—all growth, progress, fruitfulness, rest upon this growing knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

That brought us to this: Seeing He is so vast, so immense, so many-sided, we can only see Him from one standpoint at a time; we have to move round to see Him from every angle. And at this time we are just looking at the Lord Jesus from one of the many angles, or points of view, which is this particular aspect of His significance: that He, in His Person and in His work, stands related to an eternal, heavenly order. He Himself, in His wonderful, complex Person, is the very embodiment of all the principles and laws of a great heavenly order. When everything is conformed to Christ and takes its character from Him, it will be one glorious, harmonious whole, perfected into one, just one glorious unity.

So that is what we are seeking to grasp at this time: the relationship of Christ to this eternal heavenly order. We have, of course, laid our foundation in the Word of God; we have allowed that to come to us in one marvellous statement through the apostle Paul that 'in the fulness of the times—the *fulness of the times*—God has determined to gather together (or, re-gather together) all things in Christ'. Seeing that the very word contains that idea of re-gathering, it implies, if it does not declare, that there was a glorious order at one time when

everything was as God meant it to be. All the sons of God shouted for joy as they beheld the marvel of His creation and His order. That word implies that that order has been lost, and in its place there has come disorder; and it declares that the order is going to be restored in Christ. That is the great significance of the Lord Jesus from this standpoint. We repeat: He personally is the embodiment of that; and His work is related to that.

That led us to the place where the great river of revelation divides into four:

1. God is the God of order. We dwelt a little while on that, although it altogether defeats us, for it is so great and so full. This fact, of God being such, is revealed clearly, *firstly*, in His creative work;

Secondly, in the great representation that we have in type and symbol in the Old Testament;

Thirdly, in His redemptive work;

Fourthly, in the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

In all these four ways there is a wonderful revelation that God is a God of order.

Let us think for just a minute or two on the first of those—*revealed in creation*.

While, of course, we are confronted with so much in this present world and system which seems to shout disorder, derangement, discord and confusion, even in nature, there is still discernible in nature a wonderful background of an ordered system. That is something which has engaged men for their whole life, and is a marvellous universe itself of instruction and of fascination. Here is an extract from a big work by one of the most outstanding biologists. He writes thus:

"The hosts of living organisms are not random creatures. They can be classified into battalions and regiments. Neither are they isolated creatures, for every thread of life is intertwined with others in a complex web. This is one of the fundamental biological truths, the co-relationship of organisms in the web of life. No creature lives or dies to itself. There is no insulation in nature. One organism gets linked on to others, and becomes dependent upon them for the very continuance of its race. Flowers and insects are fitted together as hand in glove. When we learn something of the intricate give and take, supply and demand, action and reaction, between plants and animals, between flowers and insects, we begin to get a glimpse of a vast organization in the creation."

Well, take it for what it is worth. You will see that that gathers up into a few sentences something that is capable of tremendous enlargement. You see it everywhere. Behind this creation there is a Mind that loves to have things properly ordered and related. Behind this creation there is a perfect, spiritual system. God is the God of order, and what is true in natural history is seen to be true everywhere else. God has arranged the year in seasons. He has arranged the co-operation of heaven and earth in that the heavenly bodies govern the movements of the earth, the tides; and so on.

We would not know where to stop if we were to allow ourselves to go on with this! There is one hymn in our hymnbook which begins: "The spacious firmament on high . . ." You notice that the conclusion of that hymn is: "It all declares a Mind Divine." Well, if we wanted to go on with this we do not need to go far away to the celestial bodies or to objects outside of ourselves; we have only to have a little intelligence about our own human bodies, and to see that the human body, in health, is a marvellous system of related, dependent, inter-dependent, co-operative functions, principles and elements. I think that anyone who really has any knowledge of the human body ought to be a great worshipper! It is a marvellous unity in diversity. It all speaks of this 'hand in glove' principle, of one thing fitting into another in perfect harmony and symmetry. There is another side to that, I know, and I am going to speak about it presently.

We have done no more than stated a fact: that wherever you can trace the Hand of God before the other hand comes upon it—either the hand of man or the hand of the devil—you find this beautiful harmony, this wonderful order.

We come to the Old Testament, and anyone familiar with it will not need an exhaustive proof of this great truth. In the Old Testament representations of God's Mind we begin with Him bringing order out of chaos, for that is where everything begins. God, who is the God of order, reacts against this state of chaos, and His reaction issues in a wonderful and beautiful order. And what is true as to God bringing order out of chaos where the earth is concerned is seen to be a principle that is working all through the Old Testament. You see it at work in a representative people—and here is the glory and the tragedy of Israel. The glory of Israel is that they were taken out of the nations to be the embodiment and the manifestation of a heavenly order on this earth, and the tragedy of Israel is that Israel has come to chaos. You see them in Egypt, and what was true in nature was true spiritually

and morally of Israel in Egypt—chaos; no order; barrenness; frustration, confusion; hopelessness. Exodus is the book of emergence from all that, and they are not a rabble, a crowd of refugees going out into the wilderness. They are ordered, and ordered by their ranks. You can trace these marks as you read carefully. No, they are not just a mixed-up crowd, a disorderly crowd, running amok to get out of Egypt. See them marching like an army, in their serried ranks and their appointed order! It is order out of chaos. See them at Sinai, when God has given His pattern for their national life. Just take a look at one of those pictures that we have of Israel assembled around the Tabernacle. And then, the order of the service. Leviticus is the book of the ordering of worship. And what a marvellous system that book is of the *order* of worship! It is not just that God said this, and that, and that is to be in the way of sacrifices and offerings and feasts; you will notice that there is a marvellous sequence, an ordered sequence, and that need is supplied at every point. It is a progressive, ordered development of worship, of approach to God, under a specified and particularized government. That book of Leviticus is a wonderful book! You move into the book of Numbers, and the very name of the book indicates what it is all about. This is the book of the marchings through the wilderness, and everything is numbered, tabulated and ordered. I just indicate the details and you will pick them up.

Pass over the many years until you come to the Temple, and this is one of the things that almost overwhelms you! The marvellous, meticulous order about this Temple—every detail, every measurement; the size of everything; the place of everything; the material of everything. And what shall we say about the 'courses of the singers' and the 'courses of the priesthood'—all in course round the clock. Everything is prescribed for. And when the Queen of Sheba came and looked at the order of the house there was no more breath left in her! That was the impressive thing. Everything here was so quietly, harmoniously and beautifully regulated. It all speaks of a master-mind, and that was God. He gave the pattern for that, and He gave the revelation. And although that was disrupted and the people went into captivity, passing seventy years in exile, the return of the remnant, the rebuilding of the wall and of the house were again marked by this order. We have read and studied the book of Nehemiah from other standpoints and have perhaps not been impressed with the wonderful organization in it. You notice that one whole chapter is taken up with: 'next unto him . . . and next unto him . . . and next unto him . . .' It is

all arranged and ordered. It is, if you like, all organized. We can use that word in the Old Testament if we cannot in the New Testament. Nehemiah represents a master-organizer in the things of God. This is all under Divine direction, and it all points to this: God is a God of order. We must be impressed with this, dear friends. It is not something to be contemplated objectively and historically. You and I have to be tremendously impressed with this, and see that God is very particular about *how* things are done, *what* things are done, and *who* does these things, and also about the relationships that obtain amongst those who are employed. God is very particular, and, as we have said, this is not because He loves to have things 'just so', but because He is made that way. We know quite well that real progress, real fruitfulness and real achievement demand order: If we come into a place that is all upside down, disturbed, with everything all over the place, we know that we have got a job on hand, and we begin by saying: 'Well, we cannot do anything until we have got this straightened out.' That is God: 'We cannot get on until we have got it straightened out! We shall never get anywhere until things are put straight.'

But I do not want just to be piling a lot of data upon you. It is of very vital spiritual consequence that we get it into us that God is particular, and He is not going to overlook anything, or by-pass anything. He will have it so, or He will not have all that He desires. He will be patient; He will work; He will wait; He will do a lot to get it so; He may take years to get it so, but that will be our loss. If He could have it His way, He would get on with His job forthwith by having things according to His order. Frustration, delay, unfruitfulness, are always due to this absence of God's way of doing things, or of His object in doing things, or of what He wants done, or of the way in which He wants it done. Let us never deceive ourselves in false satisfaction because God gives *some* blessing!

That is perhaps enough by way of emphasizing the fact that God is the God of order. I have only opened a window to you through which you can see a universe.

We come to the next thing: the disruption and disorder. There is a sense in which the Bible throughout is occupied with the confronting of this long-drawn-out, obdurate, incorrigible disorder, and with the evil forces that are behind it. You meet it everywhere—the dealing with interfering forces is found almost everywhere in the Bible. The Bible shows the source of this disruption and disorder. And we are all too aware of this disorder. Everywhere in this universe, in this creation, there is a

disrupted order, a dis-order. There is a great schism everywhere. That is true, is it not? Well, taking it that you agree that it is so, the Bible shows us where it came from, the range of it, the entrance of it into this world, its development in this world, its nature and its effects, and its main cause.

This disorder, the Bible shows us, began in heaven. It was a rebellion against God; and we know how it entered into this world. The first result was that man himself became a divided creature, a centre of civil war in his own nature. Man is, by nature, no longer a unity. He is himself a clash of two worlds. The Psalmist prays: "Unite my heart" (Psalm lxxxvi. 11). 'Unite my *heart*!' Our hearts are divided: things. Man is a division, and he is himself a conflict. And when I speak of man, I am uniting the man and the woman, for with both of them this became true in themselves individually, and then, of course, it became true of them as two. The enemy sought to divide the husband and the wife—and he did it. He struck right home to that marvellous oneness. You see, the Scripture goes out of its way to describe and emphasize the oneness: 'They shall be *one* flesh . . . the twain shall be *one* flesh.' It has so much to say about that oneness of husband and wife, but this disruptive influence and power came in and divided them. It is a real lesson! From the husband and the wife it reached to the family, and it is not long before you find the family disrupted. Cain and Abel—the one murdering the other, and destroying the family life. From the family, it reached out to embrace the whole race; and you know how the book of Genesis contains the story of racial disruption and confusion. This thing spread and it has become universal. The spirit of it is in the lower heavens: 'The spirit that now worketh in the children of *disobedience*'; it is in the air: 'the prince of the power of the air'; you can breathe it and you can sense it in this world, the antagonism, hatred and malice, and much more like that. It has come right into the human life of the individual, and into human relationships, into the nearest two. It has come right into the family—and what a problem family life is now! And what a key it is to so much more!—until the race is shot through and through with this disrupting and dislocating spirit and power. Yes, it is here. We have seen where it came from, how it started, its range, its development, its nature and its effects—to set every man's hand against his brother.

Its main cause. This is something that we must stay with for a moment. Do remember that the Bible always regards this matter as a *rebellion*, for it is the spirit of rebellion. The more we know of

our own natures under stress, under trial, under pressure, the more true we know this to be. Right in our constitution there is something that rebels, and would even rebel against God and His ways, would question His wisdom and His love. It is *in* us. And the seat of this rebellion is in man himself. He is a disrupted being, not only disrupted in his relationship with God, but disrupted in his own personality. Man is a divided creature in himself, for the spirit of rebellion came in. The word 'iniquity', which is such a characteristic word of the Old Testament, has its roots in this very idea of rebellion.

Now the real nature of this thing lies here—and perhaps we can illustrate this best by looking at the physical body, because those who know something about this—the laws of physical health and disease—tell us that it is all a matter of the environment of the living cells. This is a quotation: "It is the cell environment that is responsible for whatever disease affects the human body, either in the immediate environment of the cells, the presence of a poison, or the absence of some essential ingredient." All these millions of living cells are environed by this lymph stream, which provides what is necessary for their life. This lymph stream is their environment. If some poison gets into that stream, or if something essential to their life is lacking, then the living cells fall into disease, and the body in its whole order is upset. And sickness is only disorder, is it not? Now, I have taken this illustration, for God has written His spiritual laws in all His creation, and, I think, pre-eminently in the human body.

You see, all this disorder, and resultant sickness, all the pain and agony due to this disruption, are because man left his environment. God is man's true environment. In Him there is no darkness at all, and no poison. In Him is all that we need for our life and for our health. But man left his environment. He took himself out of his environment in God, and took his life into his own hands, to say what he would do and not do, what he would have and not have. He became a law unto himself, rebelling against God as his law and his environment. What happened? He entered into an environment of poison and of fatal lack of what is necessary to his very life. Salvation—which is the word for health—is a return into God. Hence Christ emphasized the need to "Abide in Me".

Now start again with that thought. You see, this whole Bible is about bringing man back to God, bringing him into God, and restoring him to his environment. 'In Him we live and move and have our being' is the fundamental truth of the spiritual

life. There is one thing I suggest to you, or hint at, which, if you grasp it, would be such a tremendous help to you. When the Lord says anything it may look on the face of it something very simple, and not at all profound and wonderful; but anything that comes from the Lord, though it be apparently very simple, contains all the vast knowledge and understanding that the Lord has, and not to take account of that 'simple' thing may bring you into a vast amount of trouble. When the Lord Jesus says: "Abide in Me" it sounds so simple and so ordinary, but it contains all this history, and this great principle and truth: 'If you get out of your environment you are exposed to all the poisons and all that creates spiritual disease. Abide in Me for your health's sake! for your life's sake! for the sake of everything! Abide in Me, and I in you!' Have you got that? You look again at any seemingly 'little' thing that the Lord says, and if you could see you would find that you have a universe of meaning in it.

Well, the main cause of all the disorder is getting out of your rightful sphere in God, and that is what happened at the beginning. The cure, as we shall see when we come to the redemptive work, is to get back into your place, into your cover, in God. Forsake your wandering, which is outside. Leave your independence, and come in.

Now, you see, this carries with it the whole matter of the absolute, undivided, unquestioned supremacy and sovereignty of God in and through Jesus Christ. Put that another way: the absolute surrender, yieldedness, unquestioning acceptance of the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ as Head. That is the way of life, the way of health, the way of fruitfulness, and the way of progress. And we know so well that frustration, limitation, arrest, barrenness are because there is still unyieldedness to Him in the life. Adam took things into his own hands and said: 'I will be the lord of my life', and we are like that by nature. And I am afraid we have not got so far away from it in grace. We meet one another, and what do we meet? We meet a man and a woman who have got a mind of their own, a will of their own, and a way of their own, and will never be taught by you, or told by you, what they should do. Unteachable, stubborn, mulish, knowing best!

Let me close with this: Pain, all pain, is because of disorder. Pain is nature shouting: 'There is something wrong!' It is true in the physical. You may kill pain. There are lots of things provided for killing pain, and I am afraid I am one who says: 'Thank the Lord for that!' Nevertheless, no sensible person believes that the killing of pain is getting rid of the trouble. No, you may kill the

pain and silence the cry, but the trouble that is there may work itself out in your death. The killing of the pain does not mean that you heal the disorder.

The world is trying to silence this cry of pain, to numb this ache, to kill it, and go on as though there is nothing wrong; but it is there. What is true in the physical is true in the spiritual. Pain in our spiritual life, in our corporate life, is the cry that there is something wrong, there is disorder somewhere, and things are not as the Lord intended them to be. There is a dislocation in the joints,

there is a fracture in the fellowship, and there is a disease of sin in the Body. We cannot just take something to numb the pain, silence the cry, and go on as though it were all right. No, the thing will work itself out. We have got to stop and say: 'What is it? Where is the disorder? Where are things wrong? What is it that is against God's Mind?' Until we can get our hand upon that, there is no hope for clearing up the situation at all. That is the need. Remember that the Bible says that the end of the age will see disorder—rebellion—come to the full.

(To be continued)

"THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER"

5. BRINGING FORTH THE FRUITS OF THE KINGDOM

"Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah: and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew xvi. 13-18).

"Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matthew xxi. 43).

THE CHURCH IS MENTIONED

WE have been saying very much about the Kingdom of God, and have remarked more than once that the Gospel by Matthew is peculiarly the Gospel of the Kingdom. Now here, right in the middle of this Gospel which is all about the Kingdom, suddenly and without any explanation or introduction the Church is mentioned, and it is mentioned as though everybody understood what it meant. Jesus does not say: 'Now I am going to speak about something else. I have been speaking

about the Kingdom, but now I am going to speak about the Church, and then I shall have some more things to say about the Kingdom.' There is nothing like that. It is taken for granted that these people understood what He meant by the Church, and, indeed, it was no new idea to them. It may surprise some of you when I say that the Jews knew about the Church. In that long and very interesting discourse of Stephen's which ended in his being stoned to death, Stephen said that God was "in the church in the wilderness" (Acts vii. 38).

The point is: is it the same thing here, or is there a difference? Of course there is something new here, because Jesus says: "I will build My Church", so that whatever the other church was, the one that He was going to build was something other. Indeed. He had come to constitute a *new* Israel.

I have often been asked the question: 'What is the difference between the Kingdom and the Church?' I am not going to enter upon that subject now, that is, I am not going to discuss the technical points in the matter. If there is a difference—and I believe there is—it will come out in what we are going to say.

WHY CONFERENCES?

What is the purpose of our having conferences? We will answer that by asking some other questions.

Firstly, why is the New Testament so very much occupied with ministry to Christians? Of course,

you recognize that that is a fact. By far the greater part of the New Testament is concerned with Christians.

Another question of the same kind: Why were Peter and John and Paul so intensely concerned about Christians? Indeed, they were deeply and strongly concerned about Christians. Paul at one time says that we should be 'anxious for nothing', but another time, included in all his difficulties and troubles, is 'anxiety for all the churches'. These men had a real anxiety and concern for Christians. Paul said about the Christians in Galatia: "Of whom I am again in travail" (Galatians iv. 19). If you can answer this question you can answer my first one: Why is it that for many years we have had conferences?

The answer is found in the two passages of Scripture which we read. In both of those Scriptures we have a transition. In the first it is a very beautiful transition; in the second it is a very tragic one. Let us take the second first.

"Therefore I say unto you"—and this is to the Jews of His time—"The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."

That is a tragic transition—the taking of the Kingdom of God away from a nation and giving it to another. We will come to the first transition in a minute, but let us say without any further delay that the Church is the concentration of the truths of the Kingdom of God. You may not quite understand what I mean by that, but the Church contains the concentration of all the truths of the Kingdom.

Now we will look at this second transition. The old Israel had all the oracles of God. We can say that they had all the truth, for they had all that came through Moses, all that came through the Prophets, and they had the full content of the Old Testament, which was the content of the Kingdom of God in the old dispensation. They had all the teaching and all the truth, all the law, the Psalms and the Prophets, but they did not bring forth the fruits thereof, and there is a very big difference between having the truth and bringing forth the fruit of the truth. There is a very great difference between having the knowledge of the Kingdom and having the fruit of the Kingdom. You know that the New Testament is always aware of a great peril in the history of God's people, for three times the dying of the first Israelite nation in the wilderness is used as a warning to Christians. That nation had had all the signs in Egypt, and all the testimony of the Passover Lamb and the precious blood, and all the experience of being brought out of Egypt and

through the Red Sea by the very power of God. They had had all the supernatural provision of God in the wilderness, but that generation perished in the wilderness. It did not make the great transition, and I say that that is used three times in the New Testament as a warning to Christians. Then the last book of the New Testament sees the Christian Church in a state of decline, and the Lord Jesus appearing to the Apostle John with strong warnings about this decline.

So the New Testament contains this warning, this fear, for Christians, and it is because there is something so much more for them and that they might miss it. That is the answer to the question: Why conferences?

CRISES IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Let me say to the most experienced and mature Christians here, even to those who are the leaders, the teachers and the preachers to God's people: be careful that you never come to the place where it is not possible for God to do a bigger thing in your life than He has ever done before. You may have a lot of experience and a lot of history. You may have been a Christian for many years and have done a lot of Christian work and preaching, but we never reach a point where it is not possible for God to do something that He has never done before.

Now we have been giving a great deal of teaching. Do you think that that is all that we came here to do? Is that what you came here to get? Did you come here only to get your notebooks full of notes of teaching? Well, that is not my idea about the conference. We are here for a crisis. The idea of these conferences is that there should be crises in lives, and the teaching is only intended to bring us to such crises.

I do not present myself as an example, but so far as I am concerned, conferences sprang out of a crisis. I did not say over thirty years ago: 'Now it will be nice to have some conferences in which we will give the Christians a lot of teaching.' God had brought about a tremendous crisis in my life. I had been minister of churches for years. I had organized a tremendous amount of Christian work. Oh, yes, I was a very busy minister! And I was a Bible teacher. I was a member of a Bible Teachers' Association;—and then God brought about a crisis, such a tremendous crisis in my ministerial life that all the past was as nothing. From that crisis everything was changed. There was a new ministry because of a new life. I have always called that my 'opened heaven'.

Now I am not saying that I am your example, but

I am getting to grips with this principle. I doubt whether there is anyone here who is more fully occupied than I was before that crisis, but I repeat, when God did that new thing in my life the past was as nothing.

Now our concern and our purpose in having conferences is that *Christians* can say: 'God has done a new thing.' We know of a brother in Scandinavia whom the Lord had used quite a lot. He came to a conference and God met him in such a way that he says today: 'At that time, and in that conference, God gave me a new Bible and an altogether new vision.' For years since that time God has been using him as He never used him before.

What I am saying is that there is a transition which has to be made. I will begin at the beginning, where the transition really begins, and it is in this matter of gathering the fruits of the Kingdom into the Church, that is, the Church becoming the embodiment of the *fruits* of the Kingdom.

DISTINCTIVENESS OF TESTIMONY

The first thing about the Kingdom of God, whether it is in the Old Testament or in the New Testament, is this: The Kingdom of God is always selective and distinctive. The rule of God came down into the nations and took hold of one nation, selecting it from among the nations.

The first law of the Kingdom of God is separation. You have only to look at the history of Israel to see that. God said to Israel: 'You are a separate nation and are different from all the other peoples in the world.' That Israel lost its distinctiveness, for they intermarried with other peoples. You read the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. What a terrible business it was to separate the Lord's people from the ones they had married! They lost their distinctiveness of life and vocation, and the distinctiveness of their testimony in the world. They lost the fruits of the Kingdom of God. They had all the tradition, all the teaching and all the oracles, but they lost all the fruits thereof.

So the first fruit of the Kingdom of God which has to be recovered is an absolute distinctiveness of life and testimony. Christianity is in a terrible position today. There are those who are saying that the day of Christianity is over and it is no longer a force to be reckoned with. Of course, that is an extreme view, but there is a great deal of truth in it. The impact of New Testament Christianity has been largely lost, and it can no longer be said: 'The men that turned the world upside down have come here.' The best circles of Christianity are troubled about their lack of power. What is the reason for

this? The Church has got mixed up with the world. It is in captivity to the world. It is having to use all the world's means, ways and resources to carry on. It has not got enough of the real joy of the Lord to prevent it from going to the world for its pleasures.

Now you may think that I am out of date, but I do not believe that it is necessary to have worldly entertainments and all those things to carry on Christianity. I believe that it is possible to have the most living testimony and the most joyful life without any worldly entertainments. The loss of power is due to the loss of distinctiveness.

DIVINE LIGHT BY DIVINE REVELATION

I want now to come back again to this very vital matter, and I want you to listen to this, especially my brethren in ministry. Earlier we said that the Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of light. That was the first great thing in my crisis. I must speak out of my experience to explain what I mean. I have told you that I was preaching a great deal and was a Bible teacher. Well, how was I doing it? I was a member of several theological libraries and I used to go and spend hours in them, studying all the authorities on the Bible. Sometimes I studied so hard and so long that I had to get up and go for a walk because my head was going round and round. I was having to find the straw to make the bricks, and it was hard work, but it was deadly work. It was all the work of my head, my reason—'flesh and blood' was revealing all that to me. And then the crisis came. What was the difference? It was no longer reason, but revelation. It was no longer just human brain work, but Holy Spirit inspiration. Yes, the Bible was a new book. Before, I could have given you a very good lecture on the Letter to the Ephesians, putting it all out on the blackboard, but when God made that transition I saw what I had never before seen in that book. My spirit was released and I had a new world. The transition was from reason to revelation, and it was a very wonderful transition.

THE FRUITS OF THE KINGDOM FOUND IN THE CHURCH

Now we come back to the first passage of Scripture that we read. Peter, in a moment of inspiration, said: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." What did Jesus say? 'Oh, Simon, you are a blessed man! Flesh and blood did not reveal that

to you. You did not get that in the schools, nor by going to the theological libraries. You did not get that by your own brain effort. Flesh and blood did not reveal that to you, but my Father in heaven.' You can go through the New Testament and you will find that phrase 'Flesh and blood' again and again, and wherever you find it you will see that it is under a veto. It says: "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (I Corinthians xv. 50), and the first and second chapters of the first Corinthian letter are an enlargement of that fact. "The natural man" (which is only another word for flesh and blood) "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God . . . *he cannot know them*" (I Corinthians ii. 14). Flesh and blood *cannot* know the things of the Spirit of God, for they are only known by the spirit.

Here is a transition. Peter had been receiving all the teaching of Jesus and had seen His wonderful works. He knew all of that—but it never saved him from denying his Lord! It never prevented him from being a contradiction to all the teaching, but later on, when Peter got his 'opened heaven', he was free from Peter. The great transition has been made. Now the teaching is alive. Before it was truth, words, but now it is alive. He has entered into the *fruit* of the Kingdom, and the fruit of the Kingdom is light. The old Israel went out in darkness. Jesus said to them: "The sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness" (Matthew viii. 12), and that is where they have been for nearly two thousand years—in the outer darkness with "the weeping and gnashing of teeth". The Kingdom was taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, and Peter says that it is the Church that is

the holy nation, so that it is in the Church that the fruits of the Kingdom are to be found.

EMPTYING OF SELF UNTO MORE FRUIT

I must close, but just this last word. I said that this passage in Matthew xvi represents a great transition. It is the transition from all that is meant by flesh and blood, the transition from natural energy, natural wisdom, and all that is of ourselves, even in Christianity, to that which is in life and revelation. Do you want that? With all that you may have, do you not want more of that? After the transition in Peter's life he went on and on and on: We have it indicated that he had some more crises after that big one, but every new crisis brought him into more of the fruits of the Kingdom.

What are you going to do about it? Are you going to say: 'Lord! Lord! make it like that with me!?' Will you do that? Have you the *courage* to do that? Do you recognize that immediately after that episode in Matthew xvi. Jesus began to tell His disciples that He must go up to Jerusalem and be delivered into the hands of wicked men, and that they would kill Him? Peter said: 'None of that, Lord. Oh, no, Lord, this shall never come to You.' Peter was at that moment in danger of shutting the door to an opened heaven, for the opened heaven lies by the way of the Cross. You will only have more of the fruits of the Kingdom as you have less of the fruits of self. In the Cross of the Lord Jesus Peter was emptied of Himself. He was a broken man, but that was the way to the heavenly fullness.

Will you say: 'Lord, make this all real!?'

(To be concluded)

CHRIST OUR ALL

1. CHRIST OUR LIFE

Reading: Acts xvi. 6-13, 16-19, 23-26. Philip-
pians i. 1-2.

WE are beginning a meditation in the Letter to the Philippians with its message as to how the Cross makes Christ our all, for that is what this Letter really does bring before us. Not any of us can preach from this Letter as the standard of our attainment, but we must be very quiet and humble as we speak of it. Indeed, our approach must be

that of its writer: "Brethren, I count not myself to have attained, neither am I already perfect."

When the Apostle wrote the Letter to the Romans, he set himself to set forth a great and tremendous theological argument. When he wrote his first Letter to the Corinthians, he set himself to answer a lot of questions that had arisen, and to give his judgment on some very serious matters. When he wrote the Letter to the Galatians, he gave himself up to issuing a tremendous challenge

and to answering a challenge which had been issued. When he wrote his Letter to the Ephesians, he was pouring out a great revelation which had been growing and growing and growing until it had reached a great measure of fullness. But now, in writing this Letter to the Philippians, he is not doing any one of those things. He does not say: 'Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ', nor: 'I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ.' No official designation is used and no great treatise is in his mind, but he simply takes the position of a man—with Timothy he says: "Bondsmen of Jesus Christ"—and is about to open his heart as a man to men, as a Christian to Christians, as a lover of Christ to other lovers of Christ, and to share what is in his heart on common ground and on a common level with them.

"Brethren"—he will say presently—"Brethren, I count not myself to have attained, neither am I already perfect, but this one thing I do . . ." You see, it is the appeal from his own spiritual life and aspiration. His position is just this: 'Brethren, this is what I have in view, what I am seeking after, and what I call upon you to join with me in seeking after!' That is the position of this Letter, and you and I must come to that position as we approach it, for here not one of us can give an address. We can only say: 'Brethren, this Letter is beyond us! All that is here is far beyond anything to which we have attained! We cannot preach at one another, but here is the Lord's thought, and let us talk to one another about it with a view to encouraging one another if it may be that we, by any means, may also attain.' So that is our starting-point. May it be that the Lord leads us on from that to some increased measure of Himself!

We have said that the message which comes out of the Letter bears upon Christ as our all through the work of His Cross, and that arises in several particular connections. Each chapter of the four has a particular connection. We shall now just look at the first, which arises in chapter i, verse 21:

"FOR TO ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST,
AND TO DIE IS GAIN"

'For me to live is Christ.' Then that means that Christ is our very life, the very motive of our life, of our being. Asked what life means, the Apostle would say: 'Just Christ!' 'What does life mean to you, Paul?' 'Christ!' 'What is your outlook, Paul?' 'Christ!' 'What are you working for, Paul?' 'Christ!' 'What is your hope?' 'It is Christ!' 'Have you nothing else, nothing else at all in this world or all your days?' 'No, nothing else. Christ, just

Christ; that is all! For me to live, for me to *live* is Christ!'

I think we have already established what we said a minute or two ago: this Letter is beyond us! I think that if we were put to the test on that in a number of different connections, interests, associations and objects on this earth, we should be weighed in the balances and found wanting. Well, we will not press it. It would be too painful and we should all be ashamed. But, again, it is an object and an aspiration that it should be like that.

Before we go further, let us just look over this chapter and see what place Christ has here:

- Verse 1: "Bondsmen of Christ Jesus."
 Verse 2: "Peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."
 6: "Until the day of Jesus Christ."
 8: "The tender mercies of Christ Jesus."
 11: "The fruits of righteousness . . . through Christ Jesus."
 13: "My bonds . . . in Christ."
 15: "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife."
 18: "What then? only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."
 19: "The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."
 20: "As always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death."
 21: "To me to live is Christ."
 23: ". . . to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better."
 26: "Your glorying may abound in Christ Jesus."
 27: "Worthy of the gospel of Christ."
 29: "To you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf."

It is Christ everywhere, Christ in every direction, in every connection; it is all Christ.

CHRIST OUR LIFE BY WAY OF THE CROSS

Now then, we have to see how the Cross had brought Paul to the place where Christ was his very life, and how it had wrought in him to bring him to that place. We have read from the account of how this church at Philippi came into being, and we picked up the story at the point where Paul and his companions were moving prayerfully, and in

the Spirit, forward in their great ministry. They reached one point and essayed to move on in a certain direction, but they were not suffered of the Holy Spirit to go and preach in that direction, and, finding that way closed, they sought to move in another direction, and again the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not; and so they stayed still. For the night at least they stayed where they were and prayed, I suppose, and during that night a vision came to Paul. You notice that *he* saw the vision and *they* came to the conclusion. The man of Macedonia stood and appealed, saying: 'Come over into Macedonia and help us!', and they concluded that the Lord had called them to preach the Gospel there. So they went by a straight course into Macedonia, into *Europe* for the first time, and came to Philippi. That all seems fairly straightforward. They went down on the Sabbath Day by the riverside, supposing that they would find a place for prayer. I expect that they were looking in all directions for the man of Macedonia. You know what they found—a woman, not of Macedonia at all, but from Asia, where they had been forbidden to go and preach the Word! Contradiction number one! And then a girl possessed of an evil spirit bothered, worried, annoyed and vexed them; not much hope of things in that direction! Contradiction number two! And then the immediate issue of Paul's act—they were thrown into the inner prison and their feet made fast in the stocks! Contradiction number three! Where is this man of Macedonia? Where is this open door for preaching the Gospel?

Now I venture to say that you and I might just have sat down and said: 'This is a terrible case of mistaken guidance. It is all a mistake! I was quite sure that the Lord gave me that vision, that the Lord was in that matter of our coming this way, but everything now argues to the contrary! Now, seeking to do what I believed to be the Lord's will, this is where I get landed. I was trying to follow the Spirit's leading, and checking up as I went, and this is what obedience to the Lord results in!' Something like that would go on inside, at any rate, for the devil would see to it. The situation, the appearances, the apparent contradictions, on the one hand, and then bleeding sores and a dark dungeon. These are things which are calculated to raise very serious questions about your Divine guidance and being in the will of God. At any rate, they provide good ground for the enemy to encamp upon. Well, I have no doubt that it was a very real and severe test of faith for Paul and Silas as to their guidance.

How did they survive? How did they get on top of this situation? For undoubtedly they were on

top of it. At midnight they prayed and sang hymns. Again, I have to pause and say that this Letter is beyond us, and this whole matter finds us wanting. I think the answer, at least, a part of it, to the question of their triumph in such a situation is this: that the Cross had done a work deep enough to rule out all personal interests, and personal interests were so thoroughly ruled out that the Holy Spirit Himself had a clear way to bring up their spirits in triumph in spite of darkness in circumstances and darkness in spiritual appearances. The Holy Spirit was able to do this. You notice what Paul says in this first chapter—and it does seem to me that there is much in this Philippian Letter which is an echo of the Philippian experiences years before—

"For I know that this shall turn out to my salvation, through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

'The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.' Do you not think that that explains it?

We do not want to be too analytical or introspective, but it will not do us any harm to take account of our own disposition. If we are quite honest with our own hearts, is it not true that a very large measure of our darkness under trial, our failure, our breakdown, our going to pieces, our loss of position spiritually, is because we are disappointed, and our disappointment lies very largely in the direction of something upon which our hearts were set, something of personal interest even in the Lord's work; *our* ministry, the *work*—meaning, of course, the Lord's work and things for the Lord. We would not call it *our* ambition—perhaps we have never used the word 'ambition'—but may there not be an element of that lying behind our vision, something, even though it were for the Lord, which we had hoped would be blessed and prospered, and the Lord would give good success? The whole thing is brought, like David's enterprise with the ark on the new cart, to a sudden hold-up and everything seems to go to pieces, and *we* go to pieces; then, when the truth is really known, we discover that there were really personal interests in it.

It does seem to me that in Paul's case the great factor in his triumph continually—for he was a triumphant man—in the midst of terrible adversities and trials and difficulties and sufferings all the way through the years was his utter disinterestedness; that with him there was no personal interest at all. It was Christ. The Cross had smitten everything personal, and this Letter to the Philippians is full of that. Take this fragment, for instance:

“Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one do it of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel; but the other proclaim Christ of faction, not sincerely, thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds” (verses 15-17).

How mean, how contemptible, how wicked to preach Christ with a motive like that! To preach Christ in such a way as to afflict one of Christ’s servants! What does Paul say? ‘Contemptible wretches! The Lord bring His judgments to bear upon them!’? Not at all! ‘Oh, what does it matter how they preach Christ? Christ is preached, and that is all that matters. Therein I rejoice and will rejoice!’—I tell you that it wants a crucified man to say that! A man is in prison in bonds; other men are trying to hit him when he is down and are using the very Gospel or the preaching of the Gospel—their manner of preaching the Gospel—to that end. Then this man says: ‘That is all right, I will simply stand all that and thank the Lord that, however they preach, so long as Christ is preached, that is all that matters!’ I say that it is a crucified man who can say that, a man who has no personal feelings or interests.

You know what he says a little later in the Letter about all the things that were gain to him. ‘I was this, and I was that, and I was the other. I had this and I had that, and I was in a position. Yes, but these things which were gain to me I counted loss for Christ’—“Yea, verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and to count them as refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him” (chapter iii. 4-8). You see, the Cross has dealt with name, reputation, position, advantages and everything that was personal. This man has come to the tremendous vantage ground of perfect disinterestedness and selflessness, and it is the working out of the principle that the Holy Spirit follows the way of the Cross.

THE SPIRIT FOLLOWS THE WAY
OF THE CROSS

That is true right through the Word. The Cross leads the way of the Spirit; the Spirit follows the way of the Cross. We sing:

“Enlarge our soul’s capacity,
Cut deeper channels, Lord.
Room for the floods of blessing now,
According to Thy Word.”

‘Cut deeper channels’—the Cross cutting the way for the supply of the Spirit. Here is the message, if we said no more. Paul was a man who was crucified to self. The Cross had wrought that in him, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus did the rest. Oh, I cannot preach at you! I can only say to you: ‘Brethren, will not the Holy Spirit spontaneously take the course which the Cross has opened up? Will not the Spirit of Jesus come in and lift us up, even in our sufferings and our sorrows, when we have got rid of that horrible, hateful, obstructive self-interest, self-pity, self-consideration, self-realization and self-strength?’ I am sure our hearts must be smitten by this word if it is true. If you and I—and this is the sum of the whole Letter—can really come, by the grace of God, to the place where the Cross has wrought in us so that we are delivered from all self-interest, on its weak side and on its strong side, the Spirit of Jesus Christ will make a difference in our case in the time of adversity which will turn the midnight into mid-day, darkness into light, and make us sing in a dungeon. At least it is worth thinking about! In Paul’s case the Cross had resolved everything into a matter of Christ.

Now, perhaps some of you have gone beyond me, and even yet there lurks somewhere in your mind this question: ‘Yes, but those who are most utter for the Lord, most out-and-out and most thorough-going for the Lord, are very often the ones who have the greatest reason to wonder whether the Lord is for them.’ And yet when that question arises—and I must press this again—there is a tremendous deliverance from the sting of that sort of thing when you know, and the Lord knows, that you have no other concern but for His glory. I think the sting of discouragement, disappointment, despair and doubt is very often found just in the tail of some self-interest which means disappointment, personal disappointment as well as disappointment for the Lord. Well, what I see here in Paul’s case is that, with the destruction of these self-elements, he came to a position which was a very strong one. This position—“For me to live is Christ”—in his case was a very strong position in the hour of deepest difficulty and trial. “I know that this shall turn to my salvation.” “Now I would have you know that the things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel.” That is a strong position!

A STRONG POSITION

What is the strength of it? It is this: that the sovereignty of God is behind it. If you and I can

come to the place where this is true in our case—"For me to live is Christ"—where the Lord Himself knows that it is true and not just something said by us, then I believe it is a position which has the sovereignty of God behind it. See them at Philippi again! They were there for the Lord, and for the Lord only, without any kind of interest at all apart from His interests. Well, the situation which arose was a very difficult and perplexing one, apparently full of contradictions, but look at the sovereignty of God behind it!

How strategic it was, to begin with, in that it was an open door into Europe! And what an assembly came into being!

"I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you, always in every supplication of mine on behalf of you all making my supplication with joy, for your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now" (i. 3-5).

What an assembly! And what a sovereign act to make the first members of that assembly the very gaoler and his family! Where Lydia came in I do not know. She was evidently a commercial traveller, and you know that that meant great possibilities for the Gospel, for she linked up Asia and Europe. It is all very strategic and wonderful, and God is behind this whole thing—and yet what a complication! If you sit down with the thing at the outset and take the situation which immediately arises, you say: 'Well, this is a mess! This is a mistake. You have made a blunder this time!' And you give it all up and lose your confidence in God. Well, Satan knew better than that; and these men who had not any personal interests did not go down under despair. They proved the sovereignty of God. And Paul in another prison years afterwards in Rome wrote this Letter and just touched on the same thing—that the sovereignty of God was behind a crucified life: "I would have you know that the things which have happened unto me have

fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel." "I know that this shall turn to my salvation." The sovereignty of God! It is a strong position, but we cannot be sure of sovereignty unless we are well crucified. If there is any sovereignty of 'I' or self, the sovereignty of God is set aside.

AN EMANCIPATED POSITION

And then it was a very emancipated position. How unfettered Paul was by human judgments! It did not matter a scrap to him what people thought or said or did. He was a free man all the time, whether he was in prison or out. Why? Simply for this. If you and I *know* that we are not out for something here, that our hearts are really for the Lord and the Lord only, it is a wonderfully emancipated position to be in. What does it matter? Let these men preach in the manner in which they mean to bring harm upon us, preach against us, and even use the Gospel as an instrument against us! What does it matter? We are emancipated; we are on top of that! All are emancipated who are delivered from self. If we know that there is no question about our utterness for the Lord, we are not worried very much about things said and things done.

A JOYOUS POSITION

And I see, too, what a joyous position it was, and I say: 'I see it.' I am not telling you that I have got it, but I see it. Someone has said that the Letter to the Philippians can be summed up in a very brief sentence. It is this: "I rejoice! You rejoice!" And that is the Letter—"I rejoice and you rejoice!" It is full of joy right through—joy in the Lord. And what is the secret of joy? If you ask what the secret of misery is I can tell you very quickly: to be occupied with yourself. The secret of joy is to be occupied with the Lord.

May the Lord lead us into Paul's secret: the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ by the Cross!

(To be continued)

THE PRE-EMINENT MARK OF A LIFE GOVERNED BY THE SPIRIT

THE mark of a life governed by the Holy Spirit is that such a life is continually and ever more and more occupied with Christ, that Christ is becoming greater and greater, more wonderful as time goes on. The effect of the Holy Spirit's work in us is to bring us to the shore of a mighty ocean which reaches far, far beyond our range, and concerning

which we feel: Oh, the depths, the fulnesses, of the riches of Christ! If we live as long as ever man lived, we shall still be only on the fringe of this vast fulness that Christ is.

That at once becomes a challenge to us before we go any further. These are not just words. This is not just rhetoric; this is truth. Let us ask our hearts at once: Is this true in our case? Is this the

kind of life that we know? Are we coming to despair on this matter? That is to say, that we are glimpsing so much as signified by Christ that we know we are beaten, that we are out of this, and will never range all this. It is beyond us, far beyond

us, and yet we are drawn on and ever on. Is that true in your experience? That is the mark of a life governed by the Holy Spirit. Christ becomes greater and greater as we go on. If that is true, well, that is the way of life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Aberdare £2; Abertillery £1; Balallan £1; Bargoed £1 15s. 6d.; Bombay, India 10s.; Brighton 10s. Bristol £1 1s.; Bromley £1, £6, £6; Burnley 5s.; Calgary, Alberta £4 12s. 6d.; Chelmsford 10s.; Doha, Qatar £4; Dudley £1 1s.; Edinburgh £10, £1; Galt, Ontario £1 3s. 1d.; Gateshead £5; Glasgow £25, £1 11s.; Harskirchen, France £1, Hastings £2, £5; Isleworth 5s.; Leominster £3; London E.12 £1; N.19 £1; S.E.22 10s.; S.E.23 £5, £5, £2, 10s.; S.E.26 £1; Loughton £2; Meols 10s.; Montreal, P.Q. £1;

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EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear friends of this ministry,

With this issue of the little paper we conclude another year of its ministry. We do so with gratitude to the Lord for His enabling to "continue unto this day", and to you who have given us so much encouragement to go on. So many of you have written appreciative and sympathetic letters. Although it is not possible to write personally to all such friends, let me say that every letter is read, and I take this opportunity to thank you most sincerely. Your prayers have been answered in that the ministry, both of the magazine and the literature, have been in continually enlarging demand; more this year than ever. It is our true desire, not just to have something kept going, but that this may be a ministry of Christ to the Lord's people who are needing such. From many letters we realize that so many of the Lord's people are knowing spiritual pressure and stress in an increasing measure. It may help you to know that you are far from alone in this conflict, and perhaps this knowledge will stimulate you in "prayer and supplication for all saints". We have had our share in this conflict. It takes the various

forms of just naked spiritual oppression without manifest causes or reasons; opposition and cruel criticism and allegations without foundation in truth; and involvement in teachings and practices amongst Christians with which we could never agree. There are many strange and abnormal movements and it is quite a battle to keep free from entanglements, because many who are known to have been associated with this ministry have gone off into these strange things. We know that there is much "strange fire" about (Leviticus x) and we grieve that, through sheer hunger, many dear children of God are "led away", for we know that the end will be disillusionment. We do want this testimony to go on unsullied, although we are so well aware of "many adversaries".

Among the ministries of the year two are outstanding. The Eastern States Convocation in Maryland, U.S.A., in July. A wider range than ever before was represented, there being friends from a large number of States, including far West California, and Canada. There was a clear atmosphere and we feel that the Lord was working with pur-

pose. Then there was Aeschi in Switzerland. Friends gathered from many parts and nations, including Czechoslovakia and Jugoslavia. Quite a contingent of young people was present this year. While we believe that the ministry was its chief value, the fellowship was a tremendous asset. This gathering together unto the Lord is something of great value to His people, not only at the time, but afterward. But not only those gathered, but God's people *everywhere* are prayed for in times of intercession.

Much prayerful help is needed for the future. Changes are pending and much wisdom is required in making decisions and resolving problems. So, stand with us that there may be no loss of the Divine deposit, and that one's "bow may remain in strength".

Greetings in His most worthy Name.

Yours in His grace,

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS

THE CUP AND THE FIRE (III)

3. THE POSITIVE NATURE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

"I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke xii. 49, 50).

"Being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye heard from me: for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts i. 4, 5).

WAIT for the promise of the Father . . . not many days hence." The thought that I want to pass on to you concerns the *positive* nature of the Holy Spirit. We know that the Holy Spirit is the answer to the words of the Lord Jesus: "I came to scatter fire". The baptism of the Holy Spirit was a baptism of fire. Now fire is always positive; and if the Holy Spirit corresponds to the fire, it means that the Holy Spirit is also positive. Fire is neither cold nor neutral: fire is positive. When you touch it, or when it touches you, or when you get near it, you know that you are in the presence of an element that is positive.

THE SPIRIT ABHORS A VACUUM

Now here in these words at the beginning of this book, which we might call 'The Book of the Scattered Fire', we have a pause, a suspense, a kind of parenthesis. The Cross with all its meaning is an accomplished fact. The work of redemption is finished. Everything has been done as to the basis of the future. And everything has been foreshadowed and foretold as to the purpose. Here it is: "Ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem

. . . Judaea . . . Samaria . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth" (i. 8). Meeting His disciples after the Resurrection, He had given them the great commission and told them what was to be their future ministry and work to the nations, to the remotest parts of the earth. Everything foreshadowed and foretold, as to the purpose: and yet, a pause, an interlude, with a big question hanging over it: a waiting. They can do nothing, with all that. With all that, it is still negative, it is still all in suspense, it is still in this state of question. And the Holy Spirit was the answer. The Holy Spirit moved right into that 'neutral zone' and turned it into a positive; changed the whole thing from negative or neutral or question, into a mighty, positive affirmative. The rest of this book is just the story of the positive activity of the Holy Spirit.

That may seem very simple; it may not strike you as having very much in it, or being very profound. But in fact there is a very great deal in that that we ought to think about, we ought to recognize. Let me say again: wherever you come upon the Holy Spirit in the Bible, you will find He is positive. He does not believe in vacuums. The Bible opens with a vacuum—and immediately it says: "the Spirit of God". "The Spirit of God brooded upon the face of the waters". The Spirit of God is reacting against a vacuum. 'Without form and void—empty . . . and the Spirit of God . . .' You begin your Bible with this very positive characteristic of the Holy Spirit.

And so it is all the way through. If you run through your Bible, even from memory, with this thought in mind, when you come on the Holy Spirit in any expression, whether in symbol or in action, you will find that He is always tremendously positive. You have only to recall the beginning of Ezekiel's prophecies. The living ones, the wheels, and

the Spirit—and they go! They go, and they go straight forward; they turn neither to the right hand nor to the left. It is the Spirit who is the *Goer*; the Spirit of the positive, who is against all that is negative, all that is neutral and all that is empty, always seeking to be on the move forward towards the great and consummate end. He is the 'Goer-Spirit', if I may coin that phrase. He is always the *executive* of the Godhead, the energy of God in the things of God. He is always in action. So this book ought to be 'The Acts of the Holy Spirit', for it is that.

A POSITIVE WALK

Now, this law of the Spirit is the principle of the *walk* of the Christian. The walk of the Christian is supposed to be a walk in sanctification; there must be a sanctified walk. That is what it means to walk in the Spirit. The definite statement is: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians v. 16). Are you struggling, striving, fighting, not to fulfil the flesh? That is negative; you will get nowhere along that line. The way not to is to do something positive. The positive is the answer to the negative. "Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not . . ." It is a great principle of deliverance. God's way is always a positive way. We are occupied so much with the negative, striving and wrestling not to do this, to stop this and that. And we do not find that we get very far in that, do we? The provision of the Lord is: "Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not . . ."

What does it mean to walk in the Spirit? Well, it means to consort with the Spirit. You say, what does that mean? It is best understood by recognizing what we do. We, by nature, consort with the flesh: we are all the time consorting with ourselves—our poor miserable selves; occupied with ourselves, talking about ourselves, praying about ourselves; keeping ourselves, our miserable selves, always in front of us. When we are so continually occupied with what we are in ourselves, that is consorting with ourselves, is it not? How far do we get that way? Nowhere at all! We make no progress at all by consorting with ourselves.

And I am afraid there are some Christians who consort with the devil. It is not always easy to distinguish between ourselves and the devil, but you know he is always talking to us through ourselves. If there is something that is wrong with us, he lets us know it. If there is something that troubles us, he adds to the trouble, he accentuates. Give him a little bit of his own ground, that he himself created for himself—for he created that ground of the old fallen Adam for himself and for his own purposes,

to work out his own designs—give him a little bit of that which he has made for himself, and see what he will do with it. He will make everything of it, and it will not be long before people who do that will find that they are in terrible bondage to the devil through their own selves—their own make-up and faults and weaknesses and sinfulness. And that is consorting with the devil. He comes and accuses, and you listen; he makes a suggestion, and you take it on—you almost enter into a discussion with him. You consort with him, or you consort with yourself; and that is walking after the flesh.

Don't consort with the flesh, don't consort with the devil; have no truck with them at all! Consort with the Spirit! The Spirit is the One who has come alongside: the very meaning of His Name, 'Advocate' or 'Comforter' (Gk. *parakletes*) is One who is called alongside. Consort with the One alongside. Have your communion with the Spirit. Challenge yourself, and challenge the enemy, on this: Is this really of the Spirit, does this correspond to the Word of God, is this true according to the gospel of grace? If the answer is: No, of course it is not! then repudiate it! That is consorting with the Spirit, always moving on the ground of grace, the Spirit of grace.

That is a very simple beginning, but it indicates that the Holy Spirit is positive. All that other is negative: it is pulling back, it is draining, dragging; it is all a big 'No'. The Spirit never comes on that ground; He is against anything like that. As in the first creation He moved against the void, so in the new creation He has nothing to do with, and no interest in, vacuums, voids, or anything that is negative. Take positive ground, and you will find the Holy Spirit is with you. Forsake your negative ground in your spiritual life.

POSITIVE TESTIMONY

This, in the next place, is the law of service, or testimony. Notice quite simply: "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses . . ." The principle of service or testimony is being positive. How many Christian lives get tied up in knots because they do not testify! They do not witness, they do not let their light shine; they are just negative. They are all the time thinking of what people will think or say, what the reactions from others will be. All sorts of considerations come in, in that way, and they just neutralize us, get us all tied up—and what poor specimens of Christians we are then!

Now note here: "They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about

Stephen . . ." (xi. 19) went everywhere, testifying. There was no ordination service, no putting on of special uniform, or a badge—'Christian Worker!' It was spontaneous, because the Holy Spirit is positive, always. And again, while this may be very simple, I know of many lives which are tied right up on this very thing: they are not positive; they are negative, or they are neutral. The Holy Spirit is therefore not moving on His own normal and natural basis in their life; they are limiting Him. Be positive, and you will find the Holy Spirit is with you, and you will get surprises. Just take notice! That is what is in this very book of the Acts: 'the Spirit said . . .' (x. 19, xiii. 2), 'an angel of the Lord spake . . .' (viii. 26), and the men responded. When Philip responds to the Spirit, when Peter responds to the Spirit, oh, what tremendous things happen!—to their surprise, to their amazement! The Spirit is positive. You be positive, and you will find that He is positive; He is with you in that.

POSITIVE FELLOWSHIP

Thirdly, this is the principle of fellowship. The fellowship of the *Spirit* is the spirit of fellowship: but, again, it is positive. Fellowship is not a passive thing: it never can be a passive thing, because all the hosts of hell are out against it. If there is one thing that hell is against, it is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the fellowship of the people of God. Unceasingly, by any and every means, those evil powers will seek to destroy that fellowship, because that fellowship spells their final undoing. Therefore fellowship can never be a neutral, passive kind of thing. You have got to fight for it, you have got to stand for it, you have got to be positive about this. Let some rift go on, and just see the havoc that delay over putting that right will work!

If you have the Spirit—and of course I am addressing those who are supposed to have the Spirit—you should know that, if you are out of joint with another member of the Body of Christ, to which you belong, it is, as it is with a dislocation in the natural physical body: there is an ache, a perpetual ache. The Holy Spirit sets up this ache in the spiritual Body, where there is a dislocation. And you know what happens in the natural body if that is not attended to. Two things happen. One is that the longer you leave it, the more difficult it becomes to put it right; and the other is that adhesions set in—something extra. Extra things begin to come in and complicate the whole situation, so that it is no longer a straightforward thing to put that joint back. The same thing is true in the spiritual. If you let it go on, it becomes very much more difficult and

more complicated. All sorts of other things—accretions and adhesions—have bound themselves round that thing, to make it a very complicated thing now. The inflammation is there and the ache goes on.

By that inflammation and ache the Holy Spirit is giving a positive witness against this thing. But if you go on long enough, the Holy Spirit will withdraw and leave you to it, just because He is positive. He will not brook persistent negatives on these things; He just will not have it. He is going on and saying: 'All right, if you are determined to stay there, you can do so. I am going on.' And there arises a very, very serious situation. That is, of course, grim and terrible. But it all gathers round this truth that the Holy Spirit is positive on the matter of fellowship. The Spirit says: 'Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but so much the more . . .' (Hebrews x. 25). That is not a legal thing—that you must, under legal obligation, attend all the meetings, and so on. That is your very life, that is a spiritual thing, that is the way of the Holy Spirit. You are violating the very movement of the Spirit, if you detach yourself and live an independent kind of life. That which you call 'legal', which you are seeking to throw off, is really spiritual. There is a liberty which is not the liberty of the Spirit—it is the licence of our own souls.

If the Spirit is inactive, quiescent, not doing anything, not moving; if there are marks and signs that the Spirit is not at work, that is an abnormal situation. It means that, from the standpoint of the Spirit of God, there is something wrong, something is not right. If everything were right, the Spirit would be active; He would be doing, going; there would be movement.

The Spirit will always be positive if He has His own ground. And what is His ground? It is the Cross—it is the cup. The cup and the fire, the fire and the cup, go hand-in-hand. The mighty energy of the Spirit, that positive element in the Spirit that is like fire—you know it when it comes near, or when you touch it; it is alive—that positive element of the Spirit goes hand-in-hand with the cup, which rules you out and rules me out in nature. His ground is the Cross applied deeply to us. If the Spirit has that, then He goes on, then He moves. His ground is always the Cross.

We must challenge our hearts about this. The Holy Spirit, *normally*, is always positive—I could almost say aggressive. He is never negative, He is never neutral. If He has to pause, it means that He is waiting for something; for it is not His nature to do that—He would go on. May the Lord fill us with the mighty energy of His Spirit!

THE FIELD AND THE HOUSE

A message given by Mr. W. E. Thompson at the conference in Aeschi, Switzerland, in September, 1968.

Reading: I Corinthians iii. 1-17.

I BELIEVE this is a very critical period in the history of the world, and these meetings which we are having this week are at a vital period in God's dealings with the world. We are living at a point in the history of the world where we have the accumulation of centuries of evil. We are living in days when the forces of humanism are gathering considerable momentum. This covers the whole range of man's activities in the field of science right over to the field of philosophy. And the third thing is that we are living in a world which has become concentrated into what has been described as a 'global village'.

Now against this background I believe there are two things that mark the work of God and the men of God today. One is *conflict*, and the other is *confusion*. I am sure that most of you here are experiencing something of one or other of these two factors. If the devil is not plaguing you with conflict he is doing so with confusion. That is why I believe we must get right to the heart of the issue and ask: What is God doing, and what are the kind of men He is using? I think we shall find the answer to those questions in the chapter which we have just read.

THE SPHERES IN WHICH GOD IS WORKING

The first thing I want us to notice is the spheres in which God is working. From verse 6 of this chapter to the middle of verse 9 we read of the *field*, and from the middle of verse 9 to the end of verse 13 we read of the *building*.

These are two distinct spheres in which God is working, and we confuse them to our peril. We must learn to distinguish between the work in the field and the work on the building. The work in the field is evangelism. It is going out and sowing the seed, reaping the harvest and bringing it in. The building is the House of God, which God is building for Himself, the end to which He is working.

The work in the field is very different from the work on the building. There is a breadth of activity; it is a realm of work that is vastly different from the work on the building. Concerning the field, Paul could say in chapter ix of this Letter: "By *all* means save some", but when it comes to the work of the building things are very different. There is no latitude here, no "by all means"! The only "all"

that can apply to the building is the precise plan of the Heavenly Architect Himself.

We find in the commission the Lord Jesus Christ has given us in Matthew xxviii. 19 reference to this very thing: "Go . . . make disciples . . . baptize them . . . *teach them all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" We cannot take anything away from that commission from the Lord. There are some who say: 'All we must do is to preach the Gospel. We must have big campaigns, preach the Gospel and get the unsaved people saved.' There are others who say: 'No, we must only consider the House of God, the local church. We must give all our time to that.' But I believe we must keep both in perfect balance: We must understand something of the fields that we see today white for harvest. There are tremendous opportunities in the world today for preaching the Word of God, but, you know, the Lord sees those fields in a vastly different way from the way in which we see them. When the Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples in John iv: 'Look on the fields', He did not expect them to arrange a 'city-wide campaign' with a whole lot of human activity! He could see fields that were ready in those Samaritan towns and villages, but how did He reap the harvest from them? How did He meet the need of those fields that were ready? It was through one poor, sinful woman! If the Lord wants us to see the fields, He wants us to see also the way in which they can be reached, and His way of reaching them is sometimes surprising to us. It is not always through the big, massive effort that appeals to man's outlook.

It is also very important that we see the work of the building. The Lord Jesus Christ said: "I will build my church." One of the tragedies that faces India today has been the failure to build the House of God. I believe that missionary work, as we have known it, is coming to an end in India. That is true of many other parts of the world as well; missionaries are having to leave, and they are crying: 'What are the Indians going to do now? What is going to happen when we leave?' I have seen many cases where there has been failure to work on the building and believers have gone right back from the things of God. In contrast to that there is the work that our brother Bakht Singh and others like him have been doing for the last twenty-eight years, where the fruit of the field has been brought in and built into the House of God. These men have no worries about missionaries leaving! Nothing of this

kind of work is going to collapse, because it is built according to the heavenly plan.

God is out for a building—not one made with bricks and mortar, but an holy temple in the Lord—a *spiritual* house!

THE KIND OF MEN GOD IS USING

God uses men; not machines, nor methods, but *men*. I believe there are three things which should mark a man of God, and to see this clearly will help us to cut through much of the confusion we have mentioned.

One is GIFT. We must have a distinct gift from God. You cannot find this in a Bible School, nor can you acquire it from any human source. It is a gift of the Risen Christ, and we must see that we have men who possess true gift.

The second thing is CALLING. We must ask: 'Why do I preach? Does someone pay me? Is it because I cannot do any other job? Is it because someone told me to do this long ago? No, it is because of an irresistible "calling" in my heart and soul from God.'

The third essential is UNCTION. There are some people who can preach and give a marvellous message, but without unction it is of no spiritual value whatever.

These are the things that we must look for today. More than that, if we seek to be the Lord's servants we must be sure that these things mark us—and this applies whether we are young or old.

Now in this chapter there are some descriptions of the *kind* of men God seeks and uses. The first is in verse 5:

MINISTERS

That is not some professional title. It means a servant and is the word used concerning our Lord Jesus Christ in Mark x. 43—the One who came to serve, and the One who shows the quality of humility. If we want to be ministers we have to be prepared to do a lot of humble work. We have to be prepared to do many things that may test our pride. We will have to go into the humblest home to seek out the simplest child of God. We have to be prepared to do the most menial service and not always be seen on the platform, wanting a position, a place. Paul could say that he was a minister through whom these people had believed, and there may be people who believe through your serving them in humility rather than just through your preaching.

The second thing about men of God is in verse 9. They are

GOD'S FELLOW-WORKERS

I think that is wonderful! *GOD'S fellow-workers!* You know, during these last twenty years in India people have sometimes asked me: 'Who sent you to India? What mission has sent you?' I have replied: 'No mission. God Himself has sent me!' But that does not seem to satisfy them. Their God is so small that He alone cannot send people to India! You have to have something big and human, with a lot of money. I say: 'No, I am God's fellow-worker.' I have never ceased to marvel at that—that God should call *me* to work with *Him*! Well, it certainly affects every way in which I behave. Sometimes in Bombay we get people coming into the office and asking for free literature. We ask: 'Who are you?', and they usually say: 'I am the Lord's servant.' They are dirty, their clothes are smelly and they have an old ragged bag—and they say they are the Lord's servants! Many times I have told them: 'If you were my servant I would dismiss you!'

The fact that we are God's fellow-workers also affects our attitude to money. I have heard of one of the Lord's servants in England whose car once broke down, and he went to the garage to have it mended. He knew the garage man and said to him: 'Please don't charge me too much! You know I am only a Christian worker.' Do you know what the garage man said?—'You shouldn't complain. You have a richer Master than I have!' Oh, how we need to know the dignity of being God's fellow-workers! We make an impression for good or bad by our very conception of this point.

Now the third thing that Paul refers to here is in verse 10:

BUILDERS

He talks about all his building work. Now, a builder must know exactly what he is doing. He must have a clear understanding of the plan to which he is working, and he must know where to get the right materials in order to build. This is a very important factor, because what is being built is going to be tested one day. I believe that which marks the builder is *quality*. I went into an office in Bombay last year and the walls looked just like beautiful panelled teak, which is a very expensive wood. It looked very nice! A week or two afterwards I went into the same office and all this paneling had been taken down. The white-ants had destroyed much, leaving only a very thin layer—but, you know, white-ants never destroy *real* teak, because it is very hard. This was just a cheap imitation. It looked like the real thing, and many people

thought it was the real thing, but the white-ants knew it was not and they soon destroyed it.

We are living in a day of imitations, and there are many, many imitations in the work of God. They look like the real thing, but they are not, and they are vulnerable to attack. I know many of the Lord's people just seeking the various sign-gifts, or seeking an experience. They get such an experience and say: 'What a wonderful spiritual experience I have had!' Perhaps a lot of people get concerned and ask: 'What is this all about?', but it is soon proved to be false.

Now the test is this: Does it belong to the foundation? The foundation of this building is Christ, and the test is very simple. Does it glorify me or Christ? Does it build on Christ or on me? If it glorifies our Lord Jesus Christ it is real and true. The material that we gather for the House of God must have its origin in our Lord Jesus Christ, and there can be no imitation Christ. Paul, writing to the Galatians, said: 'If a man preach another gospel, if a man preach another Christ, don't just disagree with him, and don't just let him carry on. Let him be accursed!' There can be no other foundation than Christ. We must gather the material for the House of God from the Lord Himself.

It is said of David that he 'gathered gold in his affliction'. David gathered gold to build the House of God, but it was in his affliction. If the Lord gives you a little bit of trouble, if He sends some problems into your life, and He blesses you with difficulties, just be thankful, because by this you will get material for the House of God. It will not be

cheap, nor will it burn—it will survive the fire, the test of reality.

I am sorry there is not the time to say all I would like to about this section, but I will just refer you to the other two descriptions of the man of God which Paul mentions here. The fourth is in chapter iv. 1:

STEWARDS

A steward is one who has been left with a treasure to look after; and I wonder if we realize the value of the treasure that has been entrusted to us by the Lord? It is not something cheap—it is the *unsearchable riches* of Christ! Do we have a conception of those unsearchable riches? If we do, we need to be faithful in handling them, and in our dispensing them to others.

The last reference is in chapter iv. 15, and it refers to the greatest need that I believe there is among the people of God today:

FATHERS

Oh, there are lots of teachers, and all kinds of other men. They may be called elders, pastors, and other names, but Paul says: "You have not many *fathers*". There is a need for men with a father-heart, men who can guide the Lord's people, not as directors and 'bosses', but to lead them and feed them as fathers. And here we need the gift of 'pity'—"Like as a father *pitieth* his children . . ."

May the Lord make us like that, and the House will be built and stand.

THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD

BEFORE we proceed with the message, for the sake of any young Christians who may read it, and who have not yet studied the use of words in the New Testament, let us explain the one which is now to occupy us—the 'World'.

There are three main ways in which this word is used:

1. As to the material sphere which we call the earth.
2. As to the people who live on the earth.
3. As to the spiritual and moral system, order, economy, and principles which govern the people.

Peter has things to say as to the climax and destiny of No. 1. John three sixteen relates to No. 2: "God so loved the [people of this] world."

It is No. 3 that is the occasion of what follows here.

A reading of such passages of Scripture as John xvii, John's Letters, Colossians ii. 20, iii. 1, 2, Galatians i. 4, and many others such, will leave us in no doubt whatever that the New Testament designates this world system as evil, and that any spiritual relationship with it lies under God's judgment. It has always been so since the beginning, but we are now living in the full development of the fact, so terribly and shockingly, that it is ripening fast for final destruction. The following message is *very* timely, and we trust that it will serve the solemn purpose of leading many to save themselves from "this present evil world", and will explain the spiritual conflict through which many are passing.

We shall gather up certain things which we find running through the whole of the Scriptures, and

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

what we find throughout the Scriptures is, for our present purpose, an eightfold thing:

1. AN ABIDING ANTAGONISM AND CLASH BETWEEN GOD AND THIS WORLD

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

2. AN ABIDING EXPRESSION OF THAT ANTAGONISM BETWEEN THAT WHICH IS SPIRITUALLY RELATED TO GOD AND THIS WORLD

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

3. A NEW CONSTITUTIONAL AFFINITY WITH THIS WORLD IS SEEN TO BE IN MAN'S NATURE,

gravitating toward the world, like the point of the compass to the magnetic North. There is that which is in the very nature of man now as fallen which has an affinity with this world, and gravitates towards it, and the Scriptures reveal that that gravitation is of an inveterate character.

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

4. A SPIRITUAL SYSTEM OF INTELLIGENCE

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

5. SPIRITUAL DEATH IS THE LAW WHICH GOVERNS THAT RELATIONSHIP,

and is the mainstay and master-hold of that system of spiritual intelligences. Let me repeat that: spiritual death is the law which governs that rela-

tionship, the relationship between fallen man and this world; and spiritual death is the mainstay and master-hold of those spiritual intelligences which are out to maintain that relationship between fallen man and this world.

6. TO SEVER THAT BOND, TO DESTROY THAT AFFINITY, TO INTRODUCE A COUNTER LAW OF GRAVITATION, IS THE ESSENCE OF THE WORK OF CHRIST

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

7. THIS SEVERANCE, THIS INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW SPIRITUAL LAW OF HEAVENLY GRAVITATION, IS ALWAYS MARKED BY A MOST INTENSE CONFLICT AT EVERY STAGE AND POINT

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

8. THE METHOD IS THAT OF GOING INTO DEATH IN ORDER TO DESTROY DEATH, AND BEING IN THE WORLD IN ORDER TO OVERCOME THE WORLD

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

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

THE EFFECT OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE

Firstly: *To once and for all register in an absolute and pre-eminent way that collision, that mutual antagonism between God and this world.* Christ's coming into this world, and Christ's work in this world in a way unparalleled, unprecedented, registered, made manifest, dragged out into the light, threw up into clear relief that fact that there is a mutual antagonism between God and this world.

You can trace it through the Old Testament. It is quite clear there, but it is more or less local or localized in the Old Testament. When you come to the Lord Jesus coming into this world you have the universal factor, a universal Person set down in the midst of the universe, and universal forces focused upon Him. And because of who He is, because God is there in Christ, because this is no mere man, as in the case of the Old Testament, because this is "God with us", you find that from the very commencement of His career, His course, His time here on the earth, there broke out that smouldering volcano of antagonism; first through Herod, and then by another, and another, and another means, until in the end it seems that everything has conspired and converged to cast Him out of this world, as having no place in it, as being a menace to it.

Demons betrayed secrets, the full explanation of which is not in the Word of God: "Art thou come to destroy us before our time? I know thee who thou art, the Holy one of God", betraying deep mysteries concerning the destiny and the doom of that spiritual world, that world of spiritual intelligences. Men and demons worked together, and this hate showed itself. What a great deal He had to say Himself about it, and to what lengths He carried it, and into what realms—right into the heart of Judaism and its spiritual, religious citadel, the Scribes and the Pharisees: "Ye are of your father the devil"; "The works of your father ye do"; "Ye are from beneath; I am from above"; "If ye had known the Father ye would have known Me."

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

Oh, dear friends, you and I, before we are through, will see the utter impossibility of that contradiction called 'a worldly Christian', 'a worldly Church'. If we do not see that now, well, the Lord

help us! The very coming of the Lord Jesus into this world was, firstly, to manifest, as had never been manifested before in a universal way, that there is, right at the very heart of things spiritually an antagonism between God and this world; and that world can never be reconciled to God. You have to use the word 'world' in another sense when speaking of reconciling the world; that is a more limited usage of the word, but that world of which we are speaking is beyond reconciliation. We shall see that as we go on.

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

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

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

Well, the Lord's coming was to secure an instru-

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

Thirdly. His coming was *to destroy for such (that is, such instrument) that law of death*. Note: firstly, to bring out into the clear light, which He Himself was, the reality, the depth of that mutual antagonism between God and the world; secondly, to take out of the world a people for Himself, yet to be in the world for the age as a representation of that antagonism; then, thirdly, to destroy for such that law, that mainstay, that master-hold of the powers of evil, to destroy him that had the power of death and to deliver them; to destroy the power of death for His own. He came to do that. It would be impossible for us to live here on God's side and on God's behalf, to meet all that antagonism of hell to God, unless Christ had accomplished the destroying of that masterhold of the devil—spiritual death.

Dear friends, you and I are becoming more and more conscious, are we not—many of us are—that the only possibility of staying in this world and on the earth is by the life which is triumphant over death, and unless we know more of that, this place is going to be impossible spiritually. Is that not true? It is! There is a real spiritual world with which we are in touch, but which we so dimly understand. What is the spiritual experience of those who are really going on with God? It is, on the one hand, of an intensified consciousness of death, and, on the other hand, a growing emphasis on the power of His resurrection. Is that true? I do not think there is any doubt about it. And this is not something which touches merely the spiritually aged and fully matured. I believe that the Lord would teach the younger folk this thing: those of you who would, perhaps, think that you are not old enough to understand and enter into these great spiritualities. I believe the Lord would teach you that you can know deliverance and victory in the realm of death by coming into a full apprehension of Him as your life, and, while the phraseology, the terminology may be difficult for you, the experience may be as clear and as simple as anything could be. The fact that those who are children of God—whether mature or immature—are children of God brings them into experiences which they might never have if they were not the Lord's children. The Lord does not save from going into those experiences, but in them draws out to Himself by a strong taking hold, when something very critical is

threatened, and then Himself comes in, and it is something which is above what man can do, and they have learned their lesson. They have discovered that it is possible to live in this world, where death reigns, and to know victory in Christ by taking hold of Him as their life. He came that for His own He might destroy that law of death by which the god of this world, the prince of this world, holds his own in bondage, and by which he operates against the saints to try to bring them back into bondage, the bondage of death.

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

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

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

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

Sixthly. *The whole course of spiritual experience is progressive detachment from the world and attachment to Christ.* It is a course of spiritual history. It is a progressive thing, and not that in the very commencement of our spiritual life we were not severed from the world. We were fundamentally and originally separated from the world, but you and I know quite well that our experience has been all in the direction of this world becoming less and less, and Christ becoming more and more and more. "Whom having not seen, we love." "Where our treasure is, there our heart is also." We know something of the words: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is . . ." "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." We know that that is going on in us.

Seventhly. *The death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit are the basic factors in this work of Christ.* Let me repeat it. The death, the resurrection, the ascension of Christ,

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

Eighthly. *The Church is called to be the collective embodiment of all that truth.* The Church is called to be the collective—the corporate—embodiment of that full, absolute antagonism between God and the world. I realize that is a tremendous thing to say in the face of what is called the Church, in the face of what we know to be associated with what is called the Church. One hesitates in the almost hopeless situation that immediately confronts you when you raise the standard like that. Are we to conclude that what is called the Church is not the Church? At any rate, let us challenge ourselves on that. We can do no more than proclaim the truth and seek that it shall be realized in ourselves. It is not for us to go out and denounce or to judge, we must proclaim. But, oh! it does raise some very serious questions for many of the Lord's people. To be in any way entangled with that thing, that awful thing spiritually, against which God as in Christ has been revealed to be so utterly set! To be entangled in that through religion, through Christianity, through what is called the Church! You know quite well that if you stand on that ground you will meet the antagonism of the scribes and pharisees.

The Church is called to be the corporate expression of that antagonism, of that impact, by which Christ has destroyed the power of death, and living in the power of His resurrection. The Church is called to reveal in itself that it is not of this world, and that it is moving steadily further and further away from the world, because Christ is becoming more and more its life; to be the embodiment of all that is meant by the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the ascension of Christ, and the gift

of the Holy Spirit. There is no doubt but that that is how it was at the beginning. Are we to say that that is gone for ever, and that that can never be? No, we cannot say that. We may have to come within a very limited realm, but I verily believe that when the Lord comes, and there is that blessed movement toward Himself of the overcomers, He will have in them the embodiment of all that. They will represent all that.

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

Now let us close, so far as this broad survey is concerned, by just putting our finger upon one or two points. Do you see now why there must be no personal interests on the part of the people of God? What are personal interests? They are worldly in essence, in nature. It is what Paul spoke of when he said: “All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” That personal element runs out into so many directions, and is so imperceptible in many things, that only the Lord can bring it to light and destroy it. Do you see, on the face of it, why there must be no personal interest; and that there must be such an utterness of abandonment to the Lord’s interests, and that anything other than that is a spiritual link with this world? The enemy can come in and destroy your testimony if you have any personal interests, even in the work of the Lord. Deeper than we recognize there are those things which represent our like and our dislike, our want and our not want, our going to have and our not going to have, all of which give rise to suspicion of others, and then suspicion moves silently and imperceptibly on to jealousy, and jealousy on to a breakdown in fellowship. Tracked right down to its source it was some personal element, wanting it as we want it, wanting it ourselves, and not the utter emptying of self; and in the long run, sooner or later, the enemy has made an awful havoc because there was his link. Do you now see why?

When the Lord really gets a complete mastery of the life, He works to have everything carried on to resurrection ground. That is, He takes everything through a depth and a death, where we lose it, and

then in a deep crisis, in which we are brought to the point in heart of letting that go to God; not reproaching God, not rebelling against God, not refusing to accept God’s way, but where we come to the place where our heart is one with the heart of God over that matter; then so often the Lord gives that back, but it has come back in a new realm. It has gone through death and it comes back by resurrection, and there is something in it now which is not of this world. It is not a time thing, nor merely an earthly or natural thing. There is something about it now which has God in it. It is on resurrection ground, and the world factor in it has been destroyed. Now that is a true spiritual law. Do you see why the Lord must have it that way?

~~Let me put that in another way. This is why everything must be brought through to the place where it is wholly for God. Everything has to be wholly for God. The apostle had something to say about the shortness of the time, and those who had wives being as those who had none. Do you think he meant that literally? Ignore your domestic responsibilities, or ignore something which was of God, or ride rough shod over it for what you call spiritual things? Never! A thousand times, never! What the apostle meant was this: you have to hold everything in the light of God’s interests, and if you are holding domestic relationships, or anything else here on this earth, on a natural level, where they are for yourself, for time, and for what they mean to you merely in this life—and that is the range of things—well, that is wrong. Everything has to be held for God, in the light of the Lord’s interests. Why? To have that link with this world and the natural life absolutely destroyed so that the power of spiritual death cannot operate there. Do you not know that when you as a believer, as a spiritual person, or I, touch things naturally we touch spiritual death? Have you no experience of that? The power triumphant over death is in having everything wholly for the Lord and not for ourselves, not for this world, not for this life. Everything has to be held for the Lord.~~

It is so easy to sing hymns of consecration. We can sing about being all for the Lord, and having everything for the Lord, and we can answer to such challenges, but now let us face it. Are we holding everything for the Lord? Have we got something which, if we would only let that go, would in some other life give the Lord larger interests? Are we taking this attitude: ‘Now, while this thing means much to me, while in a natural way I have deep sentimental ties with this, and it is not easy to let things go, nevertheless, if the Lord is going to get more by my letting go, giving up, well, that is the

thing that counts and that matters.' That is holding things for the Lord. Are we holding things for the Lord? If we are holding things for ourselves, if we are holding things in this life before those heavenly interests of the Lord, we are opening the door to spiritual death. We cannot grow spiritually; we become earthbound, and our spiritual progress is delayed, if not utterly arrested. Everything must be carried over on to resurrection ground, and be wholly for the Lord, wholly for heaven. "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." There is so much bound up with this.

Now do you understand the meaning of suffering? I ask you, those of you who have suffered as the Lord's children, what has been the effect of your suffering? That is, inasmuch as you have not been persistently rebellious and hard because of the suffering, but inasmuch as you have sought to be one with the Lord in your suffering, what has been the effect of it? Answer me: has it been to make this world much less and the Lord much more, the things of heaven much more? Is that not true? This world has lost its grip, perhaps its charm, its hold. The things which are above have become far more to you through your suffering. Well, do you see the meaning of suffering? Do you see what the Lord is doing? Why does He empty us out? Why does He pour us out to the last drop? Just so that He can pour in, that is all. Just so that heavenly things may take the place of natural, earthly things. The Lord

permits His people to suffer in order that that gravitation world-ward might be weakened, and that that power of death might be destroyed; that they may become a heavenly people, living by a life which is His own life, and which it takes full spiritual intelligences to appreciate.

That is the testimony of Christ triumphant, but you cannot recognize that with the human mind. You need a full spiritual intelligence to grasp that. It is only principalities and powers who are able adequately to register the power of His resurrection. They recognize it. So the Church goes on in suffering, in weakness, in infirmity, "in deaths off"; but the Church will finish its course, and the issue will be that the full measure of that law of death operating in this world was taken by Christ in His Church and triumphed over. He is doing something through our weakness. We do not see it nor feel it, and we very often forget all about it in the presence of the suffering, but He is doing something, that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies should be displayed this manifold wisdom of God. That is the meaning of suffering—the raising of a heavenly testimony: getting us away from the world and making us live by a life which is hid with Christ in God.

Do you see the utter impossibility of being all the Lord's and having any kind of heart association with this world? That ought to come home to us in a new way.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

THE UNUSUAL MESSENGER

THE circus had only recently arrived at its new pitch outside a Danish village. The great tent was pitched, the ring was ready and all the troupe was dressed up ready for their publicity march to invite the villagers to the first performance, which would be that night. Suddenly somebody began to shout: "Fire! Fire!" It was true. Already the fire was beginning to spread among the caravans and so threatening to destroy the whole circus. If this happened the flames might pass down through the nearby cornfields and spread to the village itself.

It was a nasty moment, and the Ringmaster quickly realized that he would need the help of all the villagers if the fire was to be put out in time. They needed men, women, yes, and children, too, to fetch buckets of water, and they needed those who were strong and could beat out the flames. So he called for someone to hurry down to the village

and ask for everybody to come quickly and help. But who could go? Not the strong man, for he was helping to look after the elephants. Not the lion tamer, for he had his own wild animals to care for. All the attendants were rushing to get the horses to safety, so none of them could go. The only one who seemed to be available was the clown, who was all dressed up for the show.

"Run down quickly to the village," he shouted to the funny man, "and tell them we need their help at once if we are to save the circus, yes, and their own homes, too." So off he ran, with his funny hat, his big red nose and his clumsy great boots, and he burst into the village street crying: "Fire! Fire!"

Of course, everybody came out at the sound of his loud voice, but when they saw him he looked so funny that they all burst out laughing. He tried to tell them that he was not being funny this time but

was very much in earnest, but the more he tried the more they laughed. To them it was just a publicity stunt; he was trying to get them to go up and see the circus. They admired his cleverness but nobody made any attempt to move.

He pleaded with them and begged them to hurry before their own homes were destroyed by the cruel fire, but his face and his clothes were so queer that the more he pleaded the more they giggled and laughed. He was in deadly earnest, and the tears ran down his painted face as he appealed to first one man and then to another, asking them to take action at once and help to put out the fire. "Come with me!" he pleaded, "Come quickly! Or else it will be too late." Alas! they only thought that it was a very good joke and they did nothing but laugh.

All this had taken time, too much time in fact, and by now the Ringmaster was watching helplessly while the flames took possession of everything. The fire came raging down the hillside, caught the first wooden houses on the outskirts of the village, and then passed on from house to house until the whole place was a mass of flames.

Too late! The villagers now realized that the clown had been in earnest and had really meant what he said, but it was too late. They had to run for their lives, leaving their houses and all their

possessions to be destroyed by the flaming fire. If only they had taken the warning seriously! But then the messenger seemed so funny that they had not been able to believe that there was any real danger until now it was too late.

Of course, they blamed the circus for the calamity. "Why did not the Ringmaster come himself?" they reasoned. "We would have believed it if he had come himself. Or if he had sent some more suitable messenger, the lion-tamer, or one of the trapeze artistes. Anyone but the clown." The truth was, of course, that the clown was the only one available and that he had done his utmost to convince them. If they had only taken the trouble to enquire if his warning were true, then they might have been in time to put out the fires while they were still small.

Sometimes when God sends His messengers to us we do not take them seriously. Perhaps they are not the best messengers, but they may be the only ones whom He can send. The sad thing will be if we think that the matter is all a joke instead of realizing that the matter is really serious. Great and lasting loss can come to us if we do not pay attention to the call of the Gospel. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Hebrews ii. 3).

H. F.

"THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER" (VI)

6. THE GLORY

WE have said much in these evenings about the Kingdom, but, of course, as is always the case in these conferences, we have twelve basketsful over, and we have more at the end than we had at the beginning. Someone said to me this evening: 'We had better stay for another week!' Well, you may have different views about that, but there is so much more to say about the Kingdom.

We have also said something about the power, and the same is true about the power as about the Kingdom. There is far more to be said than we could say in a week.

Now for the last word in these evenings we shall say something about the glory.

ALL GOD'S WORKS AND WAYS ARE WITH GLORY IN VIEW

Glory is the supreme and all-governing thing in all God's works and ways. The order of words here

is quite correct: not 'the glory, the kingdom and the power', nor 'the glory, and the power and the kingdom', but 'the kingdom, and the power, and the glory'. We have said that the Kingdom is the sovereign rule of God, and the sovereign rule of God and the power of God are all directed toward the glory of God. It is not the rule alone. It is true that God rules, but He rules with a purpose. It is true that the power belongs to God, but He does not just use His power to no purpose. His rule and His power are for His glory.

GOD'S NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

We have said that glory governs all the ways and works of God. Glory governed God in the creation. He made all things for His glory, and when He surveyed His creative work He said: "It is very good". I have said before that if God looked upon us and said: 'It is very good!' that would be glory for us.

Some of us hope that at the end He may be able to say: 'Well done, good and faithful servant!', and that is only another way of saying: 'It is very good'. If He could say that to us it would indeed be glory for us! Glory, then, was the governing thing in the creation.

Then you will see that all through history every new beginning of God was with glory. It was indeed a great and wonderful new movement of God when He visited Abram in Ur of the Chaldees. Stephen tells us that "the *God of glory* appeared unto our father Abraham" (Acts vii. 2), which means that God had glory in view when He took hold of Abraham.

Everything was not good in the days of Noah, but when God made a new beginning after the flood Noah built an altar upon the new earth, and in so doing he said: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof". In other words, he meant that the earth was for the glory of God, and after judgment God comes back to claim the earth for His glory.

We move on to the great movement of God with Israel as a nation. God visits the nation in Egypt to bring out that people to be a people for His glory. I think that one of the most beautiful phrases in the Old Testament is that one which came through the lips of God when He said: "Israel my glory" (Isaiah xlvi. 13). His new movement with Israel in Egypt was in order to have a people for His glory, and having got them out of Egypt into the wilderness, He took the next step. He gave Moses the pattern of the tabernacle, and when 'all things were made according to the pattern shown in the mount' (Hebrews viii. 5), the glory descended and rested upon the tabernacle and it became the tabernacle of glory.

We move on hundreds of years. God gave the pattern of the temple to David, and when all things were made according to the mind of God we read that "the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord" (I Kings viii. 11).

We move on still many years and come to the time of the prophets. When we have summed up all the voices of the prophets they are resolved into one thing—the cry for the recovery of the glory amongst the people of God.

GOD'S NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Over we go to the New Testament, and to the little town of Bethlehem. He who is called 'the Prince of Glory' is born there, and that night the angel choir sings: "Glory to God in the highest" (Luke ii. 14). This is indeed a new movement of God, and He breaks into this world in glory. The

birth of Jesus was with glory, and all the works of Jesus while He was here had one object in view—they were all for the glory of God. In John's Gospel we have the seven 'signs' that He performed and then an eighth and the last one gathers up all the others into itself—and, of course, it had to be the eighth, for, as you know, the symbolic meaning of eight is resurrection. In it Jesus said: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the *glory of God*" (John xi. 4). All His works were unto glory.

What shall we say about His resurrection? Yes, His own resurrection is the crown of everything, but it was a new movement of God. God is going on in the power of resurrection, and there is no one who will question that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was a glorious thing.

Then what about His exaltation? He was received up into *glory*. John said at one time: "The Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified," so that the supreme thing about Pentecost is that Jesus is glorified. Pentecost is not something in itself—it is what it means.

And on we go still. What about that coming glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ? Indeed it will be glory when He comes!

GLORY IN THE CHURCH

That all has to do with Himself, but we step back a bit and think of the Church. The Apostle Paul said that in the end Christ would "present the church to himself a *glorious church*" (Ephesians v. 27). The Church came in with glory on the Day of Pentecost. It commenced its pilgrimage here with glory, and those early chapters of its history are chapters of the Church's progress in glory. *Born* in glory, *progressing* in glory, and to be *consummated* in glory: "not having a spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Ephesians v. 27).

THE INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER

Let us get closer still and come to the individual believer. The birth of the new believer is with glory, and if there was no glory about the beginning of your Christian life, you had better ask the question as to whether you are a Christian! Every true Christian looks back upon his or her beginning with praise to God, for it was such a glorious thing. *Born* in glory.

Are you going to agree with me when I say: '*Progressing* in glory'? Have you some question about that? How long have you been a Christian? One year—five years—ten years—twenty years—fifty years? Whether it has been one year or fifty

years, has it all been very easy? Have you had no times when you feared that your faith would fail? Have there been *no* times when you wondered whether you would be able to go on at all? Has it all been so very easy? Have you not had many difficulties? Why are you here tonight? It is all to the glory of God that you are here; not because *you* were so strong, nor because you had such a wonderful faith, but "kept by the power of God" (I Peter i. 5, A.V.). "Thine is the *power* and thine is the *glory*." Our very going on in the Christian life is all to the glory of God. *Born* in glory, *kept* by glory, to be *crowned* with glory.

Well, have I said enough to prove that *all* God's works and ways are with glory? Christianity is a system of glory. It begins with glory and the last picture in the Bible is that symbol of the people of God in the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, "having the glory of God" (Revelation xxi. 11).

THE GLORY OF GRACE

But we have to stop and think again. What is the glory of God in this dispensation? It is the glory of grace. Have you noticed how often 'grace' and 'glory' are put together? Even in the Old Testament it says: "The Lord will give grace and glory" (Psalm lxxxiv. 11), and in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians grace and glory are brought together in a wonderful way. Grace is always the basis of God's glory. He shows His glory and the riches of His glory by the way of grace. That relates to our salvation, for God saves us for His glory, not first of all for our glory, but for His own glory, and in order that He may get the glory it has to be by His grace. It is not by works of ours that we are saved, but solely by the grace of God. Why is it that so many people have such a bad time in order to be saved? Because they have been trying to save themselves. They have been struggling with their own sin. They have been trying by all manner and means to find salvation in themselves, and if they could do that in the smallest way they would take the glory. So, whether it is an unsaved person or a saved person, God lets them get on with it as long as they wish to try, and when, sooner or later, they come to the place when they say: 'I can do nothing about it. If I am going to be saved at all it can only be by the grace of God', it is then that God steps in, because now He is going to get the glory.

Some of you Christians think that is very elementary, and yet, you know that it is not elementary. You know that all through the Christian life that principle is at work. Again and again we come

to the place where we say: 'Well, but for the grace of God I will never get through.' We may not think so, but that is the most helpful position to come to. We sang when we started this meeting:

" 'Tis the Church triumphant singing
Worthy the Lamb!"

and it will never be 'Worthy me', or 'Worthy you', or 'Worthy this preacher and that teacher'. God takes great pains to steal the glory from us, and it is "Worthy the Lamb!" In our salvation all the glory will come to God.

And what is true of our salvation is also true of our service. All true service to the Lord is governed by this one law—God being glorified. God has given us a great example of that in history. I do not think that I am exaggerating when I say that the Apostle Paul was the greatest servant that the Lord ever had—of course, we except the Lord Jesus. That man Paul had great natural gifts and qualifications. He had tremendous natural resources, but there has never been a man who more readily acknowledged that all his work was by the grace of God, and God took great pains to keep that man on the basis of grace. He emptied him of physical strength—Paul spoke often of his physical infirmities. He emptied him of all intellectual strength, and Paul often did not know what to do or which way to turn. He had to get all his direction from the Lord. I think I need not work this out in detail, for it is so evident. Paul summed it all up with one statement: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (II Corinthians xii. 9). Human weakness, Divine strength and Divine glory. The Lord keeps the power and the glory to Himself.

Well, we could spend a lot of time on ministry to the glory of God, but we just touch it and pass on, and we come on to something which is perhaps still more helpful.

The same Apostle spoke very much about his sufferings, and the attitude of the Apostle Paul toward his sufferings was just wonderful. I wish that I were more like Paul in this matter! He gives us some long catalogues of his sufferings—sufferings in his own body, sufferings in his circumstances, sufferings in the world, sufferings on land and sufferings on sea, sufferings from enemies without and sufferings from false brothers within. It is a long list of sufferings, but how did he look at them? Oh, may the Lord help us in this matter! Paul gathers them all together and then he says: "Our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (II Corinthians iv. 17). That must have

meant this: 'Oh, here is another bit of suffering. This is very hard for the flesh to bear, but there is something of the glory of God to be realized in this. I cannot see it for the moment, but it is going to work out for the glory of God . . . "As always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death"' (Philippians i. 20).

Don't you wish you were more like that? I wish that every time some trouble came I said: 'This is for the glory of God'! Whether we take that attitude or not, God means it for His glory.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE GLORY OF GOD

Now, the glory of God is always over against a background of what is contrary to the glory of God, and that is where grace comes in. "That I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn (or stake) in the flesh, a messenger of Satan" (II Corinthians xii. 7). Paul said that it was something driven right through his flesh to keep his pride down, and he says: "Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee . . ." and then Paul said: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses." Suffering . . . grace . . . glory.

OUR CHRISTIAN VOCATION

Now I have a lot more that I wanted to say about this, but I want to close with one thing. All that I have said leads us to one thing: it shows us what is our Christian vocation. What is the Christian vocation? That means *your* vocation and *my* vocation. The Christian vocation is the vindication of Jesus Christ. We are here to vindicate the Lord Jesus, and first of all to vindicate the present livingness of the Lord Jesus.

"He lives! He lives! . . .
 You ask me how I know He lives—"

'Oh, the New Testament says that He died and rose again two thousand years ago.' No, that is not an up-to-date vindication of the living Lord Jesus!

"He lives within my heart!"

It is "Christ *in* you, the hope of glory" (Colossians i. 27).

We are here for the vindication of the livingness of the Person of Jesus Christ and for the vindication of the reality of His work in men and women. It is quite true, according to the record, that He did some wonderful things in men and women when He was here, and that is a wonderful story of long ago,

but the vindication of Jesus Christ is that He does just as great a work in us today as He did then. He has opened very much more important blind eyes than the eyes of the body. When we were singing that chorus yesterday—"Turn your eyes upon Jesus"—our brother told us why it was so precious to him, but I can carry his story a little further.

When I was once in Los Angeles, Mrs. Helen Lemmel, who wrote that hymn, sent a message to me to ask if I would go and pray with her. I went to her home and there was the dear old lady sitting in her blindness. She had a writing pad on her knee and was writing choruses. She said: 'Mr. Sparks, I have a problem, and I want you to pray about it. The surgeon has told me that if I will have an operation on my eyes, he thinks that possibly I may recover my sight. My problem is this: If I were to recover my natural sight would I lose my spiritual sight? I have learned so much of the Lord in my blindness, and I would far sooner remain blind naturally and keep my spiritual sight. Will you pray for me that I may know what to do?' Before I prayed I said to Mrs. Lemmel: 'Mrs. Lemmel, what does your heart tell you to do?' She answered: 'I think I have already decided. I am not going to have an operation.' Well, I did pray, but I had no faith for asking for her sight.

Now, if you want to argue about that, you can go and argue, but what I am saying right up to date is that Christ opens more important eyes than the physical ones, and in that way, among many others, we are here to vindicate the works of the Lord Jesus.

And we are here to vindicate His grace in suffering. Paul said: "The sufferings of Christ abound unto us" (I Corinthians i. 5). Now I hesitate to speak in this way because I know the weakness of my own heart, but it is true, is it not, that Christians have a lot of sufferings that other people don't have? Have you not often said: 'Why should this come to me? It does not come to these other people. Why is it like this?' Because it is through grace that we are to come to glory by way of suffering. God is glorified by grace in our sufferings. Paul spoke of the time when he was 'pressed beyond measure', and had "the sentence of death within ourselves" (II Corinthians i. 9). Now here is a word that you did not expect to hear from the lips of the Apostle Paul. This man of great faith, of great spiritual strength, said: "We *despaired* even of life." Paul in despair? Well, he said it, but then he added: "In order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead." 'We were brought right down as low as that in order that the God who raises the dead might get the glory.' It is not the strong people

who bring glory to God, nor the clever people, nor the important people, but "God chose the foolish things of the world . . . the weak things of the world . . . the base things of the world," and if that is not enough, "the things that are not" (I Corinthians i. 27-28). You know that that is what Paul said. Why? "That no flesh should glory before God."

So, dear friends, everything in the ways and works of God is for His glory. Let us bind that to our hearts. As we go back down into the world of conflict and into experiences of suffering, let us hide this word in our hearts and ask for grace to say: 'This is unto glory.'

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever." Do you say "Amen"?

(Concluded)

DIVINE ORDER—IN CHRIST (IV)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST IN HIS CROSS

WE have been giving ourselves to a seeking to see and to grasp something of the significance of the Lord Jesus Christ and His work in relation to the whole created universe. We are really gathered around one thing: that He is the key to everything, and that only as He comes into His place will the creation find the explanation and answer to its existence. That has taken us out along several lines. We have seen that there was a primeval order in the creation, of which He was the centre and the sphere, as the Son eternally appointed the 'heir of all things'. There was an order expressive of God, who is the God of order. We have seen that all progress, all fruitfulness, all satisfaction, all fullness, is a matter of Jesus Christ; and that, so far as we are concerned, Christians or mankind, it is a matter of knowing Him.

We have dwelt much upon this matter of *order* as essential to life, to progress and to the realization of God's end. Order is a key to everything.

We went on to see something of the disruption of that order, the interference with it and the breaking in upon it. The result: disorder, and all its baneful consequences—pain in the creation, spiritual pain as well as physical pain. The Apostle has put it like this: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain" (Romans viii. 22), because things are out of order. We traced the course of that disruption and dislocation, which began, apparently, somewhere outside of this present world—in heaven, where there was an uprising of a leader with a great following of angels, apparently in revolt against God's destined place and purpose for His Son as 'the heir of all things'. It was a bid for that position of equality with God, a bid to displace God's appointed One. That brought disruption in that realm, and the leader and his followers were cast out—"angels which kept not their first estate" (Jude 6). We saw the leader of them, no doubt with his fol-

lowing, invading this earth and breaking in, so that the beautiful order of the creation was upset. In the first place, the order in the man; the balance, the symmetry, the beautiful harmony in the man's own life and constitution were upset and disorganized. Then immediately to the corporate—in the man and his wife, so that you can, in almost the first mention, detect something that has come into their fellowship. The one blamed the other for what had been done, and that momentous ordinance of God, with so much bound up with it in His purpose—the two as one—is severed. And then, of course, the family. The family has this schism in it, working out to one brother murdering the other. Jesus went right back to that and said of Satan: "He was a murderer from the beginning" (John viii. 44). From the family to the race, and that book which records all this brings us to the whole race in confusion in every way. The order, universally, in the upper realms of this earth, in the lower heavens, the earth and its environs, what we mean by the cosmos is shot through and through with this disruption, this schism, this strain, this conflict, and is just shattered to pieces. Spiritual progress in the purpose of God is arrested and all the beauty of the Lord is marred.

Well, that is where we were in our earlier chapter.

Now we come to the significance of Christ in His Cross in relation to that. The Cross of the Lord Jesus stands right at the very centre and heart of that whole cosmic disruption. The Cross is the heart of redemption, but redemption relates to the whole range of Satanic interference with the order of God. The Cross, and redemption, and salvation are far, far greater things than dealing with men's sins. They deal with sinfulness, which is much, much more than sins, and sinfulness is traced right to that one who made this assault upon God's appointment, God's economy and God's order. The Cross of the Lord Jesus stands related to that

whole realm and range of disruption and disorder from centre to circumference. The Cross is not a small thing; it is an immense thing, and it reaches as far as this thing that has happened in the universe reaches. And we must look upon the Cross and upon redemption in the light of this once existing Divine order, then its upset and disruption, and then its recovery and eternal establishment beyond any more fear of the thing happening again. So far the Cross reaches, and so far Christ crucified has His significance.

THE REALMS OF DISRUPTION

(i) *The Cosmic Realm*

The redemptive work of the Lord Jesus in the Cross follows the whole path of this mischief. It follows that very course, and it is important that you and I should recognize the order and sequence of this thing. The very first realm in which the Cross has its application is the realm of the spiritual hierarchy of evil. It begins there. On the day of our Lord's crucifixion, or death, the very heavens were affected: "Darkness was over the face of the earth"; "there was a great earthquake"; "the veil of the temple was rent, from top to bottom". Heaven is involved and is breaking in, and there is a tremendous thing happening in that realm. When we read the Gospel account, of course, we only have the events and the associated happenings, but there was a man who was given an insight into something more. This was not in the Gospels and could not at that time be revealed. He tells us that in the Cross 'He stripped off principalities and powers and made a show of them openly, *triumphing over them* in it' (Colossians ii. 15). That is where redemption begins. The very heavens (by that, I take it, the lower heavens, not God's Presence) were defiled by this revolt, and they were purged by the Cross. The disrupting forces of the order of God were met in the spiritual world by God's Son on the Cross. It is far too deep and full a matter for us to dwell upon at length, but there is a very real practical value in this, for, after all, we are not dealing in the first place with circumstances, nor conditions, nor with effects and results. We are dealing with causes. When there is a breaking in, in any realm, of those disruptive, schismatic, disordering forces, in an individual life, or in a community, or anywhere, the usual way is to find a scapegoat, to blame somebody, to begin to look at one another, to put it down to this, and that, and something else, and in so doing we are missing the point and missing the way, and we will never clear it up like that. We will only make it worse. We have got to get behind it,

for there is something behind it all—ah, there is *someone* behind it all.

I do not know what you feel about it, but with all the desire that we may have—and it is a very real one—not to become demoniacal-minded, you are just more and more forced to realize that there is a whole system of iniquity and animosity to the things of God at work in this universe, and it seems that these forces are more and more at work. They come very near and are like a blanket upon you, especially when there is something of the Lord on hand. It just recurs like the seasons when the Lord has something more in view. It just happens. It is not coincidence, nor chance, nor imagination, for the thing is far too desperately real; it is calculated to put you right out of the fight, and strategically so, at a very, very important moment. Well, we could say much about it, but this is in a realm that is over things, that encompasses 'things', circumstances, happenings, feelings, and all that. They are secondary. It is what is around as the source of them that it is important to recognize.

Now, the Lord Jesus, in His Cross, has something to say to that realm, and you and I will never know victory over things until we know the value of the Cross and the Blood of Jesus in that ground and realm. The victory has got to be won in that realm, or applied in that realm, before 'things' will give place. Oh, take that to heart! Remember that! For we are just being 'played with' by these evil forces, and being made to do just as they want us to do, because we have either lost, or never have had, this key to the situation: that Calvary touches the cosmic realm of evil. That is where the path of redemption begins, as that is where the trouble began.

(ii) *The Realm of Man*

The next thing on the way, as you noted, is man. This whole thing, great and far-reaching in its range, and terrible in its nature, is focused down upon man. He is the next point of assault, to disrupt him, divide him, and make him, in himself, incapable of functioning simply because he is divided. You know that it is true, if you are divided in yourself, or amongst yourselves, you cannot do anything. You are just paralysed and cannot get anywhere. That is a fact, and the devil knows it, if you do not! And so he comes in from the outside and brings this disruption down to man himself, and man becomes a paralysed creature simply because he himself is in division. His nature is divided. The order, the beautiful order, balance and symmetry of his own personality is upset. Man was created in an order. I am not staying with the order of spirit, soul

and body, but there is an order, and if that order obtains in Christ, you have a man in peace, in rest, in strength, and a man who is accounted for something. Upset that man in himself, in his own constitution, and throw him all out of gear and out of order, and where does he get? Well, that is what the Bible means by *vanity*. "The creation", says Paul, "was subjected to vanity" (Romans viii. 20). That is, 'You *shall* not get through!' It is imposed and you cannot get anywhere.

Redemption by the Cross of the Lord Jesus is intended, dear friends, to come to us individually to recover and restore a harmony in ourselves. It may be a long process, but we do know that a beginning is made when new birth takes place; when we come to the Cross of the Lord Jesus as to our condition, our need as to ourselves, and that Cross becomes effective just at the beginning of the Christian life. The testimony of all that have come that way is that there is a wonderful sense of peace that comes into the heart. Peace is only another word for harmony, you know. It is not just that everything has quietened down. Oh, no! It is that now you have got into true line with the purpose for which you were made. You are on the path now. You have been all over the place, but now your feet are on the way and something of the peace of the end comes into the beginning. You are going to have many conflicts presently, but the beginning is like that. Even with a little child it is wonderful. A child does not understand all your theology and doctrine of atonement and justification, but a little child can know what it means to receive Jesus into the heart. And when that is done with a little child you at once see something. Something has happened, and it is not imagination. It is the beginning of a life re-adjusted, re-harmonized. The conflict has gone out, so far as the person is concerned. It is like that in new birth. It is the beginning of the new creation which, in its completion, will be a beautiful reproduction of a lost harmonious order.

The Christian life, from that beginning, from that starting point, is just the school in which we learn the way of harmony, the way of life. What is it? It is everything centred in, and governed by, the Lord Jesus. You see, we have these statements here. We are so familiar with them that they have almost lost their real meaning to us. "In him all things hold together." He is the integrating centre of this universe. He brings the broken parts together, and forms again. He takes hold of the chords which are all out of tune and tunes them again into a harmony. 'In Him all things consist.' When Jesus has His place, things begin to be like that. There is a re-conciliating. And, I say, the Christian life is the

school of learning to let Jesus have His place, and when He has His place you know, as well as I do, that, so far as our inner life is concerned, things are far more restful, more sure, and certainly more fruitful. It is just that, but that is a tremendous thing, because we say: 'Jesus has His place!' It sounds so elementary, but you see how comprehensive it is. He is the centre of a harmonized universe, and when He has His place, He begins to harmonize the inner life. And the more place He has, the more unified we are, and the more at peace we are. We know quite well how true it is in the opposite: that when He is not getting His place in everything, everything is under a strain.

For the individual, and His significance there as the unifying of the heart—*one* heart, not a divided heart—it is a deep work, a great work, and perhaps it is a long work, but that is the business of life: the unifying of everything in Christ. That is, Christ becoming the single Factor who makes of everything a single factor: 'For to me to live *is* Christ,' a single factor unifying the whole life. Satan is not going to leave that alone. He is going, by every possible means, to assail it, to interfere with it if he can. But, you see, he cannot, for he just cannot destroy Christ. He has been destroyed by Christ! And the work of the Cross of our Lord Jesus is the ground upon which we stand, and must stand, against all that interfering work of the evil forces to bring us again into inward confusion and uncertainty. Satan is trying it all the time. Stand your ground on the Cross! Stand your ground under the Blood when he tries to rob you of that quiet assurance that all is well, because of what the Lord Jesus has done in His Cross.

(iii) *The Marriage Realm*

You move from the personal into the corporate life. This is the pathway of the evil forces, and this is the pathway of the Cross. Yes, into this most sacred relationship which was the true ordinance of God at the beginning—husband and wife. Is it necessary for me to say to young people who are contemplating that union: 'Be sure that it is in Christ! Be sure that it is *in Christ* to begin with!' There is no guarantee or even hope for all that it means in the purpose of God unless it is in Christ. And there are tremendous things bound up with that relationship *in Christ*. But, if it has taken place, this is one of the sacred things that the evil forces and the evil one will never cease to assail. You, perhaps, have not realized the tremendous damage that the devil can do when he can separate two in that relationship. It is a focal point of his constant attack to divide there. That relationship is a real

battleground through life, for there is so much for the Lord in it. If it has in any way been interfered with, how are you going to put it right? Not by mere human attempts. You have got to get back into Christ, for it is only getting back on to the ground of Christ that will put that right. It may be that the man is pulling in one direction and the woman in another. There is no real togetherness. One has one mind, and the other has another; one will, and another; one interest, and another; one like, and another. And you know it is weakening, it is frustrating and it is desolating. It is only when the two get on to the ground of Christ crucified that that thing can be dealt with and put right. Every one has got to let go their natural ground and take the ground of Christ crucified as to themselves.

But, dear friends, the Word of God makes it perfectly clear to us that, in the beginning, that ordinance of God, that relationship, was a representation of something far greater. This, in its testimony, is a Church matter. 'I speak of Christ and the Church', says the Apostle in speaking of that relationship. The real principle is the principle of 'corporate life' anywhere, anyhow, in Christ—maybe the two, the three, the local company, or the larger company of the Lord's people. The principle is one principle. The enemy will stand at nothing to get in between, to divide. And the only—but the sure—means of preserving that unity is the Cross of the Lord Jesus at work in an inward way in us all. That is a tremendous thing! But it will do it. If only that Cross becomes really a subjective reality in all concerned, that is the end of all divisions.

(iv) *The Realm of the Church*

We can easily see, without dwelling upon it, that this extends, beyond the individual, beyond the two and three, beyond the little group and company, to the Church universal. We can see that, eventually, it will reach the whole inhabited world, when Christ has His place. 'All the great multitude, out of every diversity of nationaliy, and tongue, and clime, and kindred' will be on the ground of the Lamb slain, the Cross of the Lord Jesus. They will be 'singing one song' in harmony. The high notes, the low notes, and all the notes between will be ascribing worth to the Lamb. Glorious chorus! Redemption follows that course. The Cross of the Lord Jesus relates to that one thing, to an end where all is reunited in Christ.

We have placed John xvii as the foundation of this message, and you know the great, perhaps the highest, note of that chapter is in a little clause: 'that they may be *perfected* into one'. *Perfected* into one! That is the end of His prayer, the end of His travail, the end of His redeeming work—*perfected into one!* Then the great arch-adversary of the Divine order can do no more. His work is finished, his power is destroyed, for the Cross stands victorious over this long history of disruption.

I see no hope for unity anywhere other than in the Cross of the Lord Jesus: Christ crucified, put in His place. And although the battle goes on, and the enemy is always trying to make a show of disruption and disorder, if the Cross has really done a work in human hearts, there is a basic something that will triumph over all that.

(To be continued)

“THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO STAND YOUR OWN GROUND ON THE EVIL DAY” ^{W&E}

(Ephesians vi. 13)

What is this “evil day”? The context shows.

Inclusively: “The strategies and deceits of the devil”. (verse 11)

In detail: Attack upon truth. (verse 14)

Attack upon right standing with God. (verse 14)

Attack upon stability. (verse 15)

Attack upon faith. (verse 16)

Attack upon the mind. (verse 17)

Attack upon the Word of God. (verse 17)

Attack upon the prayer life. (verse 18)

This is the nature of the “evil day”, or ‘day of danger’.

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