

**A WITNESS
AND
A TESTIMONY.**

1943

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

"A Witness and Testimony"

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NO. 1, VOL. 21

Spiritual Sight

No. 3.

Seeing the Lord and Seeing Ourselves

READING: II Chron. xxvi. 1-5, 16-21, 23; Isa. vi. 1-10.

This is a very impressive and striking story, and it circles round the matter which has been brought before us at this time, namely, that of spiritual sight. "I saw the Lord"; "mine eyes have seen..."; and everything gathers around that.

What arises from the whole incident is this, that king Uzziah was spiritually and morally a representation of Israel, and of Israel's prophets to a large extent. That is the significance of the double statement by Isaiah the prophet—I am a man of unclean lips, and I am your prophet; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. And that, as is very clear, connects with Uzziah; for you know that a leper had to put a cloth upon his upper lip and go about crying, Unclean! The significance of the words "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" is just that: we are all lepers. Isaiah is saying, in effect, What was true of Uzziah is true of us all, prophet and people. You do not realise it, and I did not realise it until I saw the Lord. We were all terribly, deeply, impressed with what happened in the case of Uzziah: we have been living in an atmosphere charged with the awfulness of that thing, we have been speaking under our breath about it, saying what a terrible thing it was, what an evil thing Uzziah did, and how awful that our king should turn out to be like that, and have an end like that, what a horrible thing leprosy is; and we have been speaking hard things about Uzziah and thinking many thoughts, how grievous his case was, but I have come to see that we are all in the same case. I, who have been preaching to you (do not forget that five chapters of prophecy have preceded this sixth chapter of Isaiah, this is not

the commencement of a preacher's life, but somewhere in his life when he wakes up by a new revelation), I who have been preaching and prophesying, I have come to see that I am no better than Uzziah. You people, going on with your round of religious rites and ceremonies, you, attending the temple, you, offering the sacrifices, you, using your lips in worship, you are in the same case as Uzziah: we are all lepers. You may not realise it, but I have come to see. And how have I come to see? I have seen the Lord! "Mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts." "I saw the Lord...high and lifted up". I say this is very impressive when you think about it.

Well, what are we going to make of it? Perhaps we would do well just to steal away and be quiet with that a little while, just think it out.

Let us dismiss one thing immediately. It is a popular idea which somehow has sprung up, and by which most of us have been caught, that it was this vision that made Isaiah a prophet or preacher. We have heard that, perhaps we have said that. Oh no! Why, if the Book is inspired and governed by God, should it come long after he had been prophesying so much? Look at those five chapters of prophecies. What tremendous things are in those chapters. No, it was not this that was making him the prophet, the preacher. God was dealing with a man, not a prophet; God was dealing with a people, not with an office. He is getting down to what we are in His own sight. So we cannot just transfer it to a class of people called prophets or preachers, and feel that some of us are not involved because we are not in that class, we are just ordinary simple folk who do not aspire to be prophets and preachers. It is not that. The Lord is getting down to people here and seeking to make clear to them

how He views them in themselves, even though they may have been preaching a lot ; what they are, after all, in His sight, in themselves. Sooner or later that reality has to break upon us to safeguard everything and to secure His end.

What God is Seeking

What is God after ? If you can see, if you have your eyes opened to see what God is after, then you will understand His method, and why He employs this method. Chapter v makes clear what God is after ; He is after a people who satisfy His own heart. It is called a remnant. It is called that simply because such a people will be but a remnant. He knows quite well that the whole people will not conform to His thought. He has foreseen that history of His people right up to the days of the coming of His Son, and what this very people will do with His Son. He knows their hearts. That is why He tells Isaiah those terrible things that he is to do : make this people's heart fat, close their ears and their eyes. He knows.

But nevertheless, there will be those who will respond. They will be but a remnant, and that remnant is mentioned specifically at the end of Chapter vi in these words—

“ And if there be yet a tenth in it, it also shall in turn be eaten up : as a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stock remaineth, when they are felled ; so the holy seed is the stock thereof ”.

In the stock that has been felled—and you notice what precedes is the felling of the tree ; Israel would be felled by the nations whom God is going to call to cut down Israel, to use as His instruments of judgment, and they would fell this tree of Israel, but the stock will remain—and in the stock, there will be a tenth, there will be a remnant, a holy seed in the stock when the whole tree has been dealt with. God is after a company, even out from the whole general company of His people, who will satisfy His heart, and to secure that remnant He lays hold of Isaiah and deals with him in this way, and gives him this vision. Beloved, in order that God should get His end, we have to be thoroughly disillusioned and have our eyes opened to see very clearly what we are in ourselves in the sight of God. Terrible revelation ! Anything which is a suspicion or a suggestion of self-satisfaction, self-complacency, of having attained or being satisfied with our present condition, will disqualify from being in the remnant or in any way instrumental toward God's end, God's purpose.

So, after this man had set out to speak of the wide ranges of the sovereign judgments of God in the first five chapters of Isaiah, suddenly it seems God arrests him. There is a crisis in his own life and in his own ministry. God takes him to the depths of an eye-opening as to what he is, and what the people are, in His sight. He and they who had judged and condemned, and spoken those words with bated breath about the terrible thing that had happened to Uzziah, were shown to be just as bad ; there was no difference. In God's sight, they were all with the cloth upon their upper lips, called upon to cry, Unclean, unclean !

The Leprosy of the Self-Life

And what was this leprosy ? Oh, we say, of course, sin. Yes, sin ; but what is this ? Let us have a look at Uzziah and see what leprosy meant, what leprosy represented or betokened in the case of Uzziah. “ He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done ”, and while he walked in the ways of the Lord, the Lord made him to prosper. A man blessed of the Lord, walking in the light of the Lord and knowing the Lord's favour, and, alongside, that deeply rooted thing which is in every man's heart, always ready to rise up and turn the very blessings of God to his own account, to make a name for himself, to get a position for himself, to bring himself aggrandisement and glory and power and influence and satisfaction, to give him a reputation and a position. That is it. What is leprosy ? What is this thing which is an abomination to God ? It is just that self-life which is in us all, which is ever even coming into the things of God and seeking to make them of personal advantage and account. The Lord blesses, and we become somebody in our own secret hearts because the Lord has blessed. We forget that the very blessings that have come to us have come through grace and the mercy of God, and secretly we begin to think there must be something in us to account for it. It is our ability, our cleverness, something in ourselves. We begin to speak about our blessing, our successes. Oh, it is that thing down there, the leprous germ in us all, the self-life in its manifold ways which produces pride, even spiritual pride, and causes us, like Uzziah, to press in to holy things in self-energy, self-strength, self-assertion, self-sufficiency. Yes, the leprosy is the root of self, selfhood, however it may express itself.

Therein—and it is another branch of things for which we have no time now—therein lies the peril of blessing and prosperity. Oh, how necessary it is for us to be crucified in the midst of our blessings ! How necessary it is for God to make safe His blessing of us by continually showing us ourselves, and that it is all of grace, and that if He has given us any kind of blessing, any kind of success, any kind of prosperity at all, it is not because there is something in us in His sight, whatever men may think. Whatever we may be amongst men, in God's sight we are no better than lepers, and what matters is not how we get on amongst men, but how we get on with God. We might arrive at some very high eminence in this world, but whether we arrive with God or not is the thing that matters.

Now perhaps this goes past most of us, because we are not all too conscious of having been blessed and prospered and having much to boast about. Most of us know the opposite, a good deal of emptying and humiliating. But let us get to the heart of this thing. Even down there in the depths there is a craving in us which is a self-craving, there is a revolt which is the revolt of this self-life.

Well, Uzziah is brought to light here in order to show that that is the thing in people and prophet which makes it impossible for God to reach His end ; and it has to be dealt with, exposed ; it cannot be

overlooked ; it must be dragged out, and we must see.

The Attainment of God's Object—The Fruit of Seeing the Lord

And so I just come at once and directly to this point, which is that God should get the end upon which His heart is set, a people, though it be but a tenth, a remnant, a people answering to His own heart-desire and satisfying Him in the full purpose of His will. For Him to get that, there must be a seeing, and one thing to be seen, which will do all the rest, is the Lord ; and to see the Lord, as this makes so clear, is to see holiness ; and when we see holiness we see leprosy where we never suspected it, in ourselves or in others. When we have seen the Lord, we see the true state of things in ourselves and in those around us, even of the Lord's people. To see the Lord is the need, in order that we should be in the way of that end toward which He is pressing.

"I saw the Lord" ; "mine eyes have seen". What is the result ? Well, it is a revealing of ourselves to ourselves, and it is a revealing of the spiritual state around us. When we have seen the Lord, we cry, I am undone ! If you look at that word "undone", you will find that it just means this (but this it does mean), I am worthy of death. That is exactly the meaning of the Hebrew word there—worthy of death, I am worthy of death ! You and I will see the need for union with Christ in death if our eyes are open to see the Lord ; to see that there is nothing else for it, it is the only way.

Now, this is not just language, these are not just words and ideas. What I want us to see is this, for one thing, that the work of the Spirit of God in us, by which our eyes are opened to see the Lord, will result in our feeling that the only thing for us is to die, the best thing for us is to die, to come to an end. Have you got there ? Of course, Satan will play on that ground, as indeed he has with many people, trying to drive them to make an end of everything, to work upon something that the Spirit of God is doing and turn it to his own account and create a tragedy. Let us keep in the spiritual realm, and recognise that the Lord will work in us for His own glory and for glorious possibilities, by bringing us to the place where we feel deeply and terribly that the best thing for us is to die. Then He has got us in agreement with His own mind about us. I am undone !—and the Lord might well have said, And so you are : I have known it all the time, I have had difficulty in making you know it ; you are undone.

Well now, when you come to that place, you have come to the place where we can start. While we are there, pressing in all the time, occupying the place like Uzziah, coming into the temple, into the house, into the sanctuary ; busy, active ; we in ourselves, what we are ; while we are filling the temple, the Lord is not able to do anything. He says, Look here, you will have to go out, and you will have to come to the place where you hasten of your own accord to go out because you see you are a leper. That is put in there about Uzziah. "Yea, himself also hastened to go

out". At last he realises that this is no place for him. When the Lord has got us to that place—I am undone, this is no place for me !—then He can start on the positive side, He has the way open. This seeing is a terrible thing, and yet it is a very necessary thing, and in the outcome it is a very glorious thing. The commission came then.

Now I am just harassed for want of time ; there are so many things I want to say.

The Reason for the Necessary Experience

I will just add this one thing. Do you see how necessary it was that a thing like that should happen with Isaiah ? What was he going to do ? Was he going to preach a great revival ? Was he going out to tell the people, Everything is all right, the Lord is going to do great things: cheer up, there is a great day just about to dawn ? No ! Go, make this people's heart fat, close their ears, shut their eyes ! This is not a very joyful kind of work. What does it amount to ? Well you see, the Lord knew the state of the people's hearts. He knows quite well that they do not want to see in reality. In reality they do not want to see. If they wanted to see, oh, they would be taking different attitudes altogether. They would be free of all prejudices, all suspicions, all criticisms ; they would be reaching out and inquiring ; they would be showing their signs of hunger and longing ; they would be investigating, and they would not be readily put off by other peoples' judgments and criticisms. But He knew that in their heart they did not want to see, they really did not want to hear, whatever they might say about it ; and this prophet will say later on, "Who hath believed our report ?" (Isa. liii. 1). The Lord knew, and judgment always comes along the line of a people's heart. If you do not want, you will lose the capacity for wanting. If you do not want to see, you will lose the capacity for seeing. If you do not want to hear, you will lose the capacity for hearing. *Judgment is organic, it is not mechanical.* It comes along the line of our life. You sow a seed of inclination or disinclination and you will reap a harvest of inability, and one effect of a ministry of revelation is to draw out the people's inclination or disinclination unto their own judgment, and you will find that a ministry of revelation and life only makes some people harder. The Lord knows it is there.

Now, to go on with a ministry like that is not a very comfortable thing. You have to be a crucified man to do that, you have to have no personal interest. If you are out for a reputation, for popularity, for success, for a following, then it is best not to go this way, not to see too much, best not to have insight into things ; better put blinkers on and be an incorrigible optimist. If you are going the way of the Lord's purpose, of a people who really do answer to His thought, it is going to be a way which is cut clean through the mass who will not have it, and who let you know they will not have it, and you go a lonely way. They may think they have a case, but the fact is that they are not hungry and desperate enough even to investigate, to inquire at first hand. They are easily turned aside by

the slightest criticism of you, or of your position, of your ministry, and you have to go on with the few, the handful who are going on. It is the price of vision, the price of seeing. Isaiah had to be a crucified man in order to fulfil a ministry like that, and in order for you and me to occupy a position with God, we have to be crucified to that which was in Uzziah, a craving for position. Not satisfied with kingship, he must have priesthood. Nay, more than that, not satisfied with the blessing of God, he must have the very place of God. What a contrast is this!—on the one hand, king Uzziah; on the other, "mine eyes have seen the King".

Can you follow this? It is searching, it is tremendous, but oh, beloved, it is the way of the full desire

and thought of the Lord. It is a lonely and costly way, and the effect is really to bring out what God sees in the heart of His people, and in order to do that—which is going to mean that we suffer for our revelation, for our vision, for seeing; we have to pay a great price for it—in order to do that, we have to be well crucified, to come to the place where we say, Well, I am undone, I am deserving of death; there is nothing for it but that I should pass out! The Lord says, That is all right, that is what I want—for you to pass out; I wanted Uzziah to pass out: then I could fill the temple! Uzziah is self, it is man as he is, and God does not co-occupy His house with man, He must fill it.

T.A.S.

The Power of an Endless Life

The Prince of Life

READING: Acts iii. 14-15; John vii. 37-39:

There are times when we gather together for prayer, and when, with our hearts in true submission to the Lord, the real purpose of our being together is to make our voice heard in heaven. That is quite right. There are other times when, before the Lord, our gathering together is for a different purpose, and this afternoon is one such occasion. This time our desire and purpose is to be quiet that God may make His voice heard among us. "Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth". We have been exercised in prayer together about this day and have realised that the voice of God is not necessarily in messages and expositions of the Scripture, and that is why I have begun thus; because the word the Lord has given to me to bring to you this afternoon is just a phrase, a title, a name—"The Prince of Life". I believe that is God's word to us. As surely as He said to His disciples in the mount, "This is my beloved Son... hear ye him" (Matt. xvii. 5), so He says to us this afternoon—My Son, the Prince of Life! I want, as the Lord shall enable me, only to say that which will emphasize this speaking of the Lord.

Are we not all of us conscious of a need? And what shall we say is the great spiritual need of our day? It is certainly not of more religion, more meetings, more churches or assemblies; not more of that. It is not even of more reading of the Word of God, precious and important as that may be. This is a day of great weakness among the people of God, and though it may be true that the Word of God has been neglected, there is a good deal of the reading of the Word of God. Perhaps there is more reading of the Word of God in the earth as a whole than ever there has been. That is not the need; it is of something more than that. Is it then of more prayer? Well, there is a sense in which you can never have too much prayer, and yet among certain of the Lord's children a good amount of prayer goes on. What is the supreme need, in spite

of all that there may be of these other things? We look at one another and say, This is a day of need, a day of lack, something ought to happen, something must happen, we cannot go on like this! And what is the need? Is it not all bound up in that short, but most expressive and embracing word, life? More life: that is the need. And the Lord points us to His Son, and says in effect, Here is the life, the fulness of life; My Son is the Author of life, the Prince of life: and our need is somehow or other to receive the flow, no, the streams of life which ought to be flowing, which in one sense are flowing, from the risen Lord, but which are so little known. The Lord has provided inclusively, fully, all-sufficiently for the world, the whole world, for His Church, for every phase and aspect of need, every problem that arises, every circumstance; He has provided for them all by one inclusive solution, and that is His Son in terms of life.

When the Lord came into this earth, that was the issue all the time. Men began to say, What is this that has come to us? a new prophet, a new teacher? Yes, perhaps that will help us—a new teaching! It will not, dear friend. New light on the past, new light on the future, a righting of the things that seem to be out of place in our national life, a reproving of evil, an adjusting, a laying down of new laws, new ways and modes of behaviour and living: that was not how Jesus Christ came. We open our Gospels and we find that this was immediately the issue, that God had come down to offer to men new life; a different kind of life, His own life, eternal life; and as we read on through the Gospels, it becomes again and again the one issue of the presence of Christ that those who receive Him have life. God sent His Son into the world that men should not perish, but through Him have everlasting life. "He that believeth on the Son hath life" (John iii. 36); "...is past out of death into life" (John v. 24); "I am come that they might have life" (John x. 10); "Ye will not come to me, that ye

may have life" (John v. 40). Instead of an approach to some more outward and particular aspect of people's condition, the Lord came to get to the very heart of man, and His presence and His offer was to impart at the very root and source of the being of those who would believe on Him a new kind of life that would solve all their problems. Thus when He, the Prince of Life, had been slain, and by the power of God raised from the dead, that was the burden of the Apostles' message all the time. Their word was a word of life; and those who repented, repented unto life; and those who believed, believed because they were ordained to eternal life (Acts xiii. 48).

Now that is just the very simplest elementary approach to the whole matter of salvation; but it is not only that. It is basic to the whole question of God's will for man, and His provision for man, and His purpose for man. He has made it all, given it all in His dear Son in terms of life, and we only know the will of God, and do the will of God, in the measure in which the life of Christ is known within us. That brings us immediately to this passage which I have read from John, in which our Lord stands in the midst as a contrast to the best that earth can provide, as God's answer to a need which was not being met, as God's provision for the fulfilment of His desire and purpose for His people. I want us to think of our Lord, the Prince of Life, and see if we can see in Him something of what it means that God meets every need, provides for all His will, solves every problem, by life.

A Distinctive Life

First of all, this life is a distinctive life, it is quite different in kind. When the Lord Jesus stood forth in that assembly on the last great day of the feast, He stood there as something in absolute contrast to everything around. How different He was from everybody else! And yet if you came to seek to diagnose the difference between Jesus Christ and the other people around Him, it was not easy to discover what that difference was. It was not a difference merely of creed, that they believed one thing and He believed another. That was not the nature of this difference at all. It was not that He was different in His manners, that they did some things and He did things differently, in His dress, in His speech. That was not the difference. Occasionally men were struck by the sense of the difference as it appeared to them in some particular manifestation; and yet while He was so different from them, He was so like them. It was given to John afterward by the Spirit to lay his finger upon the essential difference, distinctiveness, of Jesus Christ as apart from all others; and He says, "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life" (1 John i. 1). That is the difference. We have found the difference between Jesus Christ and everybody else! It was not just that He had a different look about Him, and different words, and different ways. That is quite likely, but they were not outward things.

ways of life, that He adopted in order to be different. They were the expression of a great fact, and that was that, when He came, He came as One in Whom was a different kind of life. Therein lies the distinctiveness of Jesus Christ from all others.

Here were a people gathered together in the temple on the last great day of the feast. The Lord Jesus stood boldly out into their midst, and cried with a loud voice, If it is life you need, you must come to Me; only in Me is there life!

Now you may look upon that last great day of the feast if you like as being the culmination—as it was theoretically, and ought to have been—the culmination of a blessed series of the setting forth by feasts of God's goodness to His people, and His love. They had gone through the year, they had set forth the blessed wonders of God's gracious, redeeming love to them, and power and provision for them, and they had come to the last feast, the feast of great joy and rejoicing, the feast of the tabernacles, and they had come to the last great day of the last feast, the culmination of everything. Well, even if that were so, that was only in the realm of shadows, and the Lord Jesus would say to them, If you are moving in that way in search of life, the next step is to come to Me; I am the fulfilment of all this! But I think perhaps it was rather by way of contrast. The last great day of the feast was the last full-flooded effort of men to reach the Divine standard and do the Divine will, and the Lord Jesus is virtually saying to them, 'When you have done everything, when you have fulfilled all you can; blow your trumpets, pour out your water, rejoice as you may, you are a dying people, and in the midst of a dying world, and the last great day of your feast has come and you have nothing to give them, and you have nothing for yourselves. If any man thirst, even though he has been to the feasts, even though he has come to the last great day of the feast, if any man thirst, let him turn aside from that, leave it and come to Me, for I have life'. How different the Lord Jesus is, how different from everybody else and everything else, and how blessedly can He meet the needs of the human heart when none other can!

Now, if that is true of the Lord Jesus, it is true of His life. It is a distinctive life, it is different. You know it would be nice for us to feel that the world was full of people and that out of them there were those who were extra good people, extra pleasant people, easy to get on with, kind, gracious, and just the best kind of people that you could ever have, and that they were Christians and the others were not. Well, perhaps it ought to be like that, but it is not like that. The world is divided: there is a distinction, and the Scriptures make that distinction very clear; but in the first place it is not in the outward manifestation, it is in this matter of whether or not we have life. That is the distinction. If we have the Son, we have life; if we have not the Son, we have not life (1 John v. 12), and all the distinction all the time is based upon that, namely, whether or not we have life. This is a different kind of life, and this is the only and yet the full provision that God has to meet our needs.

So, if we begin for ourselves to try to find satisfaction in outward things, we are missing the point. God's provision for us is in an inward thing, in His own life, and there are no other differences permissible. What I mean is this. I may be very much attracted to another person, another man, because we have certain things and ideas and ways in common: nevertheless we are absolutely divided, because I have one life and he has not that life. If that is true, the converse is also true. I may find a person who is very different from me, with whom I do not naturally flow, and with whom I do not see eye to eye; but if I have the same life, there must be no distinctiveness. It is not in outward things, but in the inward matter of life.

Triumphant Life

Well, then, in the second place, this life of the Lord Jesus is triumphant life. If you read the previous part of the chapter, you will find how busily His enemies were engaged in trying to kill Him—the Prince of Life beset by death. It does not need a great deal of imagination, especially in view of what is written in that chapter, to realise that, when the Lord Jesus stepped forth on that great day of the feast, He was stepping forth into an atmosphere of the severest challenge. Why? It was that the earth, though very much active with its own kind of life, is active also with a terrible kind of death, and Christ's life, heavenly life, eternal life, is always challenged by the powers of darkness and of death.

But that is not an unfortunate thing: that is right; because the whole feature of this life is its ability to overcome death. It lives by meeting death and overcoming it. Is not that the case as we survey the life of our Lord Jesus? That was the nature of the eternal life in Him, not that it was something always protected, something always kept apart from every dark and evil and harsh thing, but that it was led out in the midst of every kind of challenge, moral and physical. They tried to kill Him, Satan tried to corrupt Him, and the Lord Jesus triumphed every time. Why? Not because, in answer to prayer, circumstances were changed, but because there was found within Him a life capable of meeting every challenge and triumphing over it.

Now we have so often been misled into feeling that, once we are Christians and have this precious thing, Divine life, in us, then the Lord will do wonderful things just to keep us quietly shut in and delivered from the problems that other people have to face. We have quoted Psalms to vindicate our thoughts. "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee" (Psa. xci. 7). The Lord will hide you, the Lord will keep you! How is the Lord solving our problems? (and this, mark you, is where we begin). He is seeking to bring us into a place where our problems are solved, not by some outward work of His to shut us in and keep us safe, but by the triumph of Christ's life within us. It is a triumphant life that we have. It is not a misfortune to be a Christian and have eternal life,

though, God forgive us, we have often looked upon it like that. It is a triumphant life. There is nothing in earth or hell that can quench this life. Christ is the Prince of Life, and when we come as He bids us—"If any man thirst, let him come unto me"—when we come and drink and receive of His life, it is not merely some little drop of water, as it were, to keep a dying man in existence for a few more hours: it is a draft of invigorating, living water that makes us capable of facing the world, if necessary, of facing even the Devil, and triumphing. Why? Because we have come unto Him to drink. Ah, but my knowledge of the Lord is not sufficient for me to face this! Well, come to Him again and drink more.

"If any man thirst..." I take it that our Lord, when He used that phrase, meant to express the deepest sense of human need as well as of desire. It is an awful thing to thirst; but in this case it is a blessed thing if thirst brings us to Him for His life. True, He went to the Cross; they killed the Prince of Life, and they have killed many of His servants; but what happened? God raised Him from the dead. It is that kind of life: it cannot be killed; it must triumph; it does triumph. This is what I do feel we need to get hold of, this fact, that that is the way God has solved, and is going to solve, all our problems and meet all our needs, namely, by Christ's life within us, by this princely life, this triumphant life, this throne life.

When our Lord Jesus was here, the whole age-long matter of that awful conflict between life and death was focused down on to Him. Life is not a vague, general thing of the atmosphere, and nor is death. Life has found its expression in a Man; and death focused its forces upon a Man, and the Lord Jesus became a veritable battle-ground. Praise God, when the issue, when the battle, is between life and death, there is no doubt about the outcome. This is a life which quenches death, which swallows up death, which is triumphant over death, and all the experiences of the Lord Jesus were to demonstrate that, to affirm that.

And the same thing is true of His saints. We are not called upon to sit down and dream about a strange, vague, unreal world of death, and feel that somehow by prayer or thinking, or some attitude of our hearts or minds, we are going to project into that strange, unseen, distant world of death something as strange and unseen and distant called life, and away there in the distance in a general, vague way life and death meet, and life triumphs over death. It is not like that. It becomes focused down to human lives, to our lives; to human circumstances, our circumstances, and death in a thousand forms, in a multitude of ways, overtakes us as it overtook Him: with this difference, that in Him there was such a fullness of life that death came all from the outside. With us so often there is such a mixture that it is difficult to determine how much is from the outside and how much within. But the issue is just the same and the way of victory is just the same, namely, by a life which is triumphant over death. The Lord Jesus,

when He stood forth on that day, stood as One Who had a distinctive life to offer, a triumphant life.

An Outflowing Life

There is one more feature of that life which is extremely important. I can only describe it in these words, as an outflowing life. He did not say, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink, and as he believes on Me and drinks, he will be satisfied and be comforted, be strengthened, will be made holy. He did not say that, though all that is true. He said this: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me...out of him shall flow rivers of living water". That is a condition to this life, a feature of this life. It is always flowing out. What was the matter with the Jews, with the Temple? Why was everything there so dead, even on the last great day of the feast? Because that was a Dead Sea, a stagnant pool. They took their water from Siloam and poured it out, a symbol of blessed spiritual truth. But actually what was happening was that they poured everything into Jerusalem, everything into themselves, and that is why they were dead; and that always means death to the saints, *always*. In our physical bodies, as we know so well, life must mean movement, must mean flow. The heart receives blood to pump it out again, and the whole of our physical being is one tremendous scene of activity; life flows.

I wonder what our Lord means by "thirst". Does He mean, if any man is thirsty for himself, or, if any man thirsts for others? He means it all, it is all included. Let us go back to our Lord Himself again, for His is the life which we receive when we are His. What a blessed, what an exquisitely wonderful balance with Him between the greatest carefulness to maintain His walk with God and the most utter disregard of Himself in His concern for others. There

is a concern for others which virtually says, Never mind what happens to me, my life with the Lord, my prayer, as long as I can be busy meeting other souls! That is all wrong. You cannot keep other people's vineyards and neglect your own. You must take heed to yourself first. You never find the Lord Jesus careless of His own life because of the great need everywhere; but nor do you find the Lord, as I am afraid He finds many of us, always trying to lay hold of spiritual life and light, and understanding, and power, and energy, and blessing, to bring it into some stagnant pool of ours, as if God's purpose will be realised when we have obtained an accumulation of Divine life. No, no, no, no! "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me...out of him shall flow..." Divine life must flow. That was the case with our Lord, and that must be the case with us. It is a necessity, it is a condition. Just as this life must be challenged in order to overcome, so it must have demands put upon it to the meeting of other need in order to receive fresh flow from heaven. It is a Divine necessity. He is the Prince of Life.

Dear friends, we are surrounded and faced by an unprecedented need, whether in the realm of those who know not Christ or in the realm of God's own people in spiritual weakness. There is only one answer to their need, and it is not doctrine; it is not new light and understanding about the truths of Scripture. Their need is life. But, blessed be God, He is the Prince of Life. There is abundant life in Him. Oh that our hearts might be so moved with true thirst, that, coming to Him and drinking, rivers may flow. That is what the Prince of Life means. Rightly apprehended, rightly known, it means the rivers of the water of life flow. They flowed out from Eden in all directions. They flow out from Christ. They may flow out from us. God grant it! H.F.

The School of Christ

No. 5.

The Light of Life

"And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shined with his glory. And the glory of Jehovah came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. And the Spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court: and, behold, the glory of Jehovah filled the house" (Ezekiel xliii. 2, 4-5).

"Then he brought me by the way of the north gate before the house; and I looked, and, behold, the glory of Jehovah filled the house of Jehovah: and I fell upon my face" (Ezekiel xlv. 4).

"And he brought me back unto the door of the house: and, behold, waters issued out from

under the threshold of the house eastward (for the forefront of the house was toward the east); and the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house, on the south of the altar" (Ezekiel xlvii. 1).

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John i. 4).

"Again therefore Jesus spake unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John viii. 12).

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3).

"When I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John ix. 5).

"Now there were certain Greeks among those that went up to worship at the feast: these therefore came to Philip, who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: Andrew cometh, and Philip, and they tell Jesus. And Jesus answereth them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit" (John xii. 20-24).

"I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in the darkness" (John xii. 46).

"...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" (II Cor. iv. 4).

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might..." (Eph. i. 17-19).

The Light of Life! Before coming to a closer consideration of this matter of the light of life, may I just ask a simple but very direct question? Can we all say with truth of heart that we are really concerned to be in God's purpose; to know what that purpose is, and to be found in it? Everything depends upon whether we have such a concern. It is a practical matter. It should immediately swing us clear of just being interested in truth and increasing our knowledge or information about spiritual things. As we look into our own hearts at this moment—and let us do so, each one of us—can we really say that there is a genuine and strong desire to be in the purpose, the great eternal purpose of God? Are we prepared to commit ourselves to the Lord in relation to that in an utter transaction, by which we now have an understanding with Him that He will stand at nothing so far as we are concerned to secure us in His eternal purpose, whatever it may cost? As the Lord's people, is that what lies behind our being here to-night? Are we ready to just pause and face that, and get right into line with God's end? I know that some of you are there, and that for you there is not much need of exercise about it, but it is quite likely there are some who have taken things pretty much for granted. That is to say, they are Christians, they are believers, they belong to the Lord, they are saved, they put their faith in Christ, they have had association with Christian institutions and matters for so long, perhaps even from infancy.

Well, it is to such that I make this appeal at the outset. Here in God's Word that very phrase is used repeatedly—"according to his eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus before the world was". Is that the thing which stands foremost on our horizon or is it something remote, dim, in the background? Well, I press this, because we must have something upon which to work. God must have something upon which to work, and if that is the position, then we can go on, and there will be a drawing out of revelation as to that purpose and the way of it. But unless we are in some quite positive position and attitude about it, you will hear a lot of things said to-night and they will simply be things said, more or less of account to you.

The Purpose of God

Well now, given that there is that concern, at least in some measure, which justifies our going on, we ask, What is the purpose of God? What is God's end? And I think it can be put in one way amongst others. We can say that God's purpose is that there shall come a time when He has a vessel in which and through which His glory shines forth to this universe. We see that intimated in the case of new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, having the glory of God, her light like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal. "Having the glory of God"! That is the end which God has in view for a people; to be in a spiritual sense to His universe of spiritual intelligences what the sun is to this universe; that the very nations shall walk in the light thereof; no need of sun, no need of moon, for there is no night; and that is only saying that God wills to have a people full of light, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. That is the end, and God begins to move toward that end immediately a child of His is born from above; for that very birth, a new birth from above, is the scattering of the darkness and the breaking in of the light.

All along our way in the School of Christ, the Holy Spirit is engaged upon this one thing, to lead us more and more and more into the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, that we shall be moving more and more into the light, that it shall be true in our case that "the path of the just is as a shining light which shineth more and more unto the mid-day, the perfect day" (Proverbs iv. 18). A lot of people have thought—and, thinking so, have been disappointed—that that means it is going to get easier and easier, brighter and brighter, the more cheerful as we go on. But it does not work out in that way. I do not see it to be true in the circumstances and outward condition of saints anywhere at any time. For them the path does not become brighter and brighter outwardly. Is there any saint here who says that it does? But if we are really moving under the Spirit's government, we can say with the strongest affirmation, that in an inward way the light is growing. The path is growing brighter and brighter; we are seeing and

seeing and seeing. That is God's purpose; until the time comes when there is no darkness at all, and no shadow at all, and no mist at all, but all is light, perfect light: we see not through a glass darkly, but face to face, we know even as we are known. That is God's purpose put in a certain way. Does that interest you? Are you concerned with that?

And, beloved, that has a crisis, has its beginning, and is a process in spiritual life with a glorious climax in rapture. What I am concerned with especially tonight is the process. We shall have to touch on the crisis as the beginning, but it is the process that is really my concern, because I take it that by far the greater majority of those present are the Lord's children. If there is one here who is not the Lord's child, there will be a word for you. It is all for you. We shall trust that we shall just touch your position as we go on.

We read in Ezekiel about the glory of the Lord coming and filling the House, and we have been seeing in previous meditations that the Lord Jesus is that House. He is the great Bethel of God on Whom the angels ascend and descend, in Whom God is found in Whom God speaks (the place of the oracle), in Whom is the Divine authority, the final word. He is the House, and the glory of the Lord is in Him, the light of God is in Him.

The Place of the Shekinah Glory

Looking back at that tabernacle or that temple of old where the Shekinah glory was found we mark that that light, that glory which linked heaven and earth like a ladder, had its expression in the Most Holy Place. You know that in the Holy of Holies, everything was curtained around and over, excluding every bit of natural light, so that the place, entered into apart from the Shekinah, would have been black darkness, without light at all; but entered into as it was while the glory rested upon it, it was all light, it was all Divine light, heavenly light, the light of God. And that Most Holy Place sets forth the inner life of the Lord Jesus, His Spirit where God is found, the light from heaven, the light of what God is in Him. He is the Most Holy Place, His Spirit is the Most Holy Place, in the holy House of God, and it was there in that Most Holy Place where the light of the glory was, that God said He would commune with His people through their representative. "I will commune with you above the mercy seat between the cherubim" (Ex. xxv. 22). The place of communion—"I will commune." What a lovely word—"commune". There is nothing hard, nothing terrible, nothing fearful about that. "I will commune with you." This is mutual communing. The very word itself dismisses anything that is one sided. It is mutual. It is the place where God speaks; in the communion God speaks, makes Himself known. It is the place of speaking. It is called the place of the oracle, the place of the speaking; and that is the Propitiatory, the Mercy Seat, and that is all the Lord Jesus. He, we are told, has been set forth by God to be a propitiatory (Rom. iii. 25). and in Him God communes with

His people. In Him God speaks to and with His people.

But the underlining must be of those words "*in Him*," for there is no communion with God, no communion of God, no speaking to be heard, no meeting at all, save in Christ. That would be a place of death and destruction for the natural man: hence the terrible warnings given about coming into that place without the right equipment, that symbolic equipment which spoke of the natural man having been altogether set aside and another heavenly Man having enfolded him as with heavenly robes, the robes of righteousness. Only so dare he enter into that place: otherwise it was "lest he die ..."

If you want to know exactly how that works out, come over to the New Testament and take up the story of the journey of Saul of Tarsus to Damascus. He says, "At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun ... and I heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And when we were all fallen to the ground ..." Then you will remember how they lifted him up and led him into the city, because he was without sight. By the mercy of God, he was without sight only for three days and three nights. God commissioned Ananias to go and visit that blinded man, and say to him, "Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight." Saul of Tarsus would have been a blind man to the end of his life. That is the effect of a natural man encountering the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It is destruction. There is no place for the natural man in the presence of that light; it would be death. But in John viii. we have those words, "the light of *life*," over against the darkness of death. Well, in Christ Jesus the natural man is regarded as having been entirely put away. There is no place for him there.

No Place for the Natural Man

That means that the natural man cannot come into the light and cannot have the light, cannot see the light, cannot come into God's great purpose and be found in that House full of His glory, that vessel through which He is going to manifest that glory to His universe. The natural man cannot come in there: and when we speak about the natural man, we are not just referring to the unsaved man, that is, the man who has never come to the Lord Jesus. We are speaking about the man whom God has reckoned put aside altogether.

Now, the Apostle Paul had to speak to Corinthian believers along these lines, converted people, saved people, who had a knowledge of Christ, but who were enamoured of this world's wisdom and this world's power, that is, of natural wisdom, knowledge, and the strength that comes by it, and whose disposition or inclination was to try to seek to take hold of Divine things and analyse them and investigate them, and probe into them along the lines of natural wisdom and understanding, philosophy, the philosophy and

wisdom of this world. So they were bringing the natural man to bear upon Divine things, and the Apostle wrote to them, and in their own language he said, "Now" the man of soul (not the unregenerate man, not the man who has never had a transaction with the Lord Jesus on the basis of His atoning work for salvation; no, not that man) "the man of soul receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them" (I Cor. ii. 14). The man of the psuche, that is the natural man. The newest of our sciences is psychology, the science of the soul: and what is psychology? It has to do with the mind of man, the science of man's mind; and here is the word now, and I am paraphrasing this because this is exactly what it means—Now the science of the mind can never receive the things of the Spirit of God, neither can it know them. This man is very clever, very intellectual, very highly trained, with all his natural senses brought to a high state of development and acuteness, yet this man is outside when it comes to knowing the things of God; he cannot, he is outside. For the first glimmer of the knowledge of God a miracle has to be wrought, by which blind eyes which never have been given sight, and by which light comes as by a flash of revelation, so that it can be said, "Blessed art thou ... for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven."

This is stating a tremendous fact. Every bit of real light which is in the direction of that ultimate effulgence, the revealing of the glory of God in us and through us, every bit of it is in Christ Jesus, and can only be had in Him on the basis of the natural man having been altogether put outside, put away, and a new man having been brought into being with a new set of spiritual faculties: so that a Nicodemus, the best product of the religious school of his day and of his world, is told, "Except a man be born anew (or from above), he cannot see ..." He cannot see. Well, it resolves itself into this, that to know even the first letters of the Divine alphabet we must be in Christ, and every bit that follows is a matter of learning Christ, knowing what it means to be in Christ.

How We Get the Light of Life

(a) The Crisis

That brings us to this question, which I trust will be even more helpful in the answer given. What is the way into Christ, or how do we get the light of life? Well, the answer is, of course, briefly, to have the light we have to have the life. This light is the light of life. It is the product of life. All Divine light, true light from God, is living light. It is never theoretical light, mere doctrinal light, it is living light. And how do we get this light of life?

Well, we have these two things brought very much before us in this Gospel by John, namely, Christ in us, and we in Christ. The Lord has given us a beautiful illustration of what that means, and that illustration we have read in Chapter xii. What is it to be in Christ? What is it to have Christ in us? What is it to be in the life and in the light? What is it to have the life and the light in us? Well, here it is. There

is life in that grain of wheat, but it is just one single grain. I want to get the life that is in that single grain into a whole host of grains, enough grains to cover the earth. How shall I do it? Well, the Lord says, put it into the ground: let it fall into the earth and die; let it fall into the dark earth, and let the earth cover it over. What happens? It immediately begins to disintegrate, to fall apart, to yield itself up, as to its own individual and personal life alone. Presently a shoot begins to break through the earth and up the stalk comes, and eventually there is an ear, a heavy ear, of grains of wheat; and if I could actually see life and look into those grains of wheat, I should see that life which was in the one in every one of them. Then I sow that ear, be it one hundred grains I sow, and I get a thousand or ten thousand; and I sow them again, and they are multiplied a hundred or a thousandfold until the earth is full; and if I could look with a magnifying glass into every one of those millions and millions of grains, and life was something visible to the eye, I should see that that same original life was the life of every one of them. That is the answer.

How does this life get into us, this light of life? The Lord Jesus says that death must take place, a death to what we are in ourselves, a death to our own life, a death to a life apart from Him. We must go down with Him into death, and there, under the act of the Spirit of God in union with Christ buried, there is a transmission of His life to us, and He, coming up no longer merely as a single grain of wheat, comes up a hundredfold in everyone of us. It is the miracle that is going on every year in the natural realm, and it is just exactly the principle by which the Lord gets into us. You see the necessity of our ceasing to have a life apart from the Lord, the necessity of our letting that life of ours go absolutely. That is a crisis at the beginning, a real crisis. Sooner or later, it has to be a crisis.

Some of you are saying, I have not had that crisis. For me becoming a Christian was a very, very simple thing. I simply was as a child taught, or at sometime I simply expressed my personal faith in the Lord Jesus in some way, and from that time I belonged to the Lord; I am a Christian! Is your path a shining light growing brighter and brighter unto the perfect day? Are you moving on in the growing fulness of the revelation of the Lord Jesus? Are you? Have you an open heaven? Is God in Christ revealing Himself to you in ever greater wonder and fulness? Is He? I am not saying that you do not belong to the Lord Jesus, but I am saying to you that the unalterable basis of an open heaven is a grave, and a crisis at which you come to an end of your own self-life. It is the crisis of real experimental identification with Christ in His death, not now for your sins, but as you. Your open heaven depends upon that. It is a crisis. And so with not one or two in this place to-night. The truth is this, that they were the Lord's children; they knew Christ, they were saved, they had no doubt about that; but then the time came when the Lord the Light of Life, showed to them that He not only,

died to bear their sins in His Body on the tree, but He Himself represented them in the whole total of their natural life, to put it aside. It was the man, and not only his sins, that went to the Cross. That man is you, that man is me, and many, after years of being Christians, have come to that tremendous crisis of identification with Christ as men, as women, as a part of the human race; not only as sinners, but as a part of a race; natural men, not unregenerate, but natural men, all that we are in our natural life. Many have come to that crisis, and from that time everything has been on a vast, a greater scale than ever before in the Christian life. There has been the open heaven, the enlarged vision, the light of life in a far greater way.

How does it come about? Just like that, and that crisis is a crisis for us all. If you have not had that crisis, you ask the Lord about it. Mark you, if you are going to have that transaction with the Lord, you are asking for something, you are asking for trouble; for, as I said before, this natural man dies hard; he clings tenaciously, he does not like being put aside. Look at that grain of wheat. When it has fallen into the ground, look at what happens to it. Do you think it is pleasant? What is happening? It is losing its own identity. You cannot recognise it. Take it out and have a look at it. Is this that lovely little grain of wheat I put into the ground? What an ugly thing it has become! It has lost all its own identity, lost its own cohesiveness; it is all falling to pieces. How ugly! Yes, that is what death does. This death of Christ as it is wrought in us breaks up our own natural life. It scatters it, pulls it to pieces, takes all its beauty away. We begin to discover that, after all, there is nothing in us but corruption. That is the truth. Falling apart, we are losing all that beauty that was there from the natural point of view, perhaps, as men saw it. It is no pleasant thing to fall into the ground and die. That is what happens.

"But if it die..." "If we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him" (Romans vi. 8). We shall share His life, take another life, and then a new form is given, a new life; not ours, but His. It is a crisis. I do urge upon you to have real dealings with the Lord about this matter. But if you do, expect what I have said, expect that you are going to fall to pieces, expect that the beauty you thought was there will be altogether marred; expect to discover that you are far more corrupt than ever you thought you were; expect that the Lord will bring you to a place where you cry, Woe is me for I am undone! But then the blessing that will come will just be this—O Lord, the best thing that can happen for me is that I shall die! And the Lord will say, That is exactly what I have been working at, I cannot glorify that corruption. "This corruptible must put on incorruption" (I Cor. xv. 53), and that incorruption is the germ of that Divine life in the seed which yields its own life up, that is transmitted from Him. God is not going to glorify this humanity. He is going to make us like Christ's glorious body in order that we may be glorified. That is far too deep and too much

ahead, but our point is that there has to be this crisis if we are coming to the glory, God's end.

(b) The Process

Then there is going to be a process. The Lord Jesus said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me," and in so saying He was not wrong in principle. That the Cross is something taken up or entered into once for all is true, as to the crisis in which we say, Lord we accept once for all what the Cross means! But we are going to find that after the crisis, the all-inclusive crisis, that day by day the Cross has to be adhered to, and the Cross is working out in those afflictions and sufferings which the Lord is allowing to come upon His people. He has put you in a difficult situation in His sovereignty; a difficult home situation, a difficult business situation, a difficult physical situation a difficult situation with some relation. Beloved, that is the outworking of the Cross in your experience, in order to make a way for the Lord Jesus to have a larger place. It is going to make a way for His patience, the patience of Jesus. It is going to make a way for the endurance of Christ. It is going to make a way for the love of Christ. It is going to make a way for Him: and you have not to go to your knees every morning and say, Oh, Lord, get me out of this home, get me out of this business, get me out of this difficulty! you are to say, Lord, if this is the Cross in its expression for me to-day, I take it up to-day. Facing the situation like that, you will find there is strength, there is victory, the co-operation of the Lord, and there is fruit and not barrenness. It is in that sense that the Lord was right in principle in making the Cross a daily experience. "Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple," one of My taught ones, one learning Me! So that the taking up of this difficulty, whatever it be, day by day is the very way in which I am learning Christ, and it is the process of light, the light of life, coming to know, coming to see, coming into the fulness. You and I can never see and know apart from the Cross. The Cross has to clear the ground of this natural life. The Lord knows what we would do if He lifted away the Cross from us every day. I wonder what we would do.

It may not just be the later New Testament phraseology or way of putting it to speak of our daily cross, bearing my cross daily. The principle may more truly be that it is the Cross which is given to Him and becomes mine daily. That may be true, but it just works out this way. If the Lord lifted that which is the expression of the Cross for us day by day and took it off our shoulders, it would not be for our good. It would at once clear the way for the uprising of the natural life. You can see when people begin to get a bit of relief from trial. How they throw their weight about! They get on stilts, they are looking down on you; you are wrong, they are right. Pride, self-sufficiency, all comes up. Is that right? Well, then, what about Paul? I look up to Paul as a giant spiritually. We are puppets beside that man spiritually, and yet, beloved, Paul, spiritual giant that he was,

humbly confessed that the Lord sent him a messenger of Satan to buffet him, a stake through his flesh, lest he should be exalted above measure. Yes, spiritual giants can exalt themselves if the Lord does not see to it and take precautions, and in order to keep the way of that great revelation opened and clear, that it might grow and grow, the Lord said, Paul, I must keep you down very low, very much under limitation; it is the only way: immediately you begin to get up, Paul, you are going to limit the light, to spoil the revelation.

Well, there is the principle. The light of life. It is His life: and so again the Apostle says,

“Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, *that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body*” (II Cor. iv. 10).

His life is what we need, and with the life comes the light. It is light by life. There is no other real Divine light, only that which comes out of His life within us,

and it is His death wrought in us that clears away for His life.

I must close there. See again God's end; light, glory, the fulness coming in. It is in Christ. The measure of the light, the measure of the glory, is going to be the measure of Christ and the measure of Christ is going to depend entirely upon what space the Lord can find for Himself in us; and, for space to be made for Him, we must come to the place where the utterness of the setting aside of the self-life has been accomplished: and that takes a whole lifetime. But, blessed be God, there is the glorious climax, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be marvelled at in all them that believe. Marvelled at! Having the glory of God! Oh, may something of the light of that glory fall upon our hearts now to encourage and comfort us in the way, to strengthen our hearts to on in the knowledge of His Son, for His Name's sake.

T.A.S.

Worship—Resurrection—Fellowship

READING: 2 Corinthians i. 3-11; iv; 6-16.

“And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son: so they went both of them together” (Gen. xxii. 5-8).

In these verses we have three great features of the Christian life brought together. (1) Worship—“I, and the lad will go yonder and worship.” (2) Resurrection—“and come again to you.” (3) Fellowship—“So they went—both of them—together.” If we are walking according to Christ, living by His life, these three things are our present experience, and in that order. We worship by the Spirit of God, find our fellowship on resurrection ground with the Father and with the Son, and with the Lord's people also.

Three times in Holy Writ, Abraham is called “the Friend of God.” What a description! But he was not thus called at the beginning of his new career, nor during the long, trying, testing years of his pilgrimage while he waited for the promise of a seed to be fulfilled. True it is written that “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness,” but it was not until forty years of faithful obedience, and more or less patient waiting had passed, that faith was strengthened through much testing to the point where the promise could be fulfilled. When he was ninety and nine years of age, God appeared to

him again and renewed the promise, and it is written, “Under utterly hopeless circumstances, he hopefully believed” (Rom. iv, 18. Weymouth). But not even yet is he called God's friend. Isaac is born, and at last he has a son “according to promise”: and now that son becomes the occasion of a more severe test of faith than any that had preceded it. “Take now thy son, thine only son, WHOM THOU LOVEST; even Isaac ... and offer him for a burnt offering ...” And, according to James, it was only when that supreme and awful test had been triumphantly passed through that he is called the Friend of God (James ii, 21-23).

We pause then to watch father and son moving toward Mount Moriah; and Isaac says, Father, we have the fire and the wood, but no lamb has been provided for the burnt offering. Abraham makes the beautifully simple response, “My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.” Then follows that lovely phrase: “So they went—both of them—together.” The father and the son, moving in a spirit of worship, through death unto resurrection, in true fellowship. That is what we have in this story.

Before we seek to indicate some of the lessons it has for our hearts, let us stay to catch the significance of it in the life of Abraham. Think of what the command of God must have meant to him. Yet, with all the heartache and agony it involved, it is written, “And Abraham rose up EARLY IN THE MORNING; and went ...” Then on the journey you have this fragrant and beautiful incident. I want us to see that father and son were moving in a spirit of worship. Although the Lord had laid this desolating command upon Abraham, he has a worshipping heart, and he is going to the mount to worship God. Yea, he is moving all the time in a sweet and blessed fellowship

with God. That fellowship also finds an echo in the relationship of father and son, for although the father cannot reveal the full truth to the son, it is nevertheless recorded, "So they went—both of them—together." Behind all is the tremendous faith of this man who supremely believed in God and was coming to know Him in experience as the God of resurrection.

The Three Features are Permanent Principles of Life in and with God

Now Divine principles do not change with passing time. God's methods may, and do, often vary: His principles of action abide; and when He is seeking instruments for the accomplishment of His purposes, He first brings those chosen into a knowledge of, and fellowship with, Himself. **THERE MUST BE A WALKING TOGETHER.** Having brought them in some measure into fellowship with Himself, He will lead them through progressive experiences of death into the power of resurrection. If God has some great purpose in hand, something for which He needs the co-operation of His servants on earth, having brought them into intelligent fellowship with Himself upon the basis of revelation and faith, He will lead them by ways marked by ever-growing faith into experiences of resurrection life and power. This is an almost invariable mark of the Holy Spirit's dealing with a situation. Those who are being used by God know this experience of death issuing in resurrection. Observe how that principle was worked out in the life of the Apostle Paul in increasing measure as He pressed on to the goal. His life had all through been one long process of the working of death leading to resurrection. And, of all the servants of God, perhaps Paul has had a more profound influence on the Christian Church than any other throughout the dispensation.

It is surely manifest that God cannot lead us into an experience of resurrection fulness, save as we are in fellowship with Him. Like Enoch, we *must* be walking with God. That fellowship will find its first expression on our side in worship. Fellowship with God surely *must* have as its first issue worship. How is it possible for a man to be walking with God unless his heart is going out to God in a constant stream of adoring praise. That is illustrated all through the Word. Hear Paul in Romans i.9—"God ... Whom I serve with the worship of my spirit, in proclaiming the Glad-tidings of His Son" (Conybeare). It is growing upon me that we need to know more of that side of Christian service, where the service is the outcome and expression of the heart's worship. Our spirits need to be maintained in that fellowship with God which issues in adoration. Of course there is always abundant cause for thanksgiving, and for praising and blessing His Name. Yet how little we know of that spontaneous uprising of our hearts to God in appreciation of Christ. True service flows out of that. Paul says, in effect, When I am proclaiming the Gospel, I am worshipping God Who is the author of the Gospel. And so we are not surprised to find these outbursts of praise, these breakings through of ador-

ation, these upspringings of his heart in loyalty and love. He will deal with Divine Sovereignty and give you a treatise on Election and man's responsibility in relation to God as Sovereign, and at the end he will burst forth with: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past tracing out! ... For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be the glory for ever." That is not the utterance of a man sitting down to write a laborious treatise on a tremendous subject, but the overflowing of a heart so inspired with the spirit of worship that it cannot contain itself. That is characteristic of Paul.

"The Blessed Unoffended"

Of course, this means that he was of those whom someone has strikingly called "the blessed unoffended." Notwithstanding all the difficulty of the road, all the pain of the way, all the suffering he endured, notwithstanding those baffling experiences which could find no human explanation—he was longing to come to Rome to preach the Gospel in the world's metropolis, that he might have fruit amongst the saints there, but was continually hindered, his way was hedged up—notwithstanding all that he endured, he never lost his fellowship with God. The trials of the way, the constant death attacks, never pressed his spirit out of harmony with God. He was always walking in a fellowship which found expression on his side in adoration. It is a great place to come to, where you can be maintained in an enjoyed fellowship through all the perplexities of life; and it is the perplexities that try more than anything else. If you recognise that you are up against the powers of darkness, and the Devil is across your path, blocking your progress, you know what to do. But when things simply go wrong, when there is no explanation, when you have taken your position in Christ and claimed the victory of Calvary and have stood into all Christ is and all that He has accomplished; when you have done everything you know, having travailed in prayer again and again, and still nothing is going right, you are baffled, bewildered, beaten, broken: then the question is, are you offended with the Lord or are you still worshipping Him because of His inscrutable wisdom and fathomless love. Think for a moment of John the Baptist. He foretold his own eclipse, "He must increase, but I must decrease." He had exercised a marvellous ministry, seen the heavens opened and the Spirit descending like a dove upon the Lord, borne his magnificent testimony to the Divine Sonship of Jesus, had exclaimed "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world"—the Lord said of him, "Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist"—and yet when he did decrease; when, kept in prison because of his faithfulness, he heard that the Lord was carrying on His ministry, that multitudes were flocking to Him, while he, the forerunner languished in the dungeon, he was stumbled, and sent, asking, "Art thou He that cometh, or look

we for another?" His faith passed into eclipse for a time. Can we be surprised at it? But the Lord's word to him was, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in me."

Faith's Testing and the Peril of Impatience

Oh, beloved, if we become offended with the Lord, because of His dealings with us, then we lose our fellowship with Him, the spring of spontaneous worship dries up, and we become useless. Go back to Abraham. Recall all the way the Lord had led him. Of course, we can only understand Genesis xxii as we think of it as the climax of a long walk with God. Fifty to sixty years before, God had met him in Ur of the Chaldees. As Stephen says, "The God of Glory appeared to our father Abraham," and in that first revelation of Himself, God promised that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed. Then Abram was taken into a life of testing: testing at every point. God's purposes were delayed for a long time while He was getting rid of those persons Abram had been told to leave behind, but which he had brought out with him. How often we act in a similar way and give God the problem of ridding us of that which is valued by us, but which, nevertheless, cannot serve His purpose. But Abram comes into the land of Canaan, and after a variety of experiences begins to wonder about the promise. In Genesis xv he has a controversy with God. "Behold to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir." The promise is then renewed, but nothing happens. **NOTHING HAPPENS!** That is just the point. Is not that true to life? During those long weeks, and months, and years, when you have been waiting for God, is not that the heart-break? Nothing happens. You come to the Lord's House, get refreshed and encouraged again and again, but the enemy dogs your footsteps with his insistent reminder, "Yes, that is all very good, but you know full well that nothing has really happened, the promise has not been fulfilled."

Then the danger is that we get busy. We are familiar with the tragic record of Genesis xvi. Sarah gets impatient. We know the story. There is no need to recount it. Islam is the result. The Arab problem and the Mohammedan menace is the result of Abram listening to Sarah's voice. We *must* act. We have our part to play. God expects us to use our common-sense. How many problems we have made for God by talking like that. Yet do you wonder Abram listened to his wife's voice? He had been waiting twenty-five years. But there must be further delay. He waits another thirteen years and at long last God gives him the promised seed. Forty years after the first intimation the promise was fulfilled. What holy joy! Well is the child named Isaac (Laughter). God had proved faithful. But it was when all hope on the human side had gone. God fulfilled his promise by the exercise of miraculous power.

The Mature Servant—The Friend of God

Now it was the one who was the fruit of that long,

long experience of faith's testing that Abraham was called to place on the altar. "Take now thy son ... whom thou lovest." God did not spare him even in the way the command was given. He was being tested right out. And Abraham was not offended. He had learned to know God during the waiting years, and by the fact that God had put forth miraculous power in order to keep His word. He was the God Who could do anything, the God of the impossible. If God laid this command upon him, he would trust and not be afraid. God could, and would, give him back even from the dead. So he went forward still worshipping. "I and the lad will go yonder and worship." He will worship with an aching heart. His sorrow is strangely mingled with joy. "We will worship, *and come again to you.*" The God Whom I worship is a God that raiseth the dead! He had learned through deep experience that God was EL SHADDAI, the All-sufficient One. There can arise no situation which will cause His promise to fail. Yes, and more than that, God, by the very processes of pain, discipline and death, will lift the gift on to such a level as to bring it into the heavenly realm where the Eternal Purpose will be served. God did not say anything to his servant about a heavenly fulfilment, but He brought him through to a place where, knowing God as the God of resurrection, he would be the father of a heavenly, as well as an earthly, seed.

The Perfect Exemplar—The Son of God's Love

Of all the types of the Lord Jesus, as Christ, crucified, perhaps this is the most precious. It is all familiar, but it is good to meditate upon it; to look upon that other mount and see that other Father and that other Son moving in a wondrous fellowship. What was in the heart of the Lord Jesus as He moved in sweet fellowship with His Father to Calvary? We must always remember that He was moving through death to resurrection. "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and **HOW AM I STRAIGHTENED** till it be accomplished. Surely Psalm xl. reveals the secret. "Lo, I am come; in the roll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea thy law is within my heart". This, as we know, is quoted in Hebrews x in direct connection with the Cross. Can we not apply the word from Genesis xxii: "So they went—both of them—together". Yes, The Eternal Father and the Son moving together through death, to resurrection, for the accomplishment of a mighty purpose! The type of course breaks down here. Where is the lamb? The Lord Jesus knew from the beginning that He was the Lamb of God; and He says, "Thy law is within my heart". The word translated heart is an exceedingly strong one. Twenty-seven times it is translated "bowels", which means that the innermost being is deeply moved. "I delight to do thy will O my God". That is fellowship of the deepest kind.

The Disciple must be as His Master

Now the Apostle Paul in Romans vi. is bringing

before us the death of the Lord Jesus into which we are baptised, the innermost truth of which is expressed in those words from Psalm xl. The Lord might have said to His Father, 'You are taking me through a terribly difficult way: it is dreadfully hard; is there no other? If not, well I must go; there must be no rebellion'. But it was far from that. That is too often our way of submitting to the Divine will. No, the end is in full view all the time. "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the Cross". "It will mean untold agony, suffering beyond compare; nevertheless I delight..." Oh the mystery of it all. Go into the Garden of Gethsemane. Behold the unspeakable anguish. Yet underneath it all the Lord is in true fellowship with the Father. Yes death is hard, but it is the road to resurrection always, and that means the conquering of death; for resurrection is victory and great liberation.

The Lord is taking us along that way. We are "united with the likeness of His death" (R.V.M.). The same law must operate in us. If we are to be overcomers, delight in the will of God must be the law of our lives. The road will be hard; but what is God doing? As He takes us in hand to make the death of Christ real, actual, vital in our experience, He is bringing us to the place where the curse and all the fruit of sin is rendered inoperative, cancelled out, and where we can live the heavenly life of true fellowship with Himself. What was true of Abraham and Isaac must be true of us. "So they went—both of

them—together." Not only must we be unoffended, but we must be maintained in true fellowship. He must have complete right of way, with our glad consent. "Lord, take me by any road, so long as we walk together. I will worship Thee though Thou dost strip me of everything. I only lose that which militates against that final triumph of life in the power of Thy Resurrection. Lord, we will walk together, and Thou will lead me to the place where death hath no more dominion."

The Lord is preparing a people for the final stages of the great age-long battle. The Manchild is in full view. The foundation of victory is utter yieldedness to Himself. "I beseech you therefore brethren ... that ye present your bodies living sacrifice." The issue is the casting down of the powers of darkness from the heavens. Those who will walk in fellowship with God, who will serve Him in a spirit of worship, who will go all the way with Him and set no limits on what He may do with them, these will be triumphant, because they do not live on the basis of their own resources at all, but on His resurrection life, which has already triumphed and can never more be brought under the power of death.

May we then know what it is to worship the Lord, to walk in fellowship with Him through all the changing experiences of life, knowing "the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death," enjoying the secret of it as we delight in His will and His law is in our heart. S.A.

The Fight of the Faith

No. 3

The Liberty of Sons

"Paul, an apostle (not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead) ... I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but through revelation of Jesus Christ ... it was the good pleasure of God ... to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles; straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood ... but they only heard say, He that once persecuted us now preacheth the faith of which he once made havoc" (Gal. i. 1, 11-12, 15, 23).

In this time together so far, the Lord has directed our attention to that little clause—"the faith." The passages basic to our meditation have been those in the two letters of Paul to Timothy, first his exhortation to Timothy to fight the good fight of the faith, and then his own statement as to himself at the end—"I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith." and it is into something of the meaning and significance of that phrase, "the faith," that we are being led to inquire at this time.

Here it is again in Gal. i. 23—"He that once persecuted us now preacheth the faith of which he once made havoc." What was it that Saul of Tarsus sought to destroy, of which he set himself to make havoc? Well, he was a Jew, and of the Jewish party in Jerusalem, who summed up their charge and accusation against the Lord Jesus in those words—"He made himself the Son of God" (John xix. 7). As we said before, it was not just the coming in of a new and rival religion, but something very much deeper than that, and all that is contained in that designation "the Son of God" (Jesus, the Son of God) is what is meant by "the faith." In a word, it is sonship, and all that sonship means as something that is out from God, and which has come into this world, and which being here, is altogether other than that which is already here: different in nature and different in position, and therefore different in destiny: something in this universe which is unique—sonship.

All the forces of hell, and of this world which lieth in the wicked one, are set against that sonship: in Christ primarily, pre-eminently, and then in those who are begotten of God, sons of God, through faith in Jesus Christ. It is that spiritual reality, that spirit-

ual thing, namely, sonship which is the object and occasion of all this hostility that makes it necessary for believers to fight. The contention is not for a creed, not for a system of truth, not for fundamentalism, but for a spiritual position and a spiritual nature, and for all that sonship means from God's standpoint; and for all that that sonship means from Satan's standpoint. As we said before, wherever we come on this matter of "the faith," we find ourselves at once in very close proximity to the element of conflict. Wherever it is mentioned, nearby there is warfare.

May I just repeat one word said in our previous meditation, when we were thinking about our Lord's words recorded by Luke—"When the Son of man cometh, shall he find the faith on the earth?" (Luke xviii. 8). The question does not relate to what is called in general "the Christian faith." There will be plenty of the Christian faith on the earth. The Lord Jesus would have been a bad prophet, and have had very little foresight, had His question meant that in the day of His appearing there would be very little Christianity on the earth, in that general sense. No, His question went much deeper than that, and it is a very real question, if we recognise that sonship is something which has to be brought to fulness in believers, something which relates to Christ coming to fulness in His own and of His members coming into His fulness, unto that ultimate manifestation of the sons in full growth. If that is the meaning of sonship, then indeed there is room for the question—"Shall he find the faith on this earth?"

That could be put in other words. Shall He find on the earth a people who are really going right on in sonship to the fulness of Christ? And I do not think there is any doubt about the answer. He will certainly find a great many Christians who are not going right on, who have stopped short. It will not be so easy to find those who will go right on.

My trouble this morning is lack of time, and I really do not know where to begin and what to say, because the whole New Testament gathers around this very thing.

The New Testament as a whole—of course, I am referring to the Epistles—the New Testament as a whole just comes right down on this question of who is going on, or who is going to come under this terrible arresting effort of the enemy, in the matter of spiritual growth.

A Legal System Works Against the Faith

When you come to the letter to the Galatians alone—and I am led there very definitely at this time—you know Paul has hardly got through his introductory word before he says, 'I marvel that you are so soon brought to a standstill, that your going on has so quickly been arrested.' The whole letter is on that matter, namely, their arrest, and Paul's urge that they should throw off the thing which has come upon them to arrest them, and go on.

And what is it that has come in to arrest? Well, it is the same thing you find in so many other directions

in the Church of the New Testament times. It is those Judaizers from Jerusalem who were following Paul wherever he went, coming after him and in amongst the fruits of his ministry, his converts, and saying, "Except ye be circumcised, ye cannot be saved," bringing in the old traditional system of religion, a fixed thing, in all its legality, and seeking to impose it upon them. And the tragedy, the shame, the grief of it is this, that it is so infectious that even a Peter can become contaminated; even a Peter, a pillar in the Church, a foremost apostle, a good and godly man, devoted to and serving the Lord. Here in this letter to the Galatians, Paul says, 'Certain came down from James; and Peter was infected, and he compromised, and I withstood him to the face.' That is a terrible passage, a terrible situation. But do you see what it implies? There are few people so good, so high up spiritually, so distinguished for their service to the Lord, and their relationship with the Lord, so few who cannot be infected with this something which works so insidiously against the faith in its essence: good men, godly men, devout men, Peters, men of the first three, touched by this thing that is at work. What is it? A legal system set and fixed, be it Jewish or Christian, which straddles the path of going right on with the Lord to His full thought, which just comes right in the way of all that sonship means.

For you see how the Apostle leads right off on this matter of sonship in the letter to the Galatians. He is dealing with this spiritual, heavenly seed. His introduction is all concerning that. 'Paul, an apostle, not of men but of God, Who raised Jesus from the dead ... to deliver us from this present evil world.' How significant is every word. There is something here that is not of this earth, not from down here at all, something not of men—"I received it not of man, I was not taught it of man." There is something here that is from heaven. This thing from heaven was on the basis of resurrection; and that is of God, and God only, something above all that is here. We are delivered from this present evil world or age, and Paul in his mind was not only thinking of the vast, sinful world of paganism and heathenism; he was thinking also of the religious world. "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me." We mark, then, all the spiritual elements about his very introductory words.

Where the Fight of the Faith Arises

And then, when he has struck tremendous blows at this system of things, this religious system, and has challenged Peter over it, in respect of his dissimulation, he goes on about this heavenly and spiritual seed. "We are sons of God by faith in Jesus Christ" (iii. 26). Then he moves to Ishmael and Isaac, the seed after the flesh and the seed after the Spirit, and brings in this whole matter of what sonship really is, as being something after the Spirit. What he is saying in this whole letter is just this in a word: Sonship, with all that God means by sonship, is what is in view, and over against it there is this breaking in continually of things religious, subtle, beautiful, with all the argument that God is in them;

but, nevertheless, breaking in with one object, all hidden from sight, namely, to cut right across the path of the believer in his going right on to God's fullest thought in sonship; and it sets up a warfare.

Let us be perfectly frank and plain. Beloved, it is true that there are many good people, many leading Evangelical people, many Peters if you like, touching whose devotion to the Lord we can have no question; their zeal, their consecration, is not open to discussion; and yet they are so tied by a fixed system that they become points of conflict where the matter of going right on with the Lord is concerned. They oppose, they make the difficulty and the trouble; and it is not themselves personally but the thing which binds them. In principle it is this Judaism cropping up again, a fixed system which has held sway for generations and centuries, a tradition which is established, and anything that seems to require a superseding of that tradition—I choose the word carefully—at once provokes antagonism and conflict. Is it not strange? Why do I use the word supersede? Because of what Paul says here. He says there are those who have come in with another Gospel which is not another. He means this, that all that came in with Israel was intended to lead right on to Christ, but now it is being used to hold back from Christ. The effect of it is to obstruct the way of realising the end for which it exists. It is not really two things that are here. Christ is the complement and the fulfilment of all that came in through Moses, and if only you understand and interpret Moses aright, you will go right on with Christ. But now this thing is brought in as though it were another thing. Really in essence the two things are one, intended to be one in the thought of God, but it is being made two things now. But the intention of God is that there should be this glorious issue—Christ in fulness; so that, what can lead to Christ is to be superseded by Christ. You are not going to say that Judaism is all wrong, you are not going to say all the Old Testament is wrong, is false, you are not going to say that what came in through Moses is all error. Not at all! But you are going to say that it was intended to come to a place where all that to which it was pointing would supersede it.

Oh, the conflict is there, and the fight of the faith comes right in amongst Paul and Peter in principle. That is a terrible thing. The fight of the faith! Oh, you would never find Paul and Peter fighting one another over the deity of Christ. You would never find them in conflict over any of those fundamentals of Christianity; the inspiration of the Scriptures, the Person of the Lord Jesus, the coming again. Oh no, you would find them absolutely one on all those matters, however many they were. But here, strangely, we find Peter and Paul in conflict, one having to withstand the other to the face, and it is the faith which is involved.

What the Faith Is

What is the faith? The faith is this, that Jesus is the Son of God. But that is something more than a personal, objective relationship. That is a spiritual

reality which has to come into expression through Him in the Church, in His members as representing the heavenly seed, coming to the fulness of Christ; which being accomplished, is to supplant and oust all this other seed which Satan has introduced into God's universe. That is the faith. The faith comes down to this, namely, what we are spiritually in God's universe. That is the faith.

What are we intended to be? We are intended to be in our experience, in our spiritual life, in our presence here, a living proof that Jesus is the Son of God; not just to declare this as a tenet of our faith and creed, but to be here as children of God growing up into sonship, by which sonship His sonship is put into expression. Do you follow what I mean?

Oh, it is over this that there is all the conflict, and I say again, the conflict gets right in inside, amongst godly people, godly men, devout men. Why? Because some are so held by their traditions, by their fixed system, by the thing established here in Christianity. Somehow or other that very thing gets in the way of what Paul calls here in the Galatian letter "the liberty of sons."

The Liberty of Sons

I wonder what that phrase means to you, what it is becoming to mean to you—the liberty of sons. Oh, if you have known bondage to legal Christianity and the Lord has led you in any measure into spiritual liberty, that is a very cherished phrase—the liberty of sons. It is a great, great position to be in. You are not being brow-beaten in your conscience for a moment about what you must do or must not do, this whole tremendous, colossal system of Shalts and Shalt nots that has come into the midst of Christianity, making Christianity into something that is put on you. They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders" (Matt. xxiii. 4). That is what the Lord said about the Jews, but that is what many Christians are doing, and it is very easy for us to slip into the position where our Christianity and the Christian life becomes a burden almost grievous to be borne.

To be emancipated from that into the liberty of sons; what does this mean, and how is it brought about? You go after the Lord, that is all. It is not a thing, a system, it is Himself, Christ. Run through this Galatian letter and put your pencil mark under every mention of the name of Christ, and you will get a surprise; and you have got the message of the letter, for it all resolves itself into this—it is the Lord, not Judaism, not Christianity, not a system at all; it is the Lord. And if it is the Lord, you are emancipated; you need not worry about anything else. You will not go wrong on any of those thousand points, if it is the Lord upon Whom you are set. You are bound to go right, if you are after the Lord. That is liberty, and that is deliverance.

You see the nature of the conflict. The fight of the faith is not fighting with modernism in the first instance, nor standing for the virtues of the Christian

The first book published by the "WITNESS AND TESTIMONY" publishers was

"THE CENTRALITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE CROSS"

This has been out of print for some time, but there has been repeated demand for it. It is felt that this book should be reissued. War conditions only permit of this being done in stages. The book is therefore being re-written, and will be issued one chapter at a time. They will be so laid out as to permit of binding all together when completed. Chapter One is now in the press. Each section will cost about fourpence (U.S.A. 8 cents) plus postage. If you send a larger sum we can advise you when it is exhausted or refund balance. The completion of the issue will depend upon paper being available.

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Saturday, 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.
 Lord's Day, 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.

April 23-26 (Easter)

Friday, 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.
 Saturday, 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.
 Lord's Day, 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.
 Monday, 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.

GLASGOW

28 Park Circus

March 13 and 14.
 April 10 and 11.

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MARCH—APRIL, 1943

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The Purpose of God

It is of immense help, in contemplating the manifold activities and energies of God, to be able to gather everything into one inclusive, comprehensive, and concrete issue. The Bible—from Genesis to the Revelation—covers a wide range and includes a vast amount of matter, but it has one all-governing and conclusive objective. The purpose of God is one, and only one. It is always referred to in the singular. "Called according to his purpose" (Rom viii. 28). "According to the purpose..." (Eph. i. 11.) "According to the eternal purpose" (Eph. iii. 11.) "According to his purpose and grace." (2 Tim. i. 9). It is not a variety or number of things, it is just one.

And what is the one, single, comprehensive purpose? The answer is—Christ! "His Son, Jesus Christ." And when we ask further, What about His Son? The answer is, to have Him fill all things, and to have all things in Him. That this is so is made clear in the definite statements of Scripture. "In him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible . . . all things have been created through him, and unto him." "For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell." (Col. i. 16, 19). "Whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds (ages)"—Heb. i. 2.

So then, in the counsels of God, all things must head up in Christ. God's occupation is with bringing Christ in, and bringing into Christ. If we would be "God's fellow-workers," this must be our single-eyed aim and business. This defines precisely

The Purpose of the Church }

The presence of the Church in this world is, firstly, to be a corporate expression of Christ here. The very designation "The Body of Christ" means Christ corporately present. The Church is not an institution, organisation, society, or religious fraternity.

It is—in God's intention—the embodiment of His Son in a continuation of His life and work on this earth. In the next place—after the *being* of the Church—is its work. This is just one thing, and by the one result alone its work stands or falls. This work is to make for an increase of Christ in this world, and this is to be accomplished along two lines; namely, by

Evangelism and Building Up

Evangelism is the bringing of Christ initially *into* lives. Every new instance of Christ coming into a life is an additional measure of Christ in the creation, making a new creation. It is of the utmost importance that there should be no stopping short at mere mental agreement, or emotional expression, or just an outward act of acceptance, but that Christ by His Spirit should really have taken up residence within. But our object here is not to deal with evangelism, but to point out its object, which is *to bring in Christ, and to bring into Christ.*

The other purpose of the Church is building up. In the most familiar versions of the New Testament the word in this connection is "Edification." But "Building up" is much better. The Church is to "build itself up." We are to "build one another up." Spiritual gifts and ministries are all meant for "building up." What is this "building up?" It is the increase of Christ! The New Testament repeatedly refers to "babes in Christ" and "full-grown men" in Christ; and there is a constant urge to "go on to full growth." Thus, by extensification and intensification, by increase outwardly and inwardly, it is Christ gaining an ever-increasing place. We repeat, by numerous ways and means God is governed by this one all-dominating objective—His Son.

"Evangelism" and "Building Up" Interrelated }
But there is a point which needs very much to be

emphasised and kept in view. These two things—Evangelism and Building up—are not two separate things; they must be kept together. If they are separated, or if either is given a greater place than the other, an unbalanced condition will arise, and this will defeat God's full end. If evangelism is given a place greater than building up, or to the exclusion of the other, the result will be a great number of spiritual babes who remain such, no matter how long they live. There will then exist a preponderating number of Christians who are like those referred to by the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews—"When by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that someone teach you the rudiments of the first principles . . . and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food" (Heb. v. 12).

By this and what immediately follows, the Apostle makes it quite clear that God can never be satisfied with just having so many—however many—"converts," born-again babes, but His end demands that these shall come to the spiritual position where they can take all that He has to give of spiritual strong meat, and have spiritual senses exercised, being "experienced in the word," and of spiritual intelligence. All this means what Paul called "the measure of Christ," and the end in view—"unto the measure... of the fulness of Christ." If, on the other hand, building up is given a place out of all proportion to evangelism, we shall have another malformation. There will arise an ultra-spirituality which is divorced from what is practical. Truth will—sooner or later—take the place of Life. The mental will rule out the truly spiritual. The worst outcome will be that those involved will be found to have got into a false position which will not stand up to the tests of real life—the expression of Christ—among the people and conditions of this world. For the real proof of spiritual life is in its ability to express Christ in love, forbearance, patience, meekness, and self-forgetfulness, in an unsympathetic, ununderstanding, and unappreciative world. This does not mean that there should be a limiting of either evangelism or building up, but it does mean that there *must* be a close relationship between the two.

This is very strikingly manifested in the fact that the Apostles of the New Testament combined these two ministries in such fulness. They evangelised mightily; but what an immense building up ministry they fulfilled also! They brought Christ in almost everywhere they went, but they brought Him in in ever-increasing fulness wherever they *had* been. The point is the combination of the two. In the matter of ministry-gifts to the Church, the Evangelist and the Pastor and Teacher are complementary ministries.

All this is surely very patent. But where are we now? We do not hesitate to say that the relationship between these two things has not by any means been preserved in equal proportions. The fact is that there is a preponderance of Christians who are—after many years—spiritual babes, sadly immature; without understanding in spiritual things; without capacity (and without appetite) for "strong meat." The result is that the impact and effect of Christ in this

world is not at all commensurate with either the time that Christianity has been here, or the number of Christians on the earth. A few strong, healthy, and "experienced" people of God will count for a very great deal more than a vast number of Christians whose maturity is unduly delayed. There is therefore much to be done by way of removing this ill-balanced state and bringing the Lord's children to the state and position which should be theirs "by reason of the time."

The Need of To-day

This means that there is a real need and demand for a ministry of "the fulness of Christ" to the Christians of our time. The world's need is pre-eminently Christ in greater fulness, and this can only be in and by the Church, His chosen vehicle. But, we repeat, all such ministry must not stop with itself. It must result in stronger, richer, fuller evangelism. That is to say, the Christians must come through it to the position of having more of Christ to show and impart. This then is what is our sense of calling—"for the perfecting of the saints unto (that *they* may do) the work of ministering;" the word "perfecting" meaning, making complete or full.

To sum up: God's end is the bringing in of His Son to fulness. This is the object and nature of the Church's being and work. The method is twofold; evangelism and building up. These two must be kept in close relationship as complimentary, and the balance must be preserved in equality. This balance has *not* been preserved, and there are very many Christians whose spiritual maturity and capacity is very unduly delayed. There is therefore an altogether inadequate registration, impact, and effectiveness as to Christ—considering how long Christianity has been here and how many Christians there are. The need then is for a ministry by which *Christians* can be helped to the position which is God's desire and intention for them. *Such a ministry must not end in people becoming interested in and taken up with teaching as something in itself, but rather in a richer and fuller representation of Christ to and among the peoples of this world. It is a misapprehension of truth if it results in less concern for the increase of Christ by the salvation of sinners and the mutual spiritual helpfulness of the saved. Truth should never turn us in on ourselves, but should make us conscious of being under a great debt to others (Romans i. 14).*

A Consideration of Two of Vital Importance

Then we must realise that there are certain things which are basic to full spiritual development. One of these is the essential organic oneness of all who are "In Christ." No individual, or number of individuals, *as such*, can attain unto the full stature of Christ; that is only possible for "the whole Body." Any kind of division amongst Christians is a violation of Christ ("Is Christ divided?"—1 Cor. i. 13), and that must be contrary to the Holy Spirit by whose work alone can we attain unto full growth. Therefore believers must abandon schismatic and divisive ground and

occupy only the ground of *Christ*. In the beginning the Church was constituted by the acceptance of the absolute Lordship and Headship of Christ, and not just His Saviourhood. "We preach Christ Jesus as Lord." The Saviourhood was largely for *men's* good, but the Lordship was mainly for *His* place. This issue was the occasion of all the trouble.

This then is the ministry to which we feel the Lord has called us. Through deep and drastic ways He has formed it. We have not assumed it, and we can only

give what He has given. We have sought much and always to be saved from mere theory, and we feel that in this the Lord has been faithful; but it has been costly.

And now, brethren, how can we gather up what we feel as our burden? Perhaps in no better way than in the Apostle's words:

"Teaching every man, and admonishing every man, that we may present every man perfect (full grown) in Christ."
T.A.S.

Spiritual Sight

No. 4

The Man Who Receives Spiritual Sight

READING: Acts viii. 26-40.

In this simple but instructive incident we have three parties. We have the Ethiopian, the Holy Spirit, and the human instrument, Philip. The incident falls into the compass of our present meditation in this Conference concerning spiritual sight.

The Ethiopian

(a) A Confessedly Blind Seeker

When we look at this Ethiopian, we at once see a blind seeker. Though religious, though moving in the circle of long standing and well-established religious tradition, though having been to Jerusalem, to the temple, to the very headquarters, he is still blind, still a blind seeker. That is quite clear from the questions he put to Philip about the Scriptures of those with whom he was associated, and their prophecies. "How can I understand, except some one shall guide me?" "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other?" He is manifestly a man in the dark, a man without spiritual sight, the eyes of his heart have not been enlightened; but the hopeful thing about him is that he is a confessedly blind man.

(b) A Humble Seeker

He was a very important man in this world, a man of considerable responsibility and influence and standing, and because of his position he might well have hedged things a bit. When challenged about his reading, he might have evaded the point or pointedness of the question and have given some kind of evasive non-committal answer. You know how people do who do not like to be thought ignorant, especially if they are people who are regarded as being of some standing, who have a position to keep up. This man, with all that he was amongst men on this earth, was a confessedly blind man. Without any hedging or evasion, he answers the question quite directly and honestly and frankly. "Do I understand what I am reading? Well, how can I except someone teach me?" Then, in his openness, he pressed further for information, for explanation, for enlightenment. "Of whom speaketh the prophet?"

Now, that is very simple, I know, but it is fundamental. It is fundamental to any kind of spiritual understanding, it is basic to all spiritual knowledge, it governs every degree of progress in spiritual things. The humility of this great man is the key to the whole story. He does not seek to give the impression that he knows what he does not know, to lead another to think that he understands when he does not understand; he starts right from the place where he truly and really was. He knew in his own heart that he did not understand and he gave no other impression, but let it be known that was exactly where he was, and that gave a fully opened way to the Lord. May it not be it was this that the Lord had seen long before and upon which He was acting all the time? He knew that He had a perfectly honest and humble man in the dark seeking light, and He could move sovereignly in wonderful ways over considerable distances and take some momentous steps; for these were momentous steps that were taken by the Lord in order to meet that life. You see what such a state of heart makes possible from the Lord's side, how much the Lord is prepared to do when He finds a heart like that. A blind man seeking light, but confessedly blind, and so it is not long before he is an enlightened seeker: for the Lord did not leave such a man in the dark; He gave him the light he was seeking.

And may we not say the Lord gave him a great deal more than he was seeking; for I do not think we should be adding anything to the story if we said that, when he went on his way rejoicing, he felt that he had got a great deal more than he had set out to get. It is always like that. When the Lord does a thing, He does it properly. As Mr. Spurgeon said, My cup runneth over, and my saucer also! When the Lord does a thing, He does it well. The man went on with a full and overflowing cup, an enlightened seeker. He had come to see what all the religious leaders of his day were not seeing, and were incapable of showing him.

(c) A Seeker Who Meant Business with God

But the enlightenment that came to him brought with it a fresh challenge, as it always does. Every bit

of new light coming from the Lord carries with it a fresh challenge, a challenge to some practical obedience. Now I am not going to stay to deal with a most interesting, and, I think, a most profitable detail of the whole story, but let us note it. Isaiah liii brought Christ into view and Philip preached from that scripture Jesus, and the very next thing we strike right up against is, "Here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Now, you have to do some filling in there, if you are to see how that arises with Isaiah liii. I leave you with that. Do not pass it over: you think about it. All I am going to say is that the revelation which came to the man then, the enlightenment of his eyes, brought with it a challenge to obedience, and this enlightened seeker was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision, but was swift to meet the challenge, quick to run in the way of His command, unhesitant in obedience to the light that had come. So far as the thing itself is concerned, all is very simple; but that is the substance of things. We see a man passing from darkness to light, we see a man passing from a quest to a heart-ravishing knowledge, we see a man fumbling changed into a man who has a firm grasp, a man whose heart is disappointed changed into one who goes on his way rejoicing, and the two things which from his side make that possible are an utter humility, in that he makes no bones at all about his ignorance and does not feign to know more than he does know, and his swift obedience to light coming to him. You have to say about this man, Here is an honest heart.

And that is how God deals with honest people. They get light and they get joy.

Before we leave him, let us say of him that he is clearly a man who means business. I like this man in his intentness upon knowing and doing. He is right on the mark. All the enervating effect of his Ethiopian climate had not robbed him of spiritual energy. He rose above that, he meant business with God. No element of compromise, excuse, or anything like that at all is found in him. He was simply set upon knowing, if it could be known, and doing whatever there was to be done when enlightened.

Well, to the man who is bent on thus knowing and coming into things, God is going to show Himself of the same kind. God is to us what we are to Him, God will be debtor to no man, and if you and I really mean business with God and are going right out for all that God has for us, all that God wants us to have and to know, and are not going to take on any airs but get right down to the level where we really and genuinely are, in all humility, and mean that whatever the Lord shows us we are going to do it by His grace without any hesitation, we shall find that, in the long run, God is not going to be our debtor, but He will meet us to the full. This man's story is given immortal record. It comes in the Acts of the Holy Ghost, and when you come to ask the question, Why is this man included in the record and his story handed down from age to age to last as long as time? the answer is just what we have said: he was a man who meant business with God, was open to the Lord, honest in heart, humble in

spirit, and obedient to the light that he had.

The Holy Spirit

(a) The Ground He Requires

Well, then, the second party in the story is the Holy Spirit, and a brief word only need be said. Of course, in reality He was the first party in the whole business, but I mention Him second here because it is perhaps more helpful to examine the incident in this order. The Holy Spirit was aware of such a man, and the Holy Spirit is always aware of such a man. There is a sense in which an Ethiopian must go before the Holy Spirit. You understand what I mean by that. Before the Holy Spirit can really do His work, He must have something upon which to do it that meets His requirements, and the Holy Spirit was cognizant of this man, of his quest and of his heart, and the Holy Spirit is always aware of such people as to where they are.

(b) How He is Hindered

I think there is a very big story hanging upon a statement like that. If we did but know it, a lot of our problems are solved by understanding that. There is the big question which is always confronting us as to why is it that some leap into the light and go on, and others do not, but always lag behind, and never seem to see any more? Is it that there is a selectiveness on the part of God, a kind of elect of the elect that He has, is it that He has favourites? I do not think so. I think a great part of the answer lies here, namely, in what God finds He has to deal with, whether people mean business with Him or not, whether He has a clear way or not, whether the ground is occupied or not already by that which is an obstruction to Him. I do not think anybody will fail to get all the light the Lord wants them to have if they really do mean business with God. The Holy Spirit knows us. He looks right deep down into our hearts and knows whether we mean business. He sees exactly what there is to hinder Him and how far He can go; for the Lord is not going to coerce anyone. If we are taken up with ourselves, occupied with ourselves, circling round ourselves, centering in ourselves, then the Holy Spirit has not a chance. We have to come to an end of ourselves. That is the trouble with so many. They have got a self-complex set up, and all the time it is a continuous going round in a circle and coming back to the same point at which they started, and it is all round themselves, and they are wearing themselves out. Before long they are going to have an awful crash that involves all that for which they are supposed to stand and represent for the Lord, and it will come down with them. The Holy Spirit has not a clear way. We have to get out of the way, so far as this self-occupation is concerned, if we are going to move straight on, and to go on. He knows exactly where we are, whether we are tied up with things, religious things, traditions and so on, and so tied up in them that we are not open to the Lord to consider any further light at all. We have got it all, or our people with whom we are associated have got it all, and we are a part of that! You know what I mean. The Holy Spirit cannot do much

with folk who are in a position like that ; and He knows. His attitude is, It is no use, I cannot do much there, they are too tied up. But, if we are prepared to put everything into the water, then the Lord can go on and get a clear way.

The Holy Spirit knows. He knows you and He knows me. He knows us a great deal better than we know ourselves. We may have thought that we meant business and have been praying very much a long time and crying to the Lord to do something, while the Holy Spirit knows quite well that we are not at an end of ourselves and our own interests yet. Something more has to be done to bring us to despair before He can do what He wants. But He knows : that is the point ; and He knew this man, that He had not got a great deal to do to make a start with every prospect of a clear way, and He took the opportunity presented, and He was able to act sovereignly. He did that in order to meet this need.

The Human Instrument

Now I do not want to take very much time, so I pass to the third of the three, the human instrument, Philip, the means by which, on the one hand, the blind seeker would have his eyes opened, and by which, on the other hand, the Holy Spirit will be able to accomplish His work. We all want to be in that position where really honest, genuine, business-meaning men and women can find what they are after through our instrumentality if God so will, and, on the other hand, where the Holy Spirit can find in us a vessel to hand where He sees such a need. Surely there is nothing we would desire more than that, just to be as Philip was.

But even in Philip's case, it was not that he was an automatic bit of machinery, something taken up willy-nilly. There were things about Philip which constituted the ground for the Lord ; very, very simple matters, and yet not such as are so easy in practical life and outworking.

Philip was at the disposal of the Holy Spirit, and that without any question, and when you look, you see that that meant something in his case. Philip was down there in Samaria. Many were turning to the Lord, a great work of grace was going on, so great a work that they had to send down apostles from Jerusalem to deal with the situation ; and Philip was the chief instrument in that work in the first place. Now when you are right in the thing like that, and the Lord suddenly says, Now, Philip, I want you to leave all this and go down by the way that is desert ; I will not tell you why, what I am going to do, I simply say, go to the desert", a man might have big questions. He might have said, But, Lord, what about this ? But, Lord, look at this big door of opportunity, look what I am doing, what I am in ! What will happen here if I leave it ? Many questions like that might have arisen. He could have had serious reservations and put them in the way of the Lord. But we do not read of anything like that. The Lord simply said it,

and Philip was so much at the disposal of the Lord that, without any questions, he moved. What a tremendous thing it is to be free for the Lord, free to the Lord, to be so much at the Lord's disposal that it is not difficult at all to leave anything, to adjust ourselves to an altogether new situation, if the Lord says it. It is a great thing. So Philip was at the Lord's disposal, and that is a big factor in a work like this of bringing sight to blind seekers, and being, not only the answer to man's need, but the answer to the need of the Holy Spirit ; at the Lord's disposal and unhesitating in response to the Lord's suggestion ; no delay, but a swift answer. " The Lord has said it, let us get on with it and leave the responsibility with Him."

It turned out all right, it was quite a safe thing to do. Now, the Lord never does explain Himself in advance. The Lord never does tell us ahead how it is going to work out and what He is going to do. He always presents us with a challenge to faith in Him. All His requirements carry with them plenty of opportunities for arguing if you are so disposed ; plenty of occasions, humanly speaking, of question. The one who knows the Spirit knows well that the vindication will come along the line of swift obedience.

Well now, that is the story ; simple, beautiful, but containing vital principles of enlightenment. If you want to see people go on, these are the things which the Lord requires. If you want to go on, these are the things which lie behind all real going on, all leaping into light, into knowledge, into the greater fullness of the Lord.

Well, look again at this man. It is a great story. You know that the Bible holds up Ethiopia as a type of darkness : but here is the darkness changed to the light, the full blaze of the noonday ; for Christ is that : and that is the basis on which it is done, namely, a heart that is frank, humble, purposeful, and honest in its search.

I do not know what the Lord may be saying to you, but for us all the pivot of the whole matter is, Here is water ! I am not saying that baptism is the pivot, but I am saying that it is represented by baptism. Are we ready for everything to go into the grave ? Have we something we are holding on to ; our position, our reputation, our status and all that, or is it all going into the grave ? The Lord here has a man who does not say, " Is it necessary for me to be baptized ; must I ? Of course, if the Lord requires it, I will seek grace ;" but a man who says, " Here it is, what doth hinder ?" That is another angle altogether. Tell me anything that hinders and I will deal with it ! Get that kind of spirit. ' If you can show me anything that hinders my going on in the way that the Lord indicates, then I will deal with it. What does He want, Philip ? Can you tell me of any hindrance ?' Philip found no hindrance, but everything to help. Both went down together and Philip baptized him. The Lord just put into our hearts the meaning of that and give us to be good Ethiopians in this spiritual sense.

T.A.S.

The Unchanging Christ

READING: Heb. i. 1-12.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, and for ever" (Heb. xiii. 8).

I remember reading some time ago a little kind of essay or description written by the novelist, Charles Dickens, of a visit he paid to a certain theatre in London on a Saturday night, and again on the Sunday evening. We are not interested in what he says of the Saturday, but the Sunday was a Gospel service. Not without a certain critical approach, but nevertheless with a good deal of sympathy and impartiality, he described the crowded theatre, and the hymns and prayers, and so on, and then the sermon; and he took it up in some detail. But this was the impression that remained with him. He said something like this, that he had not much sympathy with the dogmas and doctrines that this preacher was so emphatically laying down as law, and still less patience with his anecdotes which he brought in every now and again, but that he noticed that every time the preacher returned to the Master and told of the One Who walked this earth, and of His healing, delivering, gracious work and words, and of His death upon the Cross, an altogether new atmosphere came over the whole place. Hearts were hushed, everybody was tense and eager, and there was, as it were, a spell over the whole congregation. And he says, Would to God preachers would keep more to their subject!

The One and Only Lord

Well, if that was true then, it is far more true to-day. Jesus Christ is the same. The Jesus of the Gospel is the Lord Jesus Christ, the same Jesus of the Epistles, and the same Jesus Whom we preach as Saviour to-day. Sometimes we are a bit suspicious of those who harp too much upon the historical Jesus; and if by that they try to divide between the One revealed in the Gospels and the One of Whom the Epistles speak in their doctrines, then we do well to be suspicious of them, for there is no difference. All that the Epistles say of Jesus Christ, He said of Himself in the Gospels. Nothing more is made of Him than He affirmed to be true of Himself. Nevertheless, we must beware of falling into the other error of rather regarding the Jesus of the Gospels as something elementary, and of being more interested in the Epistles and in the doctrine. That is wrong, altogether wrong. The Apostles wrote to the Christians of those early centuries explaining, in greater detail than the Master had explained, what we may call the theory, giving a fuller exposition of His life and His work and His redemption, but never for one moment in any way bringing forward a theological Christ as against a real Christ, a doctrinal Christ in opposition to an historical Christ. There is no such thing. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." You are not saved by knowing the doctrine of justification by faith; you are saved when the Jesus

of the Gospels does for your soul what He did for many a crippled body; namely, puts you right. You are not sanctified by a clear understanding of the teaching of what happens in the work of the Blood as applied by the Holy Spirit; you are sanctified when the glorious heavenly Man Who cleansed the lepers touches you and cleanses you. And it is always like that. We are not going to help other people by giving them theory about Christ, except as our words may do what the words of the Apostles did, make Christ more living and more real to those to whom they were spoken.

The Secret of Stability

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." There are many secrets bound up with that knowledge of the Lord. It is the key to a multitude of needs and activities of our heart. Jesus Christ the same! It is the secret, in the first place, of stability. He is the same, He never changes, and He is the only point which is a fixed point in the moral and spiritual universe of God. An actual universe is a chaos and a confusion if there is not some fixed sun about which it can revolve, from which it takes its relationship, and this universe morally and spiritually, and any human life also, is a chaos and a confusion until it finds God's fixed point—Jesus Christ. He is the same.

Sometimes you talk about someone you have not seen for some time, and you meet someone who has seen him recently, and you say, How is he? Oh, he is just the same! He has not changed, he has not improved, he is just the same. But you know also what it is, perhaps, to have a friend, or to be acquainted with someone of sterling character in whom you can always trust; he is always reliable, always gracious, always wise. Perhaps you are away from him for a long time and someone who has seen him recently comes across your path, and you say, How is So-and-so? And the answer is, He is just the same!

That is what it is about the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not a setness, something stereotyped and hard and fixed. It is a stability of character, an excellence of eternal, unchanging worth and merit. He is the same: and when you have found Him, you have found the only fixed point in God's universe. That is the secret of being at rest, of being steady yourself. It is the secret of stability to know the unchanging Christ.

The Instability of All Confidence Short of Christ Himself

There were people very long ago and they felt they had found stability so far as this earth was concerned, and they were resting confident in the fact that it was good solid earth upon which they built and could do as they liked in. Whatever might happen, there was something solid and comfortable. God sent a flood over that earth, and they found it was not so fixed

all for them. They sought stability in earthly things, but there is no stability there.

Then there was a man who thought he had the secret of it all in his own wisdom and mental ability, and indeed these were very great; and in confidence and self-assurance he walked abroad, looked at the marvellous world-wonder that had been the result of his brain, and he said, "Is this not great Babylon which I have built?" God took his reason away from him. He became like a brute beast, he had not the sense of a little child. What fools we are when we trust in our own opinion, what we think, what we consider, how we understand things! There is no stability there.

There were those who felt that in the visible expression of the house of God here upon this earth, in the temple which God had commanded to be built, in the city of His choice, they had found stability, and there is a good deal in the Psalms which might seem to justify that. Thus they felt, Well, the whole world may rock and shake, but Jerusalem is steady: every heathen temple and every false place of worship may well be swept away, but the temple, the temple of the Lord, is all right! It was to those very people, or rather to those who were living among them, to whom the Apostle had to write warning them, There is no stability there! And not very many years elapsed before there was not left one stone upon another of the temple; and to this day there is no stability there.

And even Job, the best of them all, sought his ground of confidence here; not indeed merely in the earth; not in his own wisdom, nor in any earthly religious thing, but none the less in the blessings that God had given to him; and, as he himself tells us, he had settled down, and was at rest and at ease, confident. God had blessed him, God was with him, it was all right, and every day as he gazed in every direction, he could see proofs of God's blessing. He had to learn, as we shall all have to learn, that there is no stability there. The blessings of God were all taken away from him, and he was left without a shadow of evidence that God was with him. No stability there. But he found, and many another has found, and praise God if we have found, that in Jesus Christ we have the solid, immovable, eternal Rock of Ages. There is stability in Him.

Are we finding that? I do not ask if you believe that the statement, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever," is Scripture. I am sure you do. I said, Are you finding it? Am I finding it? Our behaviour will reveal, our hearts will make known whether we have really discovered the secret of stability. Do we fluctuate? Are we at times very certain and at times very uncertain? What is the matter? We have Jesus Christ as our Saviour. We have not yet come to realise what it means—oh, the wonder, the amazing wonder of what it means!—that Jesus Christ is always the same. What He was in Gospel days at any given point, in any given circumstance, He is that to-day. What He was in the experience of the early Church at any time, He is that to-day. What He has been to the saints—and oh, what

He has been through the ages!—what He has been to the saints of God through the generations that have passed since this sacred record closed, He is just the same to-day.

Martin Luther (we find ourselves in good company in this connection perhaps), Martin Luther was subject to fits of depression and had times of doubt and despondency, and in the midst of them one day he had the shock of his life. His wife came down to breakfast in deepest mourning. He said, Whatever is the matter? His wife said, Haven't you heard? No, said Martin Luther, what is it? God is dead! Then he realised.

Well, you see, Jesus Christ is the same; but our fluctuations deny it, they contradict it. Oh, let us come afresh to the source of stability. It is this—Jesus Christ the same. He, and He only, is the fixed point, there is none other.

Everything to be Held in Vital Relation to Christ

We have the Word of God. Thank God we have! But you know it has caused a lot of division: it has often been a stumbling block in the way it has been presented to men, and the cry has been, by those who caused the trouble, The unchanging Word! They have missed the point. It is an unchanging Word, but only because it is full of Christ, only because it points to Christ, only in the measure in which it is held in living relationship to Christ. As such it is the unchanging Word of God. In every other respect it is a book. We are not so concerned surely, we are certainly not going to help people, by trying to insist on the acceptance of every letter, every phrase, of the Book as a book, though every letter and every phrase is inspired. It is the man who knows the unchanging Christ, and he alone, who can preach the unchanging Word. Let us put things in their right order and realise that the living Christ is the fixed point. The Word is unchanging, because everywhere it speaks of Him and points to Him.

This morning we were sitting round the Lord's Table. We were doing something, that the first disciples did directly after Pentecost, though maybe not in exactly the same way. We are very different people from them in language, in mental outlook, in every respect; but we were doing the same thing. Why? Because that is a statute of an organized body of people laid down as something that must be fulfilled? No, that is unchanging only as it sets forth an unchanging Christ. Is that not so?

I was staying a few weeks ago at a house where there was a young lady, a guest, very highly educated, very worldly, but I found that she got up early three mornings every week to go to early communion. She said she could not get on without it. Oh, what a hopeless misunderstanding of a Divine ordinance. It is not an "it" at all. She could get on without the Lord all right, at least she seemed to be doing so, she had no knowledge of Him. Three times a week fulfilling what was, after all, only a dead ceremony. Oh, how many there are who in some measure are making their fixed points something else than the Lord Him-

self. They are finding their confidence and their rest and their stability in an ordinance which, after all, is a testimony only in the measure in which it holds us in relation to the living Christ.

And if that is true concerning the most sacred things of our faith, the Word and the testimonies, how much truer is it concerning things that, after all, are largely a matter of outward order and custom. It is a sad, sad truth that multitudes are basing their hopes and their confidence on a place, on a preaching, on truths, on a membership, on acts that they repeatedly do to try to be Christians. There is no stability there, and the proof of it is found in lives.

The man whose heart is fixed through thick and thin, good and evil, is the man who knows the Lord,

for He alone is the fixed point. Jesus Christ, thank God, is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever; stability not only for time but for eternity: and when we find ourselves in that which holds some dread for us in that sphere which we call eternity, every other ground of confidence, after all, will have been left behind. There will only be one thing which will stand us in stead, and that though we may have lost everything else, namely, that in glory we have come into the full knowledge of the One Whom we knew before, and He will not be other in eternity than what He is to-day or yesterday. Stability for time and eternity is only known in the knowledge of the unchanging Christ.

H.F.

The School of Christ

No. 6.

An Open Heaven

We have been led to think in these meditations about being in the School of Christ, where all the learning, all the instruction, all the discipline, is toward knowing Christ, learning Christ; not learning about Christ, but learning Christ. That is the point of greatest difficulty in trying to make things plain and clear. We could take up everything there is about Christ as doctrine, as teaching, but that is not what we are after. That is not what the Lord is after at all. It is Christ Himself. He Himself is the living, personal embodiment, the personification of all truth, of all life, and the Lord's purpose and will for us is not to come to know truth in its manifold aspects, but to know the Person, the living Person in a living way, and that the Person being imparted to us, and we being incorporated into the Person, all the truth becomes living truth rather than merely theoretical or technical truth.

Just a word of repetition here: and I cannot tell you with what force this has come to my own heart and how heavily it rests upon me in its meaning. God, whenever things are in danger of departing from His full, His complete, thought, will always seek to bring back a fresh revelation of His Son. He will not lead to the recapture of truths as such. He will bring back all that is necessary by a fresh revelation of His Son, an unveiling or presentation of His Son in fulness. In that connection we have more than once said in these days that the Gospel written by John, and his Letters and the Apocalypse, are the final things of the New Testament dispensation. They were written and brought in when the New Testament Church was departing from its primal and pristine glory, and purity and truth, and holiness, and spirituality, and becoming an earthly Christian system. The Lord's way of meeting that situation was through these writings which are a new presentation of His Son in heavenly,

Divine, spiritual fulness. It is a coming back to Christ, and the Holy Spirit would do that all the time. He would bring us back to the Person, to show us what that Person represents in a spiritual and heavenly way. We must be very careful that in our passing on from the Gospels to the Epistles, we do not get even unconsciously in us the position that we have left elementary things and gone on to something that is not so elementary; that is, that the Epistles are something very much in advance of the Gospels. Emphatically they are not. They are only the opening up of the Gospels. All that is in the Epistles is there in the Gospels, but the Epistles are simply the interpretation of Christ, and the Lord would never have us occupied with the interpretation to the loss of the Person.

All Things in Christ

Now, if I were talking to people who were responsible in the matter of Church building, that would be a very profitable matter with which to stay for a little while; but it just amounts to this for us. We take the Epistles and we think of them as having to do with the building of the Church and the churches, the superstructure of Christianity, and so we take the technique of the Acts and the Epistles as a technique, as a system of doctrine and a system of practice, a system of Christian order, and the Epistles become, and have become for so many and for Christianity in general, a crystallized system of practice, order, form, teaching, and the weakness in the whole position is just this, that that is something as in itself and the Lord Jesus has just been missed and lost. I wonder if you detect what I mean by that? You see, the Holy Spirit's way is to take Christ and open up Christ to the heart, and show that Christ is a heavenly order; not that the Epistles set forth as a manual a heavenly order, but that Christ is that order, and everything in the matter

of order has to be kept immediately in relation to the living Person. If it becomes some *thing*, then it becomes an earthly system; and you can make out of the Epistles a hundred different earthly systems all built upon the Epistles. They will support any number of different systems, different interpretations, represented by Christian orders here, and the reason is that they have been divorced from the Person.

You see, beloved, there are numerous things, numerous subjects, themes, teachings. There is "the kingdom of God", there is "sanctification", there is "eternal life", there is "the victorious life", "the overcomer" or "the overcoming life", there is "the second coming of Christ". These are but a few subjects, themes, truths, as they are called, which have been taken up and developed out of the Scriptures and become things with which people have become very much occupied, and in which they are very interested as things. So certain people hive off around a sanctification teaching, and they are the sanctificationists, and it becomes an "ism". Others hive off; and they are bounded by the hedge of Second Adventism, the Lord's coming, prophecy, and all that. So you get groups like that. I want to say that would be utterly impossible if the Person of the Lord Jesus was dominant. What is the kingdom of God? It is Christ. If you get right inside of the Gospels, you will find that the kingdom of God is Jesus Christ. If you are livingly in Christ, you are in the kingdom, and you know, as the Holy Spirit teaches you Christ, what the kingdom is in every detail. The kingdom is not some thing, in the first place. The kingdom, when it becomes something universal, will simply be the expression and manifestation of Christ. That is all. You come to the kingdom in and through Christ; and the same is true of everything else.

What is sanctification? It is not a doctrine. It is not an "it" at all. It is Christ. He is made unto us sanctification (I Cor. i. 30). If you are in Christ and if the Holy Spirit is teaching you Christ, then you are knowing all about sanctification; and if He is not, you may have a theory and doctrine of sanctification, but it will separate you from other Christians, and it will be bringing any number of Christians into difficulties. Probably the teaching of sanctification as a thing has brought more Christians into difficulty than any other particular doctrine, through making it a thing, instead of keeping Christ as our sanctification.

I am only saying this to try to explain what I mean that it is in the School of Christ that we are to be found, where the Holy Spirit is not teaching us things; not Church doctrine, not sanctification, not adventism, not any *thing*, or any number of things, but teaching us Christ. What is adventism? What is the coming of the Lord? Well, it is the coming of the *Lord*. And what is the coming of the Lord? Well, such a word as this will give us the key: He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed (II Thess. i. 10). You see, it is the consummation of something that has been going on in an inward way. How then do I best know that the coming of the Lord draws nigh! Not best of all by prophetic

signs, but by what is going on within the hearts of the Lord's people. That is the best sign of the time, namely, what the Spirit of God is doing in the people of God. But you are not interested in that. You would far sooner know what is going to happen between Germany and Russia, whether these two, after all, are going to make it up and become a great confederacy! How far does it get us? Where has all the talking about the revived Roman Empire got us? That is adventism as a thing. If only we keep close to Him Who is the sum of all truth, and move with Him and learn Him, we shall know the course of things. We shall know what is imminent. We shall have in our heart whisperings of preparation. The best Advent preparation is to know the Lord. I am not saying that there is nothing in prophecy: don't misunderstand me. But I do know that there are multitudes of people who are simply engrossed in prophecy as a thing whose spiritual life counts for nothing, who really have no deep inward walk with the Lord. We have seen it so often.

I shall never forget on a visit to the United States going into one of the big cities where I was to speak for a week. Everything was so arranged that my first message was timed to follow the last message of a man who had had a week before me, and he had been on prophecy for the whole week. I went into the last meeting where he gave his final message on the signs of the time. Notebooks were out, and they were taking it all down, fascinated. It was all external, all objective; such things as the Roman Empire revived and Palestine recovered. You know the sort of thing. Then he finished and they were waiting for some more, and the notebooks were ready. The Lord put it right into my heart that the first word was to be, "And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (I John iii. 3); to speak on the spiritual effect of that spiritual hope. They were not interested in that. The notebooks were closed, pencils put away, there was no interest as I sought in the Lord to be very faithful as to what all this should mean in an inward way, in adjustment to the Lord, and so on. They were only longing for the meeting to close. When I finished—they hardly waited for me to finish—they were up and out.

Oh no, it is the Lord, and the Holy Spirit would bring us back to the Lord, and it is not, after all, coming back to non-essentials, to elementary things, to come back to Christ. It is coming on to the only basis upon which the Holy Spirit can really accomplish all God's will and purpose, to be in the School of Christ where the Holy Spirit is teaching us Christ; and the Holy Spirit's way of teaching Christ is experimental.

The Need of a New Set of Faculties

Now, here is where we become so seemingly elementary. You see, the very nature of this school requires the most drastic change in ourselves. It is impossible to get into the School of Christ, where the Holy Spirit is the great tutor, until the greatest change has taken place in us. We have to be made all over

again to that school with which nothing. We cannot come in here with any hope of learning Christ in the smallest way until a whole new set of faculties has been given to us. We have to have faculties given to us which we do not possess naturally. "Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3); and that is the Lord's way of stating a tremendous fact.

That kingdom is one in which certain things obtain with which I have no correspondence at all, with which naturally I have no power of communication. Take a walk round the garden between these meetings. Walk down by the potatoes and vegetables and talk about, well, anything you like. What would the potatoes think about you? What would the cabbages say about you? They neither hear nor understand what you are talking about, whatever it is. Their kind of life is not your kind of life. They are not constituted in your kingdom. There is no correspondence between them and you at all. They have not the capacity, the gift, the qualification, for the most elementary things that you may be talking about. You may be talking about such foolish things as dress, ordinary every-day things; they do not know. It is like that. There is just as great a divide between us and the kingdom of God. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them..." (I Cor. ii. 14). The divide is so utter that if you and I were brought in our natural state right into the place where the Spirit of God was speaking, unless that Spirit of God wrought a miracle in us, the whole thing would be of another world. And is it not so? You believers, go out into this world and talk about the things of the Lord and see men gape at you! It is all foreign to them. It is like that. "Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." To get into this school, something has to happen to us, and that means that we have to be constituted anew, with altogether other qualifications and abilities for the things of God. That is the nature of this school. It is the School of the Spirit of God.

I know that is very elementary, but, after all, is not that the thing that is being pressed on us all the time? It is being brought home to us how that we may hear words, and yet that they may not mean anything to us. We need our capacity for spiritual understanding enlarged more and more. We are naturally handicapped in this whole matter.

The Breaking of the Self-Life

Now, there is one passage that I cannot get away from in these days. It has been with me for weeks. It has been here as the basis of our meditation. It is John i. 51, and it seems to me that those are words which introduce us to the School of Christ, namely, those words of the Lord Jesus to Nicodemus. I think it would be helpful to read the whole section from verse 47.

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

thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered him, Teacher, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said to thee, I saw thee underneath the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

Here we are approaching the School of Christ, and there is one thing which is essential before we can even come to the threshold of that school, and that is what is marked by those words, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" That put alongside the final words—"the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man"—gives us a complete picture of what spiritually lies behind.

At the time when Jacob in guile—you remember the story of his guile—stole the birthright and had to escape for his life, he saw a very great truth, though but dimly as in type or figure, and a truth moreover into which he was not then able to enter. Jacob at that time could never have entered into the meaning of what he saw, namely, the House of God, Bethel; that place where heaven and earth meet, God and man meet, where the glory uniting heaven and earth, God and man, is the great link, where God speaks and makes Himself known, where God's purposes are revealed. Now why was this the case with Jacob? He was in guile. Let him leave that there then, as he must, and go on, and for twenty years come under discipline, and at the end of twenty years' discipline meet the full impact of heaven upon his earthly life, his earthly nature, the full impact of the Spirit upon his flesh, the full impact of God upon himself at Jabbok, and let that fleshly, natural life be smitten and broken and withered, to bear the mark for the rest of his days of its having come under the ban of God; and then with the Jacob judged, the Jacob smitten, wounded, withered, he can go back and pour out his drink-offering at Bethel, and abide. The guile is dealt with. He is now not Jacob but Israel, in whom, speaking in type and figure, there is no guile.

The Lord Jesus is saying here, to put it in a word, just this. To come into the place of the open heaven, where for you God is coming down in communication, and the glory of God abides, and where you enjoy all that Bethel means, is nothing else than to come into Me; and to come into Me and abide in Me as the Bethel, the House of God, and have all the good of heaven and of God communicated, means you have to come to the place where the natural life has been laid low, broken, withered. You cannot come into His school until that has happened, and it is necessary for the Lord to say to us in Christ as we come to the very threshold of that door, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no Jacob; you shall see the heaven opened! To speak of the Jacob-life, is, after all, only another way of saying the self-life: for self is the very essence of the natural life; not just the self-life in its

most positive evil forms, but the self-life in its totality.

Let me stay with that. Here is the Lord Jesus. No one will dare to say that the self-life in Christ was like our self-life, polluted, corrupted, sinful. Not at all! And yet He had a self-life, a sinless self-life. For Him the self-life simply meant that He could act and speak and think and judge and move out from Himself. That is all. Not with evil intent, not as motivated or influenced by anything sinful or corrupt, but simply independently. He could have done a lot of good things independently, and said a lot of good things independently. But He took the attitude, the position, that, although there was no sin in Him, He could not and would not at any time act or speak out from Himself. That would be self-life and, of course, eventually that would turn to evil. That is what Satan was after. But we can leave that.

My point is this, that you and I must not think of the self-life only as something manifestly corrupt. There is a great deal done for God with the purest motive that is done out from ourselves. There are many thoughts, ideas, judgments, which are sublime, beautiful, but they are ours, and if we did but know the truth, they are altogether different from God's. No, self is not necessarily the obviously corrupt thing, although we shall find, as we go on with God, that there is a strain of corruption behind everything in ourselves. God knows all about it.

And so the Lord puts something utter right at the very door of His school. It is Jabbok. Jabbok was a tributary of the Jordan, and the effect and the out-workings of Jordan are there right at the very threshold of the School of Christ. He accepted Jordan in order to enter into that school of the Spirit for three and a half years. You and I will not get into that school of the Anointing in any other way. It has to be like that. If you and I are going to learn Christ, it will only be as the Jacob-nature is smitten. I am not talking to you mere doctrine and technique. Believe me, I know exactly what I am talking about. I know this thing as the greatest reality in my history. I know what it is to have been labouring with all my might for God and preaching the Gospel out from myself for years. Oh, I know; I know what hard labour it is with the dome over your head. How many times have I stood in the pulpit and in my heart have said, If only somehow or other I could get a cleavage through this dome over my head, and instead of preaching what I have gathered from books and put into my notebooks, and having to study it up, I could scrap the whole thing and, with an opened heaven, speak out what God is saying in my heart! That was a longing for years. I sensed there was something like this, but I had not got it until the great crisis of Romans vi came, and with it the open heaven. It has been different ever since then, altogether different. "Thou shalt see heaven opened"; and all that strain has gone, all that bondage has gone, all that limitation; there is no dome there. That is my glory to-day. Forgive that personal reference. I must say it, because we are not here this morning to give addresses; we are right down on the reality of this

matter of the Holy Ghost directly and immediately revealing Christ to us, and that in an ever-growingness; and this cannot be until we have come to our Jabbok, until the Jacob-life has been dealt with through that crisis, and the Lord is able to say, An Israelite indeed, in whom is no Jacob; thou shalt see heaven opened! There is that dome, that closed heaven over us by nature, but, blessed be God, the Cross rends the heavens, the veil is rent from top to bottom, and Christ is revealed through the rent veil of His flesh. He is no longer seen as the Man Jesus; He is seen in our hearts in all the fulness of God's consummate thought for man. It is a tremendous thing to see the Lord Jesus, and it is a tremendous thing to go on seeing Him more and more. That is where it begins—Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile, no Jacob! Thou shalt see heaven opened!

A New Prospect for a New Man

Now, that word, "thou shalt see heaven opened" is the new prospect for a new man. A new man, a new prospect! In the Authorised Version, a word is added which has been left out of the Revised Version. I take it for the simple reason that it is implicit in the original, without the word necessarily being introduced. In the Authorised it says, "Hereafter thou shalt see the heaven open". In the Revised Version, that first word is left out, and it simply reads, "Thou shalt see". But "thou shalt" is something prospective, it is a tense pointing on to a future day. Not "thou art seeing", but "thou shalt see". It is a new prospect for a new man; and therein lies a new era. It is the era of the Holy Spirit, for by the coming of the Holy Spirit, the open heaven is made a reality. The Cross effects the opening of the heavens for us, but it is the Holy Spirit who makes it good to us, just as was the case in that typical or symbolic death and burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus in Jordan, when the heavens were opened to Him. Coming up on new resurrection ground, He had the open heaven. The Spirit then alighted and abode upon Him, and the Spirit became, shall we say, the channel of communication, making the open heaven all that it should be as a matter of communication, intercourse, communion. It is the era of the Spirit, making all the values of Christ real in us. "Thou shalt"; and, blessed be God, what was prospective for Nicodemus is present for us.

That era has come. We are in the era of the Holy Spirit, of the open heaven.

The Mark of a Life Anointed by the Holy Spirit

Now, what is, then, the mark of a life anointed by the Holy Spirit. You remember when Paul went to Ephesus, he found certain disciples and, without giving us any explanation of the reason for his question, he immediately said, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" Their reply was, Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was." Then Paul's next question is full of significance, taking us back to Jordan. "Into what then were ye baptised?" "Baptism is bound up with this vital reality.

If you do not know the Holy Spirit, what can your baptism have meant? Oh, we were baptised with Jchn's baptism! Oh, I see: well, "John baptised with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Jesus". Then when they heard that, they were baptised into the Name of the Lord Jesus, they were baptised into Christ, and the Holy Spirit came upon them. Thus they came into the School of Christ; and the mark of a life anointed by the Spirit is that you know Christ in this living and ever growing way.

Oh, listen to this, this is not so elementary and unnecessary as it may seem. Some of us, of course, are very poor scholars, and we take such a long time to learn. It has taken decades in my case to come to a true realisation of this. We know so much, and we discover that our real personal knowledge of Christ is a poor thing. We are constantly brought up against that. At last, sooner or later, you and I are going to come to the place where we exclaim, 'Oh, it is not doctrines and truths and themes and subjects and Scripture as mere matter that I need to know! It is all very wonderful when you are taken up with it; but let a man come into the fires, into deep trial, into trouble and perplexity and then what about all your doctrines and all your themes, and all your Bible study? What is the value of it? It does not really solve your problem, it does not get you through.' This is a tragedy. It is true of many of us who have got certain doctrines, who have gone through the doctrines of the Bible and worked them out, and who know what is in the Bible on these things; regeneration, redemption, atonement, righteousness by faith, sanctification, and so on; it is true that after we have gone through them all, and have got them all well worked out, and we come into a terrible spiritual experience, the whole thing counts for nothing, and we come to the place where, but for the Lord, we could easily throw the whole thing over and say, This Christianity does not work! Yes, for those who have known the Lord for years, so far as the accumulation of truth is concerned, that is about the value of it in an hour of the deepest spiritual distress. The only thing then that can help you is not your beautiful notebooks full of doctrines, but, What do I know of the Lord personally and livingly in my heart? What has the Holy Spirit revealed in me and to me, and made a part of me, of Christ? Sooner or later, that is where we are coming to. We are going to be brought back to the living, spiritual knowledge of the Lord; for He alone personally, as revealed in our very being by the Holy Ghost, can save us in the deepest hour. The day will come when we will be stripped of everything but what is spiritually, inwardly known of Christ, stripped of all our mental and intellectual knowledge. Many of those who have been giants in teaching and in doctrine have had a very, very dark hour at the end of their lives, a very dark hour indeed, because all that has been proved to be of less account than the one thing, the measure of real inward knowledge of the Lord: and I say "inward". How can I explain what I mean by

that!

Well, for example, you discover something in the realm of food that really does help you. You have gone all round trying everything, all that the food people can provide to help you in a specific malady or weakness, and nothing has helped you. Then suddenly you discover something that really does help you, and the next time you are put to the test you take some of that and find you can go through on that. It is in you, something that gets you through your ordeal. That is what I mean, with reference to this question of how and what Christ is to be to us. He is to be in us, that upon which we can rest back in confidence and assurance, and, doing so, He gets us through. We are to know Him in that way. That is the only way in which to learn Christ, and that is experimental. "Thou shalt see heaven opened." The Holy Spirit has come to make for us an altogether new order of things, so that Christ is being revealed in us as our very life. Thou shalt see when the Spirit comes: that is the mark of an anointed life. Thou shalt see! And those are great moments when we do see. Some of us have had those great moments in specific connections, and some of us have seen others have their great moments in specific connection. Yet we have known that they knew all about the thing, and have been taught it, and have had it drummed into them for years; and then after years suddenly it has broken upon them, and they have said, Lock here, I am now beginning to see what has been said all this time!

I remember a man brought up in a most saintly family, whose father I always used to liken to Charles G. Finney. He was like Charles G. Finney in spirit, soul and body; and one of his sons brought up in that most godly home was a great friend of mine for years. We had real fellowship together, always talking about the things of the Lord. One day—I can see it now right at the corner of Newington Green—I was going to meet him, and as I came toward Newington Green I saw him in the distance. I saw him smile, and we met and shook hands. He was one big smile. Do you know, I have made a discovery, he said. I said, What is your discovery? I have discovered that Christ is in me! "Christ in you, the hope of glory", has become a reality to me. Well, I said, I could have told you that years ago. Ah, that is the difference, he said: I see it now, I know it now.

You see what I mean. It is just that. Oh, that the world were full of Christians like that. Is this not the need? But inasmuch as this was said to Nicodemus, it must be for us all. It was not said to Peter, James and John up on the Mount of Transfiguration: it was said to Nicodemus, one of the general circle. It is for all; and if that wants strengthening, proving, notice what the Lord Jesus said—"Thou shalt see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man". What has happened? A tremendous transition has taken place in the course of a few sentences. Behold an Israelite indeed! That is for Israel; for Jacob, yes, the father of Israel; for sons of Jacob, the earthly Israel. Ah, yes, but that is purely within the limitation of earth, purely within

the limitation of a people here amongst the nations, and within the limitation of types. Yes, but now for the tremendous transition. The Lord has cancelled out something that Nicodemus said. "Thou art the King of Israel," said he. King of Israel? That is as nothing. Thou shalt see greater things than these. *Thou shalt see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man!* That is something vastly greater than Israel. Son of Man! That is racial, that is universal; that is for all men who will come in, not just for Israel. Thou shalt see greater things! Heaven opened—and for whom? Not just for Israel, but for all men in Christ. The Son of Man!

That title, Son of Man, simply represents God's thought concerning man. Oh, the great, great thought of God and intention of God concerning man. The open heaven is for man when he comes into God's

thought in Christ. The open heaven is for man: God revealing Himself to man in the Man. It is for all of us. Let no one think that this open heaven, this anointing, is for a certain few. Oh no, it is for everyone. God's desire, God's thought, is that you and I, the most simple, foolish, weak amongst men, the most limited naturally, with the least capacity naturally; God's thought is that you and I should find that our very birthright is an open heaven. In other words, you and I may come and in Christ know this wonderful work of the Holy Spirit in an inward revelation of Christ in ever-growing fulness. That is for us, everyone of us. May the most advanced Christian here have a new movement toward the Lord in this matter, and all of us really come to this first crisis where the dome over us is smitten, and we know an open heaven, the Spirit revealing Christ in our hearts, for His glory.

T.A.S.

The Fight of the Faith

No. 4.

Revelation in Relation to Sonship

"Paul, an apostle (not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)...I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but through revelation of Jesus Christ...it was the good pleasure of God...to reveal his Son in me...I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me: but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned unto Damascus...they only heard say, He that once persecuted us now preacheth the faith of which he once made havoc" (Gal. i. 1, 11-12, 15-17, 23-24).

I want to seek, as the Lord enables us, to get still closer to this matter of sonship, and I think there is no doubt that Paul, as he comes before us in this letter to the Galatians, himself stands as an example of what sonship is. There is no doubt that much of the nature of sonship is resident in these statements of his about himself—"not from men, neither through a man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead", and other passages which are similar.

"An Apostle, not after Men"

The question arises—and it is a very simple way I think, of getting to understand what is indicated—the question arises, How might Paul have been an apostle other than by this method, other than in this way—"an apostle not from men, neither through a man: the Gospel which I preach not after man, neither did I receive it from a man, nor was I taught

it". What did he mean? Well, there were two ways in which Paul could have become an apostle and a preacher of the Gospel. There were the apostles at Jerusalem with whom he went up later, and if he had been an interested inquirer, he might have gone perhaps to one of their meetings, or might have called upon them for an interview, and they, Peter, James and John, and others, might have told him all that they knew about Jesus, and have given him a good deal of what they had heard him say through the three years, and also of the many and mighty miracles which He wrought; and then about His death; and then with tremendous earnestness, passion, zeal and fire and enthusiasm, of His resurrection. Thus they might have given Saul all those facts, and given them in such a way, with such fire and such earnestness as to be tremendously persuasive. The young man might have fallen to that because the thing seemed to be indisputable, so real, so wonderful to them. He might say, There is no doubt that these men have seen something, and they know something, and what they say is true! Then, as a result of it all, he might have said, Well, what can I do but accept what they say, believe that they are speaking the truth, and myself just become a follower of Jesus Christ and, accepting these facts and believing them, go out and declare them to other people? He might have become an apostle in that way. That is what he meant when he said, "of men", "through a man". It might have been like that. It could have been like that, and it has been like that in multitudes of cases; not just the acceptance of the argument, but the contagion of someone else's belief, becoming enthused by the others.

It is not a question of whether they were right, or whether what they said was the truth. That is not the

point at all. Nor is it in question whether their experience was a true one. There is no doubt at all regarding the truth and reality of their experience. Yet other people may have an experience, and be in a perfectly true and right position; it may be the most living and real thing with them; and their zeal and their passion and their conviction, and all that they know, the truth which they possess, may be given to you, may be passed on to you, and you may accept it quite honestly and sincerely, and in a sense you may believe it, and in that way go on with the Lord Jesus and become a Christian and a servant of Christ: and it is just between that and something else which, after all, is altogether different, that this whole matter of sonship arises.

The Need for a Revelation of Christ in the Heart

Paul says, "It pleased God...to reveal his Son in me". It pleased God likewise to reveal His Son in Peter, and in James and in John. Yes, but that is not good enough for me, and, while I may not question or doubt their experience or their knowledge, or the facts which they state, sonship in my case demands that God shall reveal his Son in me, and that I do not get it even from those who are reputed to be something, pillars in the Church, Peter, James or John. "It pleased God...to reveal his Son in me." I received it not from men, be they the twelve Apostles; neither through a man, be he Peter, but through revelation of Jesus Christ.

That is very simple and elementary, but it sets forth the difference; and that is what Paul is drawing attention to. He does not, in so many words, say, Now, this is what sonship is, it is a revelation of God's Son in the heart of a person. He does not put it quite precisely like that, but that is what this letter stands for, and that is what the New Testament makes perfectly clear as being the real nature of sonship. It is that this whole matter of the Lord Jesus has become a personal and, in a right and proper sense, an independent thing in our own hearts. Our testimony must be, not, I was brought up in a Christian home, and sent to Sunday School and taken to church, and instructed in these things of the Lord, and given a sound Bible teaching; not that—that may all be receiving it through or of men, or a man. There has to be something more than that. We have to be able to say, "God that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. iv. 6).

"In our hearts"—that is where sonship begins, and it is that which is sonship from beginning to end; an initial thing where we leap clear of everything that is second-hand and the thing becomes first-hand, and where it grows and grows and never stops growing as a first-hand thing. That is sonship. If you understand and can grasp what that means, then you know what sonship is.

You see, about every fresh case of revelation there is a sense in which everything is quite new, as though the thing revealed had never been before, and no one

else in all God's universe had ever heard or seen it. When you really come to have that experience, that knowledge by revelation of the Lord Jesus may be very imperfect, it may be only one thing about Him, but it is the revelation of the Lord Jesus in some particular way, at some particular point, some particular significance; and when you come in this way of revelation into possession of that, it is to you as though it is something that has just come out of heaven new-born, and no one else in all the world has ever had it before. That is the effect of it. You want to tell it to other people, and old stagers who have known it for years and years have become your pupils. You begin to teach them something they know about as though they knew nothing of it at all. That is the effect of it. Of course, they do not let on; they do not smile benignly, and say, Poor creature! Inwardly they may smile, but it is a smile of gratification. They know that is how it ought to be with you. But they know quite well exactly what has happened. It is just like that. Some of us know that, when we did, by the grace of God and the operation of the Holy Spirit, leap clear of all that we had known in that other way, that traditional way, into the knowledge of the same thing in a living way by revelation, then we began to talk about it, and it did not matter to us at all that there had been people saying the same thing for years, or that it could be found in a good many books. To us it was as though they knew nothing about it at all. We were the only ones who knew anything about it! That is quite pardonable. If it really is of the first-hand order, there is something which is quite new and quite fresh, as though it had just come for the first time out of heaven. That is sonship.

Oh, if we lived there right up to date all the time, how different things would be. I mean, how much of our knowledge is, after all, what we have got through men, or of a man. And Paul is saying, Now, I could have got it all from the elders and apostles at Jerusalem and become a good Christian and an apostle, a servant of Jesus Christ like that. But no—"Paul an apostle (not from men, neither through a man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)."

Revelation Makes for Stability

Now we want to see how this connects with the whole object of the letter to the Galatians. These Galatians had, as the apostle said, started well, and for a little while they had run well, and then they had stopped because the traditionalists, the Judaizers, had come in and bewitched them, and their going on had been arrested; they had proved unstable. "I marvel", says the Apostle, "that you are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto another gospel" (i. 6). I marvel! "O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you.. having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?" (iii. 1, 3). They had proved to be fickle, unstable, unreliable; and such features are not the features of sonship. They are just the opposite; they are the contradiction of sonship.

Now what is implied, if it is not directly stated, by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle is this, that when it is after this kind—"God revealed his Son in me"—when it is first-hand, immediate, direct, personal, the revelation of God's Son in us, it makes for stability, it makes for assurance, it rules out all fickleness. Immediately you get on to second-hand ground, you get on to dangerous ground, so far as your stability is concerned. Presently a storm will arise, the rains will come, the winds will blow and beat upon that house, and it will fall: and great will be the fall of it, because it was built upon the sand. You remember what our Lord said: "He that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand". It implies something that is not rooted in experience, not rooted in ourselves, something we have heard and that is as far as it got. We have got it second-hand. The Galatians met the adverse winds and rains of the Judaizing assaults and crashed. Paul then, says, by implication, Stability, assurance, trustworthiness in the spiritual life demand that we shall have this first-hand knowledge by revelation of the Lord; and if it is a demand, it is a possibility, it is meant for us; and it is just that freshness of things by first-hand knowledge and revelation which brings the element of wonderful freshness and life into every case concerned.

There is all the difference, you see, between that Christian life which is a labouring under the burden of an imposed Christian order and system, requirement and demand, and the free life of a son in whom the joy of the Lord is the strength. I cannot help asking this question of you, Is your Christian life a burden? Are you under a strain because you belong to the Lord? Have you come into a realm—you may use phraseology and call it "the testimony" or something of the kind—into a realm which has brought you into a strain and you ever wear a look of strain on your face, and go about as though you were carrying a great burden: this testimony is something so exacting and you have to be so careful? Has your Christian life become anything like that, a strenuous burdensome thing which takes the real joy out of your life, and people feel that you are all the time trying to live up to something, to keep up a standard, to maintain something? That is all wrong, every bit of it is wrong. That is not sonship; that is slavery. That is what Galatians deals with, the great difference between the son and the slave. Sonship carries within the heart always the sense of wonder, of freshness of life. It does not mean you have no burdens and trials, but it does mean that your relationship to the Lord is a thing which is so real, so first-hand, and your knowledge of the Lord is so fresh, that you know that you are on the borders of a land of far distances. You know in your own heart what these words mean—"Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land of far distances" (Isa. xxxiii. 17). I am not exaggerating and I am not straining to make this mean something. To some of us it is just like that. For us we know that we have come to the land of far distances. That can be put in other words.

We are seeing so much, sensing so much, that we realise quite well we will never get through it, and never be able to give it out or even to exhaust it, though we were to go on here for many a lifetime. It is like that.

Is it like that with you, or are you living on the last crumb, hardly knowing how to make ends meet spiritually? It is the difference in sonship, you see. Sonship implies an open heaven, sonship does bring in this element of wonder. Oh, friends, it is very true; and I would not say that to you if it were not true in my own case. I know this tremendous difference. Life is cut in two for some of us. On the one side of life, there was that strain to get something, to meet the demand, working hard to get some fresh idea, buying the latest books in order to try and keep fresh in our preaching, getting new ideas. People who were the most suggestive or provocative of thought and idea were our favourite authors. Then came the dividing of life with death and resurrection, with the Cross, and the other half of life, the growing revelation of the Lord Jesus that, no matter how long you go on, you feel that you have not started, but are still right at the beginning. It is a wonderful thing to feel you have the land of far distances, and are seeing the King in His beauty. That is the inheritance of sons. Christ is the land of far distances, He is the King in His beauty; and the land is our inheritance; we are brought into the land. It is a wonderful land.

Revelation Leads to Loneliness

Yes, that is quite true, that is all true, and yet there is something else about sonship which is equally true though not perhaps so happy. This revelation of Christ in us, when it is a true, real, living revelation, not only leads to and makes for stability and assurance and confidence, wonder and freshness and life, but it leads to loneliness, and I should be false to you if I did not say so, and indicate what that means: because the majority even of Christians are still hide-bound by tradition. They are still all of that other kind: what they have received they have received through men or from a man; they have taken on an already completed, rounded-off system of truth and teaching called Christianity. They have entered into it and taken it up, and they cannot see beyond it. You do not question their sincerity, nor do you doubt their earnestness, but there is that about all they have which is so second-hand. It is something which has existed through the Christian centuries, developed by this one and that one, shaped, formed and phrased by different teachers. It has become the evangel, evangelical Christianity in all its set terms, phraseology and forms. They do not see beyond it. And when one moves out of that realm into a personal, direct knowledge of the Lord through what we often term an open heaven,—but not, mark you, through a new or different revelation of Christ that is something apart from the Scriptures—into that experience, where we can say, "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me", and with me it is so real that sometimes I wonder if anyone has such a knowledge, such an experience;

when we move that way, we move into a lonely realm. The majority cannot follow, cannot go with us, and cannot understand.

It does seem to me that there was something of that about Paul, that even other apostles were not able to grasp or apprehend Paul. He seemed to be very much one by himself. Yet here too we see the wonderful grace of God. Regarding what I said to you in our previous meditation about Paul and Peter having to have it out, and Paul resisting Peter to his face, I think I ought to add a word which improves on that situation. It is quite true Paul had a very straight talk with Peter. That is putting it mildly, I think. The words are strong words—"I resisted him to his face". But I think it is a great thing that years after when Peter wrote his letter he writes of him as, "Our beloved brother Paul" (II Pet. iii. 15). It is all right. It shows the grace of God; the final offence has not been taken, fellowship has not been broken. "Our beloved brother Paul."—Peter coming back after being resisted to his face. Well, we just add that word and leave it.

But, you see, it does seem that even Paul, surrounded though he was by all the other apostles, had to go a lonely way, because this revelation was to him something so personal. It does mean that: understand that; and probably some of you do understand it in your experience. It will put you very largely into a lonely position, so far as the majority of other Christians are concerned, if you are going this way.

A Word of Warning—What is Meant when we Speak of Revelation

But I will step back a little, to safeguard and cover something. You have to be very careful about this matter of revelation, and I am not thinking for one moment of a revelation which is a different and a fresh revelation of the Lord Jesus from that given to the Lord's people in our own time or in other times. I am only speaking of it coming to us as revelation. Let us be very careful that we do not give the impression that we think that we are constituted by a special revelation which none of the Lord's people elsewhere have had or have. That is not the case, nor is that our idea at all. What we do seek to stand and live for is that the full revelation of the Lord Jesus shall come in our case in such a living way as to remove us altogether from merely traditional ground, and put us on to living ground. That is what it means, that the thing is living.

It is a difference, beloved, in another sense, in the sense that the Lord has done something by which it has been possible for Him to make His truth living in a fuller way than is true of that which is merely a traditional and set system, and an old order of things. That is the difference here in the letter to the Galatians. What Peter, James and John and all the others had was perfectly right, and Paul was not in any way different from them in any fundamental matter, or in the manner of his knowing, though in the measure of revelation he may have far outstripped others. But the point is, that whatever the other apostles may

have had, and whatever Paul may have learnt from them, all that had to come to him likewise by revelation; he had not just to receive it second-hand. That is the difference; and it is that which makes for these things of which I have spoken, and it is that which makes for real helpfulness and power. We are not really helped by second-hand truth, second-hand revelation. It may be a very fine address, the substance of it may be perfectly true, and we may see that the person who gives it really knows it; but oh, then there is the gap! What do we need? Not just to adopt it because they see it and believe it, and because it is true in their case, but it has to be made as true in our case. And when it becomes like that, true sonship in that sense, then we are in a position to be really helpful to others; for, while we cannot give them our experience, we can help them very much to see that there is such an experience, and that it is for them.

First-hand Experience Alone Makes a Servant of God

I have just said, in very simple language, another thing which is very far reaching and compasses a great deal of ground in the Word of God. Real service does not come by being "trained". We are never made servants of God by going to Bible Institutes. They may be good things, very helpful, very useful, but they do not make a servant of God. You cannot be trained to be a servant of God in this academic sense. "It pleased God...to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles." It pleased God to send me to College, that I might preach Him? No, it pleased God to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him. Real service of the Lord comes out of that sonship. In the Word of God, sonship always lies behind service—The Levites and priests, sons of Aaron; service, sonship.

The Testing and Perfecting of Sonship in the Wilderness

Now, Paul says, "When it pleased God...to reveal his Son in me...immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me; but I went away into Arabia". It seems to me that what Arabia stands for is always very closely related with sonship. Moses had forty years of it. Well, he was truly far more a son when he came out than when he went in, in a spiritual sense.

"The heavens were opened...and a voice...said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased... Then was Jesus led of the Spirit into the wilderness" (Luke iii. 21-22; iv. 1). Sonship was being dealt with there. "If thou be the Son..." That is the basis of the wilderness. Somehow or other, in the economy of God a wilderness has a great relationship with sonship. It is a principle. "I went away into Arabia." What is Arabia? You do not get very much help from the world in Arabia, nor do you get very much help from the flesh. The flesh has nothing to thrive on in the desert; the natural life is starved in Arabia. You are alone with God: that is the point. Moses was alone with God in the desert for forty years. The

Lord Jesus in the wilderness was alone with God. The Devil was there, it is true ; but He is now being tested and proved on this matter of His relationship with God without any help from the flesh or the world. Paul went away into Arabia. I have no doubt that during that time—some say two years—the sifting out of this position took place, the adjustment of things, the handing over of the old traditions to the new facts of experience. Perhaps you know something of Arabia. You can live in a great city and be in Arabia. You may be here right in this meeting and be in Arabia at the same time. You are knowing something of the dry desert, the wilderness ; that is, you are not finding a great deal upon which your natural life can thrive, a great deal to support you naturally in your relationship to the Lord. All that is being withdrawn, and you are coming to the place where it is the Lord,

and only the Lord, and all other things are taken away. Beloved, the desert, Arabia, has proved again and again to be a school of sonship, and a very valuable school. Some of us know a little bit about Arabia. Oh, the desolation for the flesh there ! " I conferred not with flesh and blood." No, it is coming, under desert conditions, to know the Lord. That is sonship, where the Lord alone is our resource, and where, if it were not for the Lord, we would die, our carcasses would fall in the wilderness ; but we are proving that He can prepare a table in the wilderness. That is sonship. You will see the thing in principle and in spiritual meaning if you cannot follow or wholly grasp the way in which it is put. What the Lord is set upon is having us like that, sons in a true sense. May He have it so with us !

T.A.S.

God's Quiet Conquests

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

God's quiet operations are like Himself, they are deep, and quiet, and seem to be slow, and circuitous, and have to be searched into in order to be appreciated.

When we stand upon the margin of a swift river, it often happens that there are whirling eddies near the shore, where the water runs back up the stream, which looks as if the river were going the wrong way ; but when we look out in the channel, we find the current speeding on toward the ocean. This is a picture of the way God works. In many things in the Church, and society, as well as in religious experience, it looks as if God were being defeated, and that the movements of His grace and providence were failures, and that all His purposes were going the wrong way. It is only when we lift our eyes and look farther away from the shore of the present moment and take into consideration the entire stream of God's government among men, that we see that He is constantly getting the victory, as it were by strategy, and in quiet circuitous ways.

He works in a hidden way, as if with gloved hands, and what we call second causes, and by forces which are spiritual and not mechanical. His great operations in grace, in subduing the soul are accomplished by the invisible and almost unrecognized power of serious thoughts, gentle heart-yearnings, heavenly attractions in prayer, secret apprehensions of great danger, or sudden openings, in the mind, of hope ; or the alternations of a sense of utter helplessness on the one hand, and then great courage on the other.

Have you noticed that great rough old sinners are usually captured and conquered in the most unexpected ways, and by some little pathetic circumstance full of quiet gentleness, exactly the opposite of what we would think essential to produce such results? Infidels are not converted by big sermons, but more frequently by the quiet faith of some poor old saint, or the whispered prayer of a little child.

Whatever is done by Satan or the flesh is with great show, and noise and demonstration ; and you would think that they were upsetting the universe at every turn. Carnal churches work on the same line as the world, and when they plan for a revival there must be a great combination of churches, crowds of people, a gigantic choir, and the most eloquent preachers. When it is all over it is difficult to find the abiding fruits of a genuine work of the Spirit of God.

God works *through persons*, not through committees, federations, or great organisations. God conquers some heart, and through that heart He pours His purposes like a mighty river.

The tower of Babel was built by a national committee who said, " Let us build us a city and a tower ". But God singled out one *man*, Abraham—called to be a pilgrim, and the founder of a race of those who had faith. The king of Syria marshalled an army to capture the prophet Elisha, but that lone prophet prayed, and the army went blind.

The Lord carries His point and makes His conquests by keeping His saints in a helpless condition in various ways, so as to make them live by faith, and *depend on God alone*. Men of great faith are never allowed to get beyond having their faith tried. God's plan is—there shall be *none of self* and *all of Christ*. Our true conquest is to form a secret alliance with God, and take His side against our natural selves. We succeed by agreeing to be what other people would call a miserable failure.

We conquer our enemies by loving them, and by quietly letting the Lord manage them ; receiving their treatment as a part of God's will for us. God always comes out ahead and on top. He seems to give Satan and sinners, and old self, all the advantages, and then handicaps Himself, and, like lame Jacob, God conquers, and carries His point in such a quiet way that He seems to be doing nothing ; yet all the while, like the majesty of chemistry, He is working miracles out of sight and far underground. SELECTED.

(continued from back page)

in you by new birth. That is the Gospel. That, of course, is going back to the very elementary; but oh, that we could get a fresh glimpse of the immense significance of the Gospel, the Gospel of God concerning His Son, Jesus Christ, God's secret! I like to dwell upon that. If you sit down in the presence of the world situation and try to sort it out and find the solution to it, it is beyond us altogether; but all through the ages God has been perfectly at rest about this whole thing, about the issue. He was able to say, I have the secret of the whole thing, I have solved the whole problem, I have the means in hand: in the end My method will absolutely succeed! And the secret?—why it is just this: I will go down Myself in terms of sonship and will generate a new race through faith, and that new race will be brought eventually to spiritual fullgrowth; which simply means that then I shall fill all, I shall occupy all the

space; there will be no room for anything else at all! That is the issue for every Christian life. It is whether God is going to fill the whole space or not, or whether we are going to have a bit. All the time that is what is going on. Can the Lord gain the ground, will we give way to Him? Are we holding the ground for ourselves, are we in His way? Are we going to let the Lord have all the territory of our being in every way. It is not so easy as saying, Yes! It becomes a daily challenge. There is a strong, many-sided, subtle self-life. We never know how difficult it is to let the Lord have His way until He lights upon some pet opinion of our self-life. But that is the issue. When the Lord has gained His full way in all His own, as He will at the end, the manifestation of the sons of God will take place, and the whole problem will have been solved, the problem of this universe.

T. A-S.

SPECIAL GATHERINGS AT HONOR OAK

(if the Lord wills)

Whitsun—June 12-14.

Saturday, 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.

Lord's Day, 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.

Monday, 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.

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MAY—JUNE, 1943

NO. 3, VOL. 21

Spiritual Sight

No. 5.

The Cause and Ground of Blindness

READING: II Cor. iii, 7-18; iv, 1-6.

We have been led in this Conference to be concerned with the matter of spiritual sight. Here in the scripture which we have read we have another portion touching upon this very matter of blindness and seeing.

First, there is the fact of the blindness—"the god of this age hath blinded"; then there is the cause—"the god of this age"; and then there is the reason or object, namely; "that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them." We will look at it, then, in that order.

The Fact of Blindness

You will notice that a parallel is drawn between Israel in the days of Moses and the unbelieving in the days of Paul. In both cases it is said that there is a veil over their hearts, over their minds, a veil which shuts out, which excludes, and which is in the nature of a darkening blindness. Moreover there is an element of judgment and condemnation in the way in which the apostle speaks of it. Even with regard to Israel gathered to the door of the tent of meeting, when Moses read the law, he says, in effect, that while Moses had to put a veil over his face because they could not bear to look upon the glory of his face, that was not really because the glory could not be beheld, but because of the state of their mind, of their heart, because of an inward condition in themselves. Had there been another inward state, the veil would have been unnecessary; they could have beheld the glory and dwelt in the light. But the veil was an outward representation of an inward condition, hiding the glory of God. It was never the Lord's desire to hide His glory, but rather to manifest it, and that man should

dwell in it, should enjoy it, that there should be no veil between God and man at all. Veils have always been as something between God and man because of a condition which God would rather not have.

The Blinding Power of Unbelief

Thus it must stand as a thing under condemnation and judgment, this darkness, this blindness, this hiding, this shutting out of the glory of God, and that inward condition in the case of Israel in the time of Moses, and of those in like condition in the days of Paul, and in the case of all in such a position, that inward condition which acts like a veil is, as we know so well from all that is said about Israel, incorrigible unbelief. It was Israel's incorrigible unbelief which blinded them. But to say that is not to be altogether helpful. It is a statement of a fact, a very oppressive fact. We know our own hearts sufficiently well to know that there is an incorrigible unbelief in us all, and we want to understand why that unbelief is there, and what the nature of it is, so as to discover how the veil can be removed; that is, how the unbelief can be dealt with so that we behold the glory of the Lord and dwell in the eternal light.

Light on Resurrection Ground

Well then, let us look again to see what the Lord was ever and always seeking to do in the case of Israel. We can put it this way: He was always trying to get them in heart, in spirit, in life, to occupy resurrection ground. That is first made evident in the Passover in Egypt, when the firstborn in every home in Egypt was slain on that terrible night when death was everywhere. But Israel was not, as is too superficially supposed, exempt. The casual, superficial idea is that the firstborn in Israel were not slain, only the firstborn in

Egypt. But the firstborn in all Israel were slain. The difference was that the first born in Egypt were slain actually, and the firstborn in Israel substitutionarily. When that lamb was slain in every Israelitish home, for every household, that lamb representatively passed under the same judgment as the firstborn in all Egypt, and in that lamb Israel passed representatively from death into life. In that lamb Israel was virtually brought through death on to resurrection ground. For Egypt there was no resurrection ground; for Israel there was. That is the difference. But all died, the one actually, the other representatively. Thus God, right at the very foundation of Israel's national life, sought to get them established upon the ground of resurrection, which means that a death has taken place, an end has been brought about. One whole order of things has been wound up and another entirely different order of things has been brought in, and to get them to take their position upon that new ground, in that new order, was God's great effort and meaning in the Passover. The keeping of the Passover year by year as an established ordinance throughout all their generations and their history was God's way of showing that they belonged to another order, the order of the resurrection. While darkness was in every house of the Egyptians and over all the land of Egypt, the children of Israel had light in their dwellings; for light is always on resurrection ground, but only on resurrection ground.

Then at the Red Sea the same great principle was repeated, passing through and out on to resurrection ground; Egypt again swallowed up, but Israel saved. They all went into the same sea, but for Israel on the other side there is a pillar of fire to be their light on resurrection ground—the Spirit of light and of life. They kept the Passover as they went on year by year under God's order, in order to preserve the testimony as to the ground upon which they stood nationally.

Then came the Jordan; and it is but a reiteration in principle of the same thing, now made necessary, not by their naked condition, but by their recognition of it. It is doubtful whether in Egypt and at the Red Sea Israel had the subjective understanding of the meaning of what God was doing in the Passover and in the Red Sea, but now they have the subjective consciousness of its being a necessity. They have been discovering things for forty years and they agree at last; they agree with God that another ground altogether is necessary if they are to abide in the light. You see, God was persistently by every means seeking to get Israel to occupy and remain upon resurrection ground, from which there had been cut off entirely all the ground of nature. Their incorrigible unbelief had as its main constituent the clinging to unresurrection ground or ground of nature.

The Consequence of Living on the Ground of Nature

What is the ground of nature? Well, look at Israel and you can see quite clearly what the ground of nature is. The ground of nature is always a drawing of things toward oneself and a viewing of everything in the light of oneself, just how it affects self. You see

right at the beginning it was that. Yes, of course, the deliverance at the beginning affected us rather well, and so we were very happy. The mighty deliverance at the Red Sea is a good thing for us, so we are full of joy to-day. It will always be like that while things are good for us. But let us find that we are being tested at all, bring us to-morrow to this place and that, where it is not so obvious that it is all to our profit, and the song ceases, joy goes out, and murmuring comes in "They murmured." Oh how often it is said that they murmured! Why? Because they occupied carnal ground, natural ground, which in a word, means "how it affects me"! That is natural ground, and on that ground there will always be the uprising of unbelief.

The strength of unbelief is just that very thing, personal natural interests and considerations, looking at things in the light of our own advantage or disadvantage. Allow that kind of thing to come in for a moment, and you will not be long before you are questioning and doubting, and found in unbelief; for the essence of faith is the very opposite of that. When things are going against you and your interests, and you are losing your life and all that you have, and you believe God, you trust God, that is faith indeed, that is the essence of faith. But faith is not real faith when we believe God merely while the sun shines and all goes well. Israel occupied natural ground so persistently that they were found more in unbelief than in faith. It was that which blinded them. So that blind unbelief, when we come to analyse it, is simply occupying ground that is other than resurrection ground; that is, we are occupying ground which God has put under the curse, which God has forbidden, upon which God has inscribed the warning to believers, Keep off! If only we could see in our hearts those warning notices of God strewn over the whole territory of self-interest, worldly considerations, and so on, we should be saved from very much of the misery which comes into our lives.

Well, you see, the whole life of nature is a blind thing, and the measure in which we are ruled by nature is the measure of our blindness. "The natural man", says the Spirit of God, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned" or "discerned by the spiritual" (I Cor. ii, 14). The whole life of nature is a blind thing. The measure in which we occupy that ground is the measure of our blindness. God was seeking to get Israel off that ground on to resurrection ground, to be governed, not by nature, but by the Spirit: and being governed by the Spirit means to walk in the light, means to have light, means to see.

A Life in the Spirit

"Now the Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (II Cor. iii, 17). Liberty from what? Why, liberty from the veil. "When it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away"; bondage, limitation, is taken away. And "the Lord is the Spirit". To be on the ground of the Spirit, which is resurrection ground, with the life of

nature set aside, is to be delivered from blindness and to be in the light. A life in the Spirit! Israel forever stands to declare with no uncertain note that religion is not necessarily enlightenment, and that even to have the Scriptures is not necessarily enlightenment. "When Moses is read, a veil lieth unto their heart". "When Moses is read..." Paul said a very strong thing about the Scriptures and the prophets which they read every day; that they know not what they mean, perceive not what they signify, but are still in blindness, in darkness. No, even to have the Scriptures does not necessarily imply enlightenment.

This message of II Corinthians is as much to Christians as it is to unbelievers, if it is not more so, this message about the veil, about blindness, about seeing; for where is the Christian who is fully and finally delivered from the life of nature? Enlightenment, after all, is only a comparative thing, that is, it is a "more or less" matter. Hence all those strong urges and exhortations to believers to walk in the light, to live in the Spirit, for only so can this matter of spiritual seeing and understanding develop and make progress. A life in the Spirit—that is only another way of saying, a life on resurrection ground.

What we have said thus far is that the blindness which is spread over the whole of the life of nature operates and has its strength in the choice and acceptance of that life of nature on the part of those concerned. It is not necessary, it is not God's will. God's desire is that we should dwell in the light, that we should see His glory, that there should be no veil at all. That is His desire, that the veil should be taken away. But one great thing is necessary, namely, that we should come to that Passover, to that death which is the death to the life of nature and which brings in a new life altogether, a life of the Spirit, in which a new faculty, a new power, a new capacity for seeing is created. That is a very important thing. I could well spend all the rest of the time available on that, it is so important to us as the Lord's people.

When will the Lord's people who have the Scriptures, and who know the Scriptures so well in the letter, when will they come to realise and to recognise that, if truly they have been crucified with Christ, if they have died in His death and have been raised together with Him, and have received the Spirit, they have light in their dwelling? "The anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you, but...his anointing teacheth you concerning all things" (I John ii, 27). When will believers, when will Christians, come to realise that? Why must Christians who have the knowledge of the Scriptures in the letter run about here and there to seek advice from others on matters which vitally affect their own spiritual knowledge? I do not mean that it is wrong to get counsel, wrong to know what other children of God of experience think or feel about matters. But if we are going to build our position upon their conclusions, we are in great danger. The final authority and arbiter in all matters is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the anointing. We may get help from one another, but I do hope that you are not

going to build your position upon what I say now because I say it. Do not do that. I do not want you to do it, I do not ask you to do it. What I say is, listen, take note, and then go to your final authority Who is in you, if you are a child of God, and ask Him to corroborate the truth or to show otherwise. That is your right, your birthright, the birthright of every child of God, to be in the light of the indwelling Spirit of light, the Spirit of God.

I wonder where Paul would have been had he taken the opposite course to that which he did take? "When it pleased God, who separated me from my birth...to reveal his Son in me...straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me: but I went away into Arabia" (Gal. i, 15-17). I wonder what would have happened had he gone up to Jerusalem and laid every matter before those who were apostles before him? We know from subsequent events that one thing they would have said to him would have been, Look here, be careful, Paul! You tell us that on the Damascus road Jesus is supposed to have said something to you about going to the Gentiles; be careful! They would have put him back about this Gentile business. You know what happened afterward. You know how on that point even Peter was caught in dissimulation years after. You know how those apostles which were before him at Jerusalem were all the time very chary about this matter of the Gentiles, and had Paul capitulated to them, we should never have had the great apostle to the Gentiles, the great apostle of the Body of Christ, with his revelation of the mystery, of the oneness of all in Christ, Jew and Greek. He did not submit that thing even to those who were apostles before him, to ask them whether he was right or not, whether this was sound or not. Oh no! He had the anointing in Damascus; Ananias laid his hands upon him and he received the Spirit, and from that day, although Paul was quite ready and happy to have fellowship with his brethren, though he never took a superior or independent position, though he was always open to conference, nevertheless he was a man governed by the Spirit.

I know you have to be careful how you take what I am saying. It will only be safe for you as you are one who does not set yourself up as some independent party with the Holy Spirit, but who keeps perfect fellowship, humility, submissiveness, openness of heart, with readiness to listen to and obey what may come through others, as the Spirit bears witness to the truth. But all that depends upon your inward condition, whether you are on natural ground or on spiritual ground, on old creation ground or on resurrection ground. But being on resurrection ground, where it is not the life of nature but the Spirit that governs, beloved, you have the right and the privilege and the blessing of knowing the Spirit bearing witness in your heart and the anointing teaching you all things, with regard to whether any given matter is right or wrong. When will the Lord's people know that, recognise that?

You see, it is this other thing all the time that is robbing so many of the light that the Lord would give them. The Lord would lead them into the greater fulnesses of the knowledge of His Son, of the enlargement of their spiritual understanding, but they are neglecting the gift that is in them. They are neglecting the Holy Spirit as their illuminator and teacher and instructor and guide and arbiter, and they are going to this one and that one, to this authority and that, and saying, What do you think about it? If you think it is wrong, then I will not touch it! It is fatal to spiritual knowledge to do that. That is going on to natural ground.

Now the Lord wants us off of that ground. This matter of occupying resurrection ground, of living a life in the Spirit, is all-important in coming to the full knowledge of God's Son. How much more we could say about that! Let us be careful as to who our authorities are. So many dear children of God, individually and collectively, have come into dire and grievous bondage, limitation and confusion, by all the time going back to human authorities, to this great leader and that, to this man who was greatly used of God, this man who had a great deal of spiritual light. "The Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth from His Word" than even this or that servant of His possessed. Do you see what I mean? We get all the benefit of the light given to godly people and seek to profit by true light, but we will never come into bondage and say, That is the end of that matter! That must never be. We must maintain our resurrection ground. And who can exhaust that? In other words, who can exhaust the meaning of Christ risen? He is a boundless store, the land of far distances. No man yet has ever done more than begun to know the meaning of Christ risen. If there has been one man who has that meaning more than another, I suppose it was Paul. But to the last from his prison he still cries, "That I may know him!": "I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse" (Phil. iii, 8). Right at the end of a life like his, the life of a man who could say, Fourteen years ago I knew a man in Christ, caught up to the third heaven and shown unspeakable things, which, it is not lawful for a man to utter (II Cor. xii, 2-3), he is still saying, "That I may know Him! I say no man, be he Paul, has ever done more than begin to know Christ risen. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit" (I Cor. ii, 9-10). You see, the Spirit has the unsearchable riches to reveal to us. So much, then, for the blindness which comes by occupying natural ground, whatever form that may take.

The Cause of Blindness

A word or two about the cause. "The god of this age hath blinded." There are two things in that phrase. Firstly, this blindness is not, after all, only natural, it is supernatural. It is not to say everything

to say that nature is a blind realm. No, there is something very much more sinister than that about this blindness. It is supernatural blindness, but it is evilly supernatural blindness. It is the work of the Devil. That is why, on the one hand, spiritual sight-giving is always fraught with such terrible conflict. No one ever really does come to see by the Spirit and understand without a fight, without a price having to be paid, without a terrible amount of suffering. Every bit of real spiritual illumination and enlightenment is a costly thing. For it Paul had to be much on his knees where the saints were concerned. "I bow my knees"; I pray "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Eph. i, 17). It is something which has to be prayed through, and it is not without significance that prayer in the letter to the Ephesians comes so much in association with what is revealed in chapter vi: "our wrestling...is against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies. Wherefore take up the whole armour of God"—this and that and that—"...with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit" (Eph. vi, 12-18). "This darkness"—"praying always": "I pray that he...may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him". You see, it is all of a piece. But why all this? The explanation lies here, in "the god of this age". We are up against something supernatural in this spiritual blindness. We are right up against the whole cosmic forces of evil, all those intelligences operating to keep people in blindness.

It is no small thing to have true spiritual sight. It represents a mighty victory. It is not going to come to you by just sitting passively and opening your mouths for it to arrive. There has to be exercise about this matter. You are right up against the full force of the god of this age when you are really out for spiritual understanding. It is a supernatural battle. So every bit of ministry that is going to be a ministry of true revelation will be surrounded by conflict. Conflict will go before, conflict will go on at the time, and conflict may follow after. It is like that.

Herein, then, is the need for you to be exercised about light, that, while you hear the thing, you shall not take it for granted that, having heard it, you have got it; that you should afterward have very definite dealings with the Lord, that what He is seeking to break through to you shall indeed be entered into, and that you are not going to delude yourself by assuming that you know now merely because you have heard it in its terms. You may not know it. It may not yet be delivering light; there may be a battle necessary in this matter.

If we did but know it, a very great deal of the conflict which arises in our lives is because God is seeking to bring us further on the road, to open our eyes to Himself, to bring us into the light of His Son. God is seeking to broaden our spiritual horizon, and the enemy is out against that, and he is not going to have

it if he can help it. Conflict arises. We may not understand it, but very, very often, more often than not, it is just that, namely, that the Lord is after something, and Satan says, They shall not see that if I can help it! So there arises a mighty warfare. This blindness is supernatural, just as enlightenment is supernatural.

"The god of this age"! That designation may mean more than just a period in time. It may mean all of time, because Satan gained kingship over man right at the beginning. That is what he was after, to take the place of God and to get the worth-ship of man's life; to be god, to be worshipped; which simply means to take what man has of worth to himself. God made man with a view to his being a vehicle of bringing something to God for God's pleasure and glory, something worthy of God, that God should have a worth-ship out of man, and Satan said: I am going to have that worth-ship; God has something vested in that creation, something He is going to get for Himself; I am going to have it! So the whole of what took place in the Garden was Satan's way of supplanting God in man's heart, in man's mind, and getting from man that which was God's right—the worship. Thus, by man's consent and fall, Satan gained godship in this world, and has held it ever since. "This age" just means the course of this world. "The god of this age"!

Now, the greatest peril to Satan's godship is spiritual illumination. He will not hold that ground long once your eyes are opened. Oh, once a heart is enlightened, Satan's power is at once broken. So the Lord, consistently with that fact, said to Paul on the Damascus road—"...to whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God" (Acts xxvi. 18). The two things go together: From darkness to light; from the power of Satan unto God. I repeat that the greatest menace and peril to Satan and his position is spiritual illumination, Hence he must find ground on which to perpetuate and maintain his position, his godship, in this age. And what ground will satisfy him in that matter? The answer is, the ground of nature. You get on to the ground of nature and you have given Satan right of possession. Every time we do that, Satan's hold is strengthened

The Object of the Blinding Work of Satan

Now just to mention and hint at the third thing. What is the reason or object of this blinding work of Satan? It is that "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them" (II Cor. iv. 4). The glory of Christ; the gospel of the glory of Christ; the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God;

lest that should dawn upon them, and that it should not dawn upon them, the god of this age hath blinded them.

Then what is the object? We are taken back to some dateless time when in the counsels of the God-head the Son was appointed heir of all things. He who was co-equal with God was put in the way of inheriting all things. When that was known in heaven, there was one in the angelic hosts in whose heart iniquity was found. That iniquity was the pride of desiring that equality and aspiring to that inheritance. His heart was lifted up, and he said, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will be like the Most High" (Isa. xiv. 12-14; Eze. xxviii. 11-19), in the saying of which he uncovered his jealousy of God's Son; and out from that iniquity of his heart, that pride, that jealousy of his heart, he lost his place there, and he has come down and pursued his course of animosity all through the ages, that men shall never see the Son if he can help it. That the light of the glory of Christ should not dawn upon them, he has darkened and blinded them. It is to exclude the Son.

That surely signifies something immense where Christ is concerned, if Satan, with all his great intelligence and understanding, recognises that, if men see that Son, it is the greatest thing that ever could happen. Everything of God's intention is bound up with that. All God's great purpose in the creation of this world, and this universe, hangs upon that. It is all vested in the Son, and if men see the Son, then God reaches His end and realises His purpose. Satan says, That must not be, they must not see the Son! The god of this age hath blinded their minds, lest the light of the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God, should dawn upon them.

What a thing it is to see the Son then! I cannot stay now with that immense matter. But let us finish on this note: What a tremendous shout will go up throughout the universe when at last we see Him face to face, when there is no more darkening veil at all in any degree. God has His end then; the Son appears, the Son is seen. When we see him, "we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is" (I John iii. 2). That is what God made us for: "fore-ordained to the conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. viii. 29). But oh, seeing now and seeing evermore unto the perfect day is necessary, for it is as we behold that we are changed into that image.

What is the prayer upon our lips and in our hearts as we go away? Let it not be mere sentiment, let it be a persistent cry and a persistent quest—We would see Jesus! In the seeing of Him all the purpose of God in this universe is bound up. T.A.S.

THE ENEMY OF THE CROSS

"The terrible history of mankind can never be rightly understood till we allow Scripture to teach us that, even as there is a purpose in God which overrules all, so there is, on the other hand, amid what appears, nothing but a natural growth and development, an organized system and kingdom that holds rule over men, that keeps them in darkness, and uses them in its war against the kingdom of God's Son.... Though the issue is not doubtful, the struggle is long and destructive. In the history of that struggle *the Cross is the turning point.*" (Dr. Andrew Murray).

The Life Of The Ages

SCRIPTURES: Gen. ii. 8-9; iii. 1-3; Rev. ii. 7; xxii. 14-2; 1 John 1. 2; John 1. 4; x. 10; 1 John v. 5, 10-12; Col. iii. 4; II Cor. vi. 9-10.

"So I saw in my dream that the man began to run. Now he had not run far from his own door but his wife and children perceiving it began to cry after him to return: but the man put his fingers in his ears, and ran on crying, Life! Life! Eternal Life! So he looked not behind him, but fled towards the middle of the plain". Thus Bunyan, at the very beginning of his immortal allegory, stresses the true nature of the quest of his pilgrim, and shows the goal towards which every energy of the seeker's soul must be directed. For the LIFE which is life indeed is a priceless boon, and cannot be gained in its blessed fulness apart from a great renunciation.

There are few things more important for the believer than to see the true nature of the eternal life. True it is a gift of God to be received by simple faith, but it is a gift with mighty potentialities. Its possession makes possible a development and destiny of amazing glory. Hence Timothy was exhorted to "lay hold on the life eternal" (1 Tim. vi. 12). Eternal life is spoken of in the Word of God as "a gift" (John x. 28), "a promise" (1 John ii. 25), and "a hope" (Titus 1. 2). It is something that the believer possesses, but the content of which has to be discovered, and enjoyed in ever-growing fulness.

Eternal Life not Abstract but a Person to be Known

One of the first lessons that the Lord teaches us as we go on with Him is that the eternal life is not an abstract thing imparted to us but a Person to be known. "God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (1 John v. 11). "This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John xvii. 3). We "declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (1 John 1. 2). "We know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John v. 20). "I AM the way, and the truth, and THE LIFE" (John xiv. 6). These passages make it abundantly clear that the degree in which the Lord Jesus is known by us is the measure in which we are personally in the good of eternal life. It is always a question of measure, and should be for each one of us a measure continually increasing. This will be the case as we learn to turn to Him from all else, and, like Bunyan's pilgrim, make the cry of our hearts to be "Life! Life! Eternal Life!"

Now the Apostle John says in his Gospel "In him was life, and the life was the light of men": and again in his first Epistle, "The life was manifested". "THE LIFE"! This expression brings us up short and makes us ask questions. In what sense was the coming of the Lord Jesus into the world a manifesta-

tion of life which can justify the use of the definite article? Not only "life", not even "a life", but "THE LIFE": something altogether different from, and infinitely higher than, anything which had been seen on earth previously, for it was now manifested in Him. Four thousand years of human history had passed: men had lived for longer or shorter periods: some had been great and good men, men of God; prophets who had spoken for God; priests who had led God's people in pure worship; kings who had ruled for God, but in no single one had "THE LIFE" been manifested. They had at best been broken lights, fitful and uncertain gleams, suggesting the existence of something, but not revealing it. When Christ came it was the shining of the Sun in noontide splendour, and that shining was a manifestation of "THE LIFE". As the Prophet Isaiah so beautifully says, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined" (Isaiah ix. 2).

We are apt to think of Eternal Life in terms of duration, as a life that lasts throughout the ages to come, whereas the emphasis in the Word is on the quality of the life, its origin, its character, its nature. The explanation of its age-abiding power is in what it is essentially. It is uncreated life, life at its very source, life that is life indeed. In Him *was* life. He not only lived but He is the Living One, as He says to John in Patmos: "I AM...THE LIVING ONE" (Rev. 1. 18); or more strikingly still to Martha in Bethany, "I AM.....THE LIFE".

There are two things to be borne in mind which are true in regard to life on all its varied levels. It cannot be defined by man's wisdom, nor can it be produced by man's power. There have been many attempted definitions, but they all fall short of the reality, and are completely unsatisfying. You can say what life does, but it is impossible to say what it is. You can discern its activities, see the results it produces, rejoice in its manifestations, but that is as far as it is possible to go. It is the mightiest force in the world, always performing miracles before our eyes, yet it defies analysis. Neither can man produce any "living thing" from dead matter. Many skilful scientists have tried over long periods to produce some simple form of living substance in their chemical laboratories from matter that contained no anterior life. Every such attempt has failed, and will fail; for God has reserved the giving of life in all its forms unto Himself. It is His jealously guarded prerogative. If this is true of the lower forms of life, and it admittedly is, how much more so in the case of THE LIFE manifested by the coming of the Son of God. This is the life of God Himself. It can be imparted to His creatures: they can receive it by faith and rejoice in its death-conquering qualities: all the potentialities and possibilities of the life can be explored and experienced by

the believer if its laws are obeyed, but the life itself remains in the hand of God : it is His and His only.

God has shut up the matter of life to His Son. " He that hath the Son hath the life : he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life ". (1 John v. 12). In these days of confused thinking when the Word of God is made of none effect by human tradition, it is of vital importance to see clearly that man by nature does not possess, and never has possessed, this first and highest life. Adam, in the Garden of Eden, fresh from the creating hand of God did not possess it. He was the crown and glory of creation ; a being marvellous and glorious, created for dominion and for fellowship with God. He was " a living soul ", but he did not possess " THE LIFE ". The Lord God put him in a position where it was possible for him to receive it ; indeed gave him every inducement to make it his holy ambition to share the life of his Creator, but from this he turned aside. And in that turning aside he found that the order of life he had received from God had become poisoned in its very spring, and he was from that moment a fallen creature, knowing good and evil indeed, but with the evil predominant in his nature. So man to-day, if he is to be what God desires, must know redemption ; the fall and its consequences must be undercut by the Cross of our Lord Jesus, and He must do that which Adam failed to do, namely, receive from the hand of God THE LIFE which only He can bestow.

The Tree of Life and its Signification

Now it is possible to see the meaning of the " Tree of Life " as it is found both in the Garden of Eden and in the City of God. " In HLM was life ". The tree is a symbol of Christ. Eating of the fruit of the tree is feeding upon Him, being nourished by what He is, living by His life. This was God's intention for mankind from the first. Humanity was to be Christ-centred, to find its life in Him. Hence, in placing the first human pair in the Garden of Eden, with everything that they could possibly need provided by the munificent hand of God, the central thing in the beautiful garden was the Tree of Life. This is often not recognised. Everyone remembers that the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was in the midst of the garden, but Genesis ii. 9, places the Tree of Life first. The initial mistake made by Eve was in ignoring the Tree of Life, and concentrating her attention on the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. She speaks, in her conversation with the Serpent, of the fruit of the " Tree " (singular number) which is in the midst of the garden. (Gen. iii. 3.). This was, in principle, a displacement of Christ from the position of centrality and pre-eminence which God had purposed for Him, and if that is done the way is opened for all kinds of disastrous consequences. This is the basic mistake which men have made ever since. God has fore-determined that His beloved Son should have the pre-eminence in all things. His place in the universe as FIRST is the key to what is often called the riddle of the universe. Put Him in His true place, and you have a most wondrous beauty and harmony everywhere.

Fail to do that, and dislocation and difficulties immediately appear. Dethrone Christ, and you have a universe in disintegration, resulting in complete chaos. " In Him all things consist " (hold together). He is the cohesive force. The manifold problems of this world, cursed as it is with man's selfishness, under the domination of him who deceived Eve in the Garden, and brought the head of the race under his authority, will be solved only when God's original creative purpose is fulfilled ; then His Son is in His place as supreme Lord, and all things are headed up in Him. When Christ fills all things, when all becomes an expression of what He is, then " The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad ; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing ; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon : they shall see the glory of the Lord, the excellency of our God ". (Isaiah xxxv. 1-2).

The enemy of God and man is very subtle. His wiles are far more to be feared than his roarings, His activities as an angel of light far more dangerous than his temptations to gross and obvious evil. He is a great believer in " the thin end of the wedge ". Who would have believed that the neglect of the Tree of Life, with its immediate issue of disobedience to God's express command would have led to the appalling evil manifest in the world to-day. Yet so it is. That was the (apparently) small beginning : we are now heading up to the end. There was the sowing of the evil seed in man's heart : we are reaping the harvest. There was the first displacing of Christ : we are moving with appalling speed towards Antichrist. As H. G. Wells said a few nights since on the Radio, " Thirty years ago the idea of a single government for the world was an absurdity. To-day it has become a necessity ". There are to be no world rulers save God's anointed Man, THE CHRIST, and the Devil's counterblast, The Antichrist.

When you move in thought from the opening chapters of Genesis to the book of the Revelation, from the earliest beginning of human history to the unveiling of Christ in relation to the time of the end, it is not a little remarkable that the Tree of Life reappears : and, significantly enough, it reappears in relation to the almost imperceptible beginning of departure from God's purpose and pattern for His people. Ephesus was to all appearance a model Church. In His message to it through the Apostle John, the Lord commends much. He speaks appreciatively of its works ; toil ; patience ; faithfulness ; endurance. Yet He says " But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love." And, startlingly enough He calls it a fallen Church and stresses the necessity of repentance. A leaving of first love means that Christ was not to them what He had once been. He still had a large place in their hearts but not the supreme place. He was not all in all. Though they were not alive to the fact, it was the beginning of decline, and the slippery slope on which they were descending would lead finally to that Laodicean lukewarmness and self-complacency which are so nauseous to Him. It is to

the "Overcomers" in Ephesus, that is, to those who recover their first love, that the promise is given: "To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the Paradise of God". Yes, Christ Jesus is not Saviour only, nor even Lord only, He must be known as "life", and that not as teaching but in actual experience. "He that eateth me, he also shall live because of me". (John vi. 57). And so; when we pass to the closing chapter of the book, it is delightful to note that the Tree of Life is one of the most prominent features of the City of God. There is a river, clear as crystal, flowing "in the midst of its single highway, and on either side of the river the Tree of Life is found, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month, and the very leaves keep the nations in health. That which was first and central in Eden's lovely garden is in the midst of God's glorious City. For garden and city alike the Tree of Life is a necessity. Christ is, and must be, the life of His people at all times and under all conditions. Only as this is so do they move on in the direction of God's ultimate purpose, for He is THE LIFE.

The Relation of Life and Light

At this point a word needs to be said with regard to the relationship between life and light. Light is often spoken of as if it were the same thing as knowledge; the accumulation of information; or, in the Christian realm, soundness of doctrine. It is sadly possible to be very correct in apprehension of truth and yet be in the dark. Light is a living thing, it is always the outshining of life. God works on the principle of incarnation. That which He would make known to man He expresses in terms of personality. He desires, for instance, that men should recover their lost knowledge of Himself. He does not commission one of His prophets to tabulate the facts and express them to men in clear and simple terms: He sends His Son. "There was the true light, even the light that lighteth every man, coming into the world". (John i. 9). In other words, "The Life was manifested". "In Him was Life, and the life was the light of men." As a consequence we know God, in Christ. We know that God is love because that fact was manifested in the Cross of Calvary. In the nail-pierced hands and feet of our blessed Lord, in His riven side, in His thorn-crowned brow, in His cry of dire agony, we read the ineffable love of God. "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." Here the heart of God is revealed, and, though the sun hides its light, and there is dense physical darkness, we perceive a spiritual radiance which illumines the face of God.

What is true of the Son, Who so wondrously manifested the Father, is true also in our own case. Light comes in terms of living experience. We never really know a truth till it has been wrought out in life; then it has become light which shines upon our pathway as we press on to know Him, the knowledge of Whom is Eternal Life.

"The Life was manifested, and we have seen it." There is nothing this world needs more to-day than to

see again that life in manifestation. It is this for which the Church has been left in the world. The manifestation of Christ is our supreme business. This is "The Testimony of Jesus". Not so much speaking of Him, but shewing forth The Life; its beauty and peace, its radiance, its triumph, its abundance, its ability to swallow up death in victory, its incorruption, its irresistible force, and indestructible qualities. We should be men wondered at because we are living by the power of a life infinitely superior to the life of nature. There should be some suggestion of miracle all the time. Paul expresses it thus: "As sorrowing, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich, as having nothing, yet possessing all things" (II Cor. vi. 10). (There is a lovely little story told of a humble and aged couple who had just lost their only son. A visitor called to sympathise and to comfort them. He found them sitting together, hand in hand, with the Word of God open, and the old man's finger pointing to one of the great promises. Tears were coursing down their cheeks, but there was the light upon their faces which never was on land or sea, and the very tears had a suggestion of the rainbow). In the same passage Paul adds, "As dying, and BEHOLD, WE LIVE." We ought not to be alive, but we are. THE LIFE is a death-conquering life. The Lord's servant is immortal till his work is done. Even then he does not die, but falls asleep in Jesus, and immediately passes into the presence of His Lord more alive than ever. For his life is the life of the ages and is unaffected by the death of the body.

"Life" and Overcoming in the Time of the End

There can be little question that while every phase of the Testimony of Jesus is important—and we must ever seek to be well balanced in our apprehension and expression of it—as the climax of evil in the earth grows nearer, the urge and pressure of the Holy Spirit in our hearts will be increasingly in relation to this matter of the life that overcomes. Defeated Christians are of little use to the Lord in His Testimony, or as warriors against the Powers of Darkness, as they move with ever-growing wickedness to their goal. In the Garden of Eden, with everything in man's favour, the Serpent was victorious. He overcame man. In the end time it is necessary for the accomplishment of Divine purpose that this should be entirely reversed; that there should be on earth a company of Saints, living by faith under conditions of the utmost difficulty, of whom it can be said, "They overcame him." (Rev. xii. 11).

At the beginning of His ministry, He Whose coming was the shining forth of THE LIFE met the Devil in the wilderness and overcame him. At the end of His earthly pathway, on the Cross, in weakness, in terrible isolation, in agony, beset by the concentrated forces of hell, He won a glorious victory.

"By weakness and defeat,
He won the mead and crown;
Trode all our foes beneath His feet,
By being trodden down."

" He hell in hell laid low ;
 Made sin, He sin o'erthrew ;
 Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,
 And death, by dying, slew."

" He was crucified through weakness ", but His victory was the triumph of THE LIFE. That victory is our victory, for His victorious life is our portion, that by which we live. We overcome " because of the Blood of the Lamb." The Blood is the Life. Blood shed is life outpoured. Blood sprinkled speaks of life imparted. We have " come to the blood of sprinkling " (Heb. xii. 24). The life that comes to us in the Blood of sprinkling is the life of the ages. Live by that, or, to put it in the language of John vi. " eat of His flesh and drink of His blood " continually and you overcome the cosmos, and the Devil also in whose lap the whole cosmos lies. Live on any lower level and victory is impossible. The final victory is the triumph of THE LIFE, which is " in His Son ". (1 John v. 11).

The overcomer, therefore, is not a person who adopts a certain phraseology, believes certain doctrines, or goes in for a peculiar form of teaching, but one who lives by the power of a life not his own, which however becomes his possession as he exercises faith in the Son of God, and says, " To me to live is Christ ".

As we are able to bear it, the Lord " weakens our strength in the way, He shortens our days " (Psalm cii. 23) in order that we may the more fully draw from Him His life, the life of the ages. He is " the living bread which came down out of heaven ". We, partaking of that bread, become " more than conquerors through Him that loved us ". We thus move on to that final goal which Paul describes in these memorable words, " When Christ, who is our life shall be manifested, then shall we also, with him, be manifested in glory ". (Col. iii. 4). Meanwhile, " We which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh " (II Cor. iv. 11). S.A.

The School of Christ

No. 7.

Learning Under the Anointing

READING : Matt. xi. 29 ; John i. 51 ; Matt. iii. 16 ; John i. 4 ; Rom. viii. 2 ; II Cor. iii. 16-18.

In the School of Christ ; that is, in the School where Christ is the great Lesson and the Spirit the great Teacher ; in the School where the teaching is not objective but subjective, where the teaching is not of things but an inward making of Christ a part of us by experience. That is the nature of this School.

The Meaning of the Anointing

" Thou shalt see the heaven opened." " He saw the heavens opened and the Spirit of God descending upon him." What is the meaning of the anointing of the Holy Spirit ? It is nothing less and nothing other than the Holy Spirit taking His place as absolute Lord. The anointing carries with it the absolute Lordship of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit as Lord. That means that all other lordships have been deposed and set aside ; the lordship of our own lives ; the lordship of our own minds, our own wills, our own desires ; the lordship of others. The lordship of every interest and every influence is regarded as having given place to the undivided and unreserved Lordship of the Holy Spirit, and the anointing can never be known, enjoyed, unless that has taken place. That is why the Lord Jesus went down into Jordan's waters, into death and burial, in type, taking the place of man in representation, from that moment not to be under the government of His own life in any respect as He worked out the will of God, but to be wholly and utterly subject to the Spirit of God in every detail. Jordan's grave set forth the setting aside of every independent lordship, every other lordship, every other influence, and

if you will read the spiritual life of Christ in the Gospels you will see that it was to that position that He was every moment adhering. Many and powerful were the influences which were brought to bear upon Him to affect Him and govern His movements. Sometimes it was the full force of Satan's open assault, to the effect that it was necessary that He should do certain things for His cause, or for His very continuation in life physically. Sometimes it was Satan clothing himself with the arguments and suasions of beloved associates, in their seeking to hold Him back from certain courses, or to influence Him to prolong His life by sparing Himself certain sufferings. In various ways influences were brought to bear upon Him from all directions, and many of the counsels were seemingly so wise and good. For example, with regard to His going up to the feast, it was urged, in effect : It is the thing that everybody is doing : if you do not go up you will prejudice your cause. If you really want to further this cause, you must fall into line with the accepted thing religiously, and you only stand to lose if you do not do that ; you will curtail your influence, you will narrow your sphere of usefulness ! And what an appeal that is if you have something very much at heart, some cause for God at heart, the success of which is of the greatest importance. Such then were the influences that were beating upon Him. But whether it were Satan coming in all the directness of his cunning, his wit, his insinuation, or whether it be through beloved and most intimate disciples and associates, whatever the kind of argument, you cannot cause that Man to deflect a hair's-breadth from His principle. " I am under the anoint-

ing ; I am committed to the absolute sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, and I cannot move, whatever it costs. Cost it My life, cost it My influence, cost it My reputation, cost it everything that I hold dear, I cannot move unless I know from the Holy Spirit that that is God's mind and not another mind. God's will and not another will, that this thing comes from God ". Thus He put back everything until He knew in His spirit what the Spirit of God witnessed. He lived up to this law, this principle, of the absolute authority, government, lordship of the anointing, and it was for that that the anointing had come.

That is the meaning of the anointing. Do you ask for the anointing of the Holy Spirit? Why do you ask for the anointing of the Holy Spirit? Is the anointing something that you crave? To what end? That you may be used, may have power, may have influence, may be able to do a lot of wonderful things? Beloved, the first and pre-eminent thing the anointing means is that we can do nothing but what the anointing teaches and leads to do. The anointing takes everything out of our hands. The anointing takes charge of the reputation. The anointing takes charge of the very purpose of God. The anointing takes complete control of everything and all is from that moment in the hands of the Holy Spirit, and we must remember that if we are going to learn Christ, that learning Christ is by the Holy Spirit's dealing with us, and that means that we have to go exactly the same way as Christ went in principle and in law.

So we find we are not far into the Gospel of John, which is particularly the Gospel of the spiritual School of Christ, before we hear even such as He saying, "The Son can do nothing of himself". "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself". The works that I do are not Mine; "the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works".

"The Son can do nothing out from himself". You see, there is the negative side of the anointing; while the positive side can be summed up in one word—the Father only. Perhaps that is a little different idea of the anointing from what we have had. Oh, to be anointed of the Holy Spirit! What wonders will follow; how wonderful that life will be! The first and the abiding thing about the anointing is that we are imprisoned into the Lordship of the Spirit of God, so that there can be nothing if He does not do it. Nothing! That is not a pleasant experience, if the natural life is strong and in any way in the ascendant. Therefore Jordan must be there before there can be an anointing. The putting aside of that natural strength and self-life is a necessity, for the anointing does carry with it essentially the absolute Lordship of the Spirit.

You notice the issue of that in II Cor. iii. 16. When it shall turn to the Lord, when the Lord is the object in view, the veil is taken away, and we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are transformed into the same image as by the Lord the Spirit, or the Spirit which is the Lord. You are in the School and you can see Christ and learn Christ; which is being transformed into the image of Christ under the Lordship of the Spirit. "When it

shall turn to the Lord", when the Lord is our object in view! But with us, with us Christians, with us very devoted, very earnest Christians, what a long time it takes to get the Lord as the sole object. Is that saying a terrible thing? We say we love the Lord; yes, but we do love to have our own way as well, and we do not love to have our way thwarted. Have any of you yet reached that point of spiritual attainment where you never have a bad time at all with the Lord? Oh no, we are all still found at the place where we so often think it is in the interests of the Lord that our hearts go out in a certain direction, and the Lord does not let us do it, and we have a bad time; and that has betrayed us absolutely. Our hearts were in it. It was not easy, absolutely easy and simple for us to say, Very well, Lord, I am just as pleased as though you let me do it, I delight always to do Thy will! We are disappointed the Lord does not let us do it; or if the Lord delays it, what a time we go through. Oh, if we could only get at it and do it! The time is finding us out. Is that not true of most of us? Yes, it is true. We do come into this picture, and that just does mean that, after all, the Lord is not as verily our object as we thought He was. We have another object alongside and associated with the Lord; that is, something that we want to be or to do, somewhere we wanted to go, something we wanted to have. It is all there, and the Holy Spirit knows all about it. In this School of Christ, where God's objective is Christ, only Christ, utterly Christ, the very anointing means that it has to be Christ as Lord by the Spirit. The anointing takes that position. Well, so much for the moment for the meaning of the anointing. It was true in Him, and it has to be true in us.

" Lordship " and " Subjection "

If we are going to graduate in this School, graduate to the glory, the ultimate full glory of Christ, to be the competent instrument in His Kingdom for government, the one way of learning that spiritual, Divine, heavenly government which is His destiny for the saints, is subjection to the Holy Spirit. That is a very interesting word, that word " subjection " in the New Testament. I think it has been rather mishandled and given a wrong and unpleasant meaning. The idea of subjection is usually that of being crushed down underneath, being put under all the time, suppression. " Wives, be in subjection to your own husbands." That is now interpreted as, You have to get down underneath; and the word does not mean that at all. How shall we seek to convey what the Greek word for subjection or submission really implies? Well, write down the number 1; and then you are going to write subjection or submission. How are you going to write it? Not by putting another 1 underneath. The word means " putting alongside it or after it ". Here is No. 1, but that is the primary number. That stands in front of all that may come after. That 1 governs all the rest and gives the value to all the rest. Subjection means that He in all things has the pre-eminence. We come after and take our value from Him. It is not being crushed down, but deriving everything from

Him as the first one: and you never do derive the benefits until you know subjection to Christ. That is to say, you come after, you take second place, take that place by which you derive all the benefit; you get the value by taking a certain place. The Church is not subject to Christ in that repressive sense, not down under His heel or His thumb, but just coming after, alongside, He having the pre-eminence, and the Church, His Bride, deriving all the good from His pre-eminence, from His having the first place. The Church second, yes; but who minds a second place if you are going to get all the values of the first by having second place? That is subjection. The Lord's idea for the Church is that she should have everything. But how will she get it? Not by taking first place, but by coming alongside the Lord and in all things letting Him have the pre-eminence. That is submission, subjection. The Lordship of the Spirit is not something hard that strips us, takes everything from us, and keeps us down there all the time so that we dare not move. The Lordship of the Spirit is to bring us into all the fulness of that Headship. But we do have to learn what that Lordship is before we can come into that fulness. It is of His fulness we receive.

The trouble ever was, from Adam's day till ours, that it is not someone else's fulness that man wants, it is his own; to have it in himself and not in another. The Holy Spirit cuts that ground from under our feet and says, It is His fulness, It is in Him. He must have His place of absolute Lordship before we can know of His fulness. That is enough, I think, for the moment, on the meaning of the anointing. Do you grasp it? The Lord give us grace to accept the meaning of Jordan in order that we may have the open heaven and, by the open heaven, the anointing which brings in all heaven's fulness for us. But it does mean the absolute Lordship of the Spirit. Lesson No. 1 in the School—oh, that is not Lesson No. 1, that is the very ground of coming into the School, that is a preliminary examination. We never get into the School until we accept the Lordship of the Holy Spirit. That is why so many do not get on very far in the knowledge of the Lord. They have never accepted the implications of the anointing, never really come down into Jordan. Their progress, their learning, is very slow, very poor. Find a person who really knows the meaning of the Cross, of Jordan, in the clearing of the way for the Lordship of the Spirit, and you will find quick growth, you will find spiritual development far ahead of all others. It is very true. That is the preliminary, the entrance examination.

The First Lesson in the School of Christ

But when you are in, Lesson No. 1 begins here. It is but a reiteration of what has been very strongly said in earlier hours. The first lesson in the School of Christ which the Holy Spirit takes up to teach us is what we have called the altogether "other-ness" of Christ from ourselves. This may be not only the first lesson but a continuous lesson throughout life. But this is the thing with which the Holy Spirit begins, the altogether "other-ness" of Christ from what we are.

Will you take up the Gospel of John with that one thought in mind and read it again, quietly and steadily. How different Christ is from other people, even from His disciples. You can expand from John's Gospel to all the Gospels with that one thought. It will be an education to you if the Holy Spirit is with you as you read. How utterly different He is! That difference is again and again affirmed. "Ye are from beneath; I am from above" (John viii. 23). That is a difference, and that difference becomes a clash all the way along; a clash of judgments, a clash of mentalities, a clash of minds, a clash of ideas, a clash of values; a clash in everything between Him and others, even with His disciples who are with Him in the School. His nature is different. He has a heavenly nature, a Divine nature. No one else has that. He has a heavenly mind, a heavenly mentality. They have an earthly mentality, and the two cannot meet, and do not meet, at any point. When the last word has been said, there is a big, big gap between the two. He is so utterly other.

Now, you say, that being so, we are at a very great disadvantage. He is one thing and we are another. But that is just the nature and meaning of this School. How is that problem going to be resolved? Well, it is just resolved like this, that He is all the time speaking about a time when He will be in them and they will be in Him, and when that time comes, in the innermost and deepest reality of their being, they will be altogether other than what they are in every other part of their being. That is to say, there will be in them that which is Christ, that which is Christ in all that He is as the absolutely Other, in their very person. In their souls, in their bodies, they will be altogether other than what He is there at the centre in their spirit. Sometimes they will think that the best thing to do is this, but that altogether Other inside will not let them do it. Sometimes they will think that the wise thing is not to do this, and that altogether Other inside keeps saying, in effect, Get on with it! The outer man says, It is madness! I am only courting disaster! The inner Man says, You are to do it! These two cannot be reconciled. He is within and He is altogether other, and our education is to learn to follow Him, to go His way. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself...and follow me." Deny himself: your arguments, your judgments, your common-sense sometimes. Follow Me!—and Christ is vindicated every time. Men have done the maddest things from this world's standpoint and have been vindicated. This is no suggestion that you should go and begin to do mad things. I am talking about the authority of Christ within, the difference of Christ from ourselves, and this is the first lesson the Holy Spirit would teach anyone coming into the School of Christ, that there is this great difference, this great cleavage, that He is one thing and we, even in all our religious aspirations, are quite another; and we can never be sure that we are on the right line only as we submit everything to Him.

This is why prayer has to have such a large place in the life of a child of God, and this is why prayer had

such a large place in His life when He was here. The prayer life of the Lord Jesus is, in a certain realm and sense, the biggest problem that you can face. He is Christ, He is the Son of God, He is under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and He is without sin in His person, and yet, and yet, He must spend all night in prayer after a heavy and long day's work. Again and again you come upon Him in prayer. Why must He pray? Because there are other influences at work, there are other things which are seeking to call for consideration and response and obedience, and He must keep all the time in line with the anointing, in harmony with the Spirit under Whose government He has placed Himself, because He can decide nothing out from Himself. If He must do that, what of us? We are not even on His sinless level. We have all that in our very natures which works violently against God, God's mind, God's will. How much the more necessary then is it for us to have a prayer life, by which the Spirit is given an opportunity of keeping us straight, keeping us on the line of Divine purpose, keeping us in the ways of the Lord, and in the times of the Lord.

Beloved, if there is one thing that a child of God will learn under the Holy Spirit's Lordship, it is this thing, namely, how different He is from us, how different we are from Him, how altogether other. But, blessed be God, now in this dispensation, if we are truly children of God, the altogether Other is not merely objective but within. That is the second phase of this matter of the "other-ness". The first phase is the fact of the difference. Will you accept this? Will you now, at this very point, this moment, just settle this? The Lord Jesus is altogether other than I am: even when I think I am most perfectly right, He may still be altogether other, and I can never, never rely upon my own sense of rightness until I have submitted my rightness to Him! That is very utter, but it is very necessary. Many of us have learned these lessons. We are not talking out of a book, we are talking out of our own experience. We have been quite sure at times that we were right and we have gone forward to follow out our rightness in that judgment, and we have come to grief, and we have got into an awful fog of perplexity and bewilderment. We were quite sure we were right, but look where we have been landed? And when we come to think about it, and put it before the Lord, we have to ask ourselves, how much did we wait on the Lord and wait for the Lord about that thing? Were we not a bit precipitate with our own sense of rightness? And that is David and the ark all over again. David's motive was all right and David's sense of God's purpose was all right. That God wanted the ark in Jerusalem was right enough, but David got the thing into his soul as an idea, and it worked itself up as a great enthusiasm within him, and so he made the cart. The motive, the good motive, the good idea, the devout spirit, got him into most awful trouble. The Lord smote Uzzah, and he died before the Lord, and the ark went into the house of Obed-edom, and the time was long, all because man had a good and right idea, but had not

waited on the Lord. You know the sequel. Later on, David said to the heads of the Levites, "Sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the Lord, the God of Israel, unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because ye bare it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not according to the ordinance". The instruction was there all the time, but he had not waited on the Lord. If David had brought his devout enthusiasm quietly before the Lord, the Lord would have directed him to the instruction He had given to Moses, and said, in effect, Yes, all right, but, remember, this is how it is to be carried! There would have been no death, no delay, things would have gone right through.

Yes, we may get a very good idea for the Lord, but we have to submit it to the Lord, to be quite sure it is not our idea for the Lord, but the Lord's mind being born in us. It is very important to learn Christ; He is so other.

You see, this divides Christians very largely into two classes. Christians can be, in the main, divided into these two classes. There is that very large class of Christians whose Christianity is objective, is outward. It is a matter of having adopted a Christian life, that now they do a lot of things which they once would not do. They go to meetings, they go to church, they read the Bible, lots of things that they used not to do; and they now do not do quite a lot of things they once did. That is what holds good more or less in that class. It is now a matter of not doing and doing, not going and going, being a good Christian outwardly. That is a big class with its various degrees of light and shade, a very big class of Christians indeed.

There are others who are in this School of Christ, for whom the Christian life is an inward thing of walking with the Lord and knowing the Lord in the heart, in greater or lesser degree. That is the nature of it, a real inward walk with a living Lord in their own heart. There is a great deal of difference between those two classes.

The Spirit's Law or Instrument of Instruction

Well now, I must come to a close. The altogether "other-ness"; by what means does the Spirit make that "other-ness" known to us? For the Spirit does not speak to us in audible language and words. We do not hear an outside voice saying, This is the way, walk ye in it! Then how are we to know? Well, it is in what the Apostle Paul calls "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus". "In him was life and the life was the light." How are we to know, by what means are we to be enlightened on this matter, on the difference between our ways, our thoughts, our feelings, and the Lord's? How are we to have light? The life was the light. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John viii. 12). The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death." Then the Spirit's instrument, if I may call it that, of our education is life in Christ. That is to say, we know the mind of the Spirit on matters by quickening, by

sensing, discerning life, Divine life, the Spirit of life. Or, on the other hand, if we are alive to the Lord, we know when the Spirit is not in agreement with anything by a sense of death, death in that direction.

Now, that is the thing that no one can teach us by words, by giving us a lesson. But it is a thing we can know. You know it by reactions, violent reactions often. You have taken a course, and you get a bad reaction. You strive in a certain direction to realise a certain thing, and you know, if only you would stop for a moment and look at it, you know that you are trying to bring that about. You know quite well that this thing is not spontaneous, that this lacks the spontaneity which is a mark of the Lord. You know the Lord is not coming through there. You know quite well that you have no sense of spontaneity and peace. It has to be forced, to be driven, to be made to happen. More or less I think everyone of you who is a true child of God knows what I am talking about. But remember, this is the Spirit's instrument in the School for teaching us Christ—life. The mark of a Spirit-governed, Spirit-anointed, man and woman is that they move in life, and that they minister life, and that what comes from them means life, and they know by that very law of life where the Lord is, what the Lord is in, what the Lord is after, what the Lord wants. That is how they know. No voice is heard, no objective vision is seen, but deep in the spirit life arbitrates, the Spirit of life.

How necessary it is for us to be alive unto God in Christ Jesus. How necessary it is for us to be all the time laying hold on life. If Satan can only bring his

spirits of death to bear upon us and bring our spirit under the wrappings of death, he will cut off the light at once and leave us floundering. We do not know where we are, what to do. He is always seeking to do that, and ours is a continuous battle for life. Everything for the realisation of God's purpose is bound up with this "life". This "life" is potentially the sum of all Divine purpose. Just as in the seed there is the life, not only of the seed, but of a great tree, and that life, if but released, will eventuate in that great tree, so in the life given to us in our spiritual infancy, our new birth, there is all the power of God's full and final and consummate thought, and Satan is out, not just to cut off our life, but to prevent God's final interests and concerns in the full display which is in that life which is given to us, that eternal life given to us now. The Spirit is always concerned with that life, and He would say to us, Guard that life: do not allow anything to come to interfere with that life: see that whenever there is something that grieves the Spirit and arrests the operation of that life, you immediately resort to the precious Blood which stands as a witness against all the death, that precious Blood of Jesus, the incorruptible life, the witness in heaven to victory over sin and death, by which you can be delivered from that arresting hand of Satan. That precious Blood is the ground upon which we must stand to deal with everything that grieves the Spirit and checks the operation of life, by which we come to know, and know in this living way, Christ in ever-growing fullness. The Lord help us.

T.A.S.

The Battle Is The Lord's

"And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of contumely" (II Kings xix. 3).

"This is the word that Jehovah hath spoken concerning him: The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. Whom hast thou defied and blasphemed? and against whom hath thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel" (II Kings xix. 21-22).

The Relation of a True Perception to Heart Confidence

You will notice the difference of attitude represented by these two verses. On the one hand, the heaviness and the sorrow and the terrible course of the circumstances of the day; on the other hand, the confident, scoffing rejoicing, the virgin daughter of Zion laughing to scorn that which was so terrible. It is not that at that particular moment there had been any change in the circumstances, but rather was it the change of the attitude of the heart toward the circumstances which brought this difference.

You may remember the story of how Sennacherib

came up against Hezekiah. Hezekiah found himself obliged to prepare Jerusalem for a siege: and how the enemies of those days did just exactly what enemies do to-day, and what our spiritual enemy always seeks to do, and that is, to introduce into the hearts of the besieged a sense of despair. If only that despair had been accepted, Sennacherib would have triumphed. Thus he sent men to speak, to shout, in the Jewish language to the people, representing to them how hopeless their position was, and he sent a letter to the king in the same terms: and indeed, from the human point of view, it was hopeless. But the thing that brought this change and which altogether altered the attitude of heart and mind of both the king and the people was this, that, instead of accepting the despair brought about or suggested by their own utter inability to face things, they as it were withdrew themselves, and stood back, and said, This is not a thing between the enemy and us, even between the enemy and us, with the Lord helping us; this is something between the enemy and the Lord; and as soon as it was seen in that light, it was perfectly clear that the issue was already settled.

Now, that is an attitude that we must adopt toward

he largest issues of this day of trouble and rebuke in which we are, and it is an attitude which the Lord would have us adopt to the most intimate and personal matters of our own every-day life. So long as we are found struggling, facing the peculiar and particular expression of the power of the enemy against us, so long as we are found even seeking the Lord's help to struggle against that, we shall be found, as was Hezekiah, oppressed with the sense of the hopelessness of it all; and once we despair, well then, the battle is lost. But, as the Lord strengthens our heart, cannot we regard even our personal matters, as well as the largest issues at present before us in the world, on this wise, that this challenge is not against man, it is against the Lord.

All Spiritual Conflict Essentially the Lord's Matter

Sennacherib had prospered in every direction so long as he had only been fighting against man, and, as he himself argued, and perfectly correctly, Hezekiah was least able to resist of all. So too it is true of us. We may know ourselves to be weakest of all. If others fail, we certainly shall. If they do not succeed, there is little hope for us. But there is a different aspect about this particular conflict, as Isaiah so clearly brings out. This is not now an antagonism against man, it is a challenge to the Lord, and it is as if Isaiah takes this position, and Hezekiah and all the people along with him, namely, of standing back out of this battle and bringing the real combatants face to face. The real issue is not between you and your problem, your oppression, your trial, your suffering under the Devil's power and opposition: the real conflict is between the Devil and the Lord. The challenge is not against you, it is against the Lord, and that thing that baffles you, that baffles me, against which I fight and struggle and find no way through, even by asking for the Lord's help, can it not be met by my withdrawing from this conflict, and saying, Even though I be, as it were, the battle-ground, the conflict is between the Lord and His enemy? And so the virgin daughter of Zion can laugh even Sennacherib's Satanic master to scorn because the Lord has taken up this matter. Therein lies the basis of all conflict.

So, as we read, it is clear the Lord has heard the blasphemy against Him, and the Lord is concerned for Himself, and He is well able to meet and overcome whatever be the force of the army that is against Him. We are quite confident about the Lord's ability. Oh,

what a rest of faith and what rest and peace come to our hearts as we are able to stand back and to make this a clear issue between the Lord and His enemy.

The Conflict the Occasion for Prayer—The Motive for Prayer

Well, you say, we must do something! Yes, we must do something. If you read the story as it is found in the book of Chronicles, you will find that Hezekiah actually did a great deal in practical ways to face the situation and to meet it as far as he could. But after all, when he had done everything that he could, Sennacherib was still there with his mighty host, and there was not the vaguest possibility of a chance of Jerusalem's escaping by all that Hezekiah did, even though he had to do it. Yet there is one thing that they did, and in the Chronicles narrative it comes out so much more clearly. It says there concerning Sennacherib and his men—

"And they spake of the God of Jerusalem, as of the gods of the peoples of the earth, which are the work of men's hands. And Hezekiah the king, and Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz, prayed because of this, and cried to heaven" (II Chron. xxxii. 19-20).

They prayed because of this. Here is a ground for prayer. Here they saw a situation in which there was a challenge to the name of the Lord, a blasphemy against the Lord. That is the ground of our praying, that is the strength of our praying. They did not merely pray, Lord, help us because we need Thy help! They saw that this was a menace, a challenge, to the unique sovereignty of the Lord, and what could they do then but pray; and when they had prayed the Lord sent an angel and cut off all the mighty men.

So, you see, the basis of confidence is that all conflict, all spiritual conflict, is essentially the Lord's matter, the Lord's interest; and the Lord is well able to take care of His own interests. That is the basis of confidence. With that confidence, we may pray, we must pray, and that is the thing that emerges from this story. Not that Isaiah said to Hezekiah, We will not do anything; it is quite all right, it is in the Lord's hands, but Hezekiah and Isaiah were spurred on to pray because they saw this thing was a challenge to the Lord. Now that surely is a strength for our prayers, that we may stand in faith and in expectation that the Lord will fight His own battle and gain His own victory.

H.F.

URGENTLY NEEDED!

Men (and women) of stature—(Isaiah xlv. 14; Ephesians iv. 13.). In whom the Cross has done a deep work as to self-interest. Who are not so concerned to preach, or to try and influence others to a doctrine or theory, but whose main influence will be one of LIFE. Who have come to know the Lord in a way of proving. Whose reaction to every situation, circumstance, and proposition is: Does it glorify God?, and whose Touchstone by which all things are tested and determined is: Can it work out to an increase of Christ? For such there is a pressing need, in the Church, in the Lord's work, and in all the nations.

Enquire in The Secret Place. Basis of consideration "Romans" chapter 6.

The Fight of the Faith

No. 5.

The Mystery of the Gospel

READING: I Tim. iii. 9; Phil. 1. 27; Rom. 1. 3, 5; xvi. 25-26; Eph. iii. 3-4, 9; iv. 13.

I think you will have recognised the familiar thoughts and words in all those passages, and the similar ideas. Some words stand out, such as Gospel, His Son, the mystery, the faith. They are all common words in those passages. And then, of course, there is the associated idea of conflict.

So this morning for a little while we are to be occupied with the mystery of the Gospel, or what the Gospel is. There is a very great need for a new apprehension of the nature of the Gospel. The Gospel has been very much reduced and whittled down, made merely to mean one or more of its parts, and its entirety, its fulness, has really been lost sight of. What I mean is, that so often the Gospel is said to be "the atoning work of the Lord Jesus", "righteousness which is by faith", "the forgiveness of sins"; all these things. All those things and many more like them are in the Gospel, they are parts of the Gospel, but the Gospel is something more than the parts. The Gospel is the sum of all those parts. But even then, when you have catalogued all the elements of the Gospel; God's redeeming love, forgiveness of sins, atonement for sin, when you have catalogued all the parts, you have still to get inside to know really what the Gospel is.

The Present Situation Amongst Christians

I am just wondering in these days—and we are all wondering and thinking very hard in the light of the situation—I am just wondering whether this may not be the matter upon which God is, to a very large extent, suspending operations to-day. I am just going to talk for a moment out of my heart, because I do feel that we are in a very perplexing, but very significant, situation at this time. There is a sense in which it does seem that the Lord is not doing very much. I mean there are no very manifest movements of God on the earth along certain lines in which we look for God to be moving. I do not mean that He is doing nothing, that there is nothing going on. I believe there is, and in parts a very real work of God going on. But, speaking generally, there is no great movement of God in an outward way spiritually. For a long time such forms of Divine activity seem to have been suspended. We think back to Wesley, and even to Moody, and then see that at a certain time a whole galaxy of great Bible teachers was raised up. We have all the names of the men of a generation ago. They have all gone. There are no movements like that, and have not been for a long time. Moreover the situation has changed so much that I do not believe that if all those men came back to-day, they could meet the

situation. Something has happened. The situation has not only changed but it has become much deeper, and the need is for something more than has been during these past generations, something more potent and something deeper. The need is such as to require something from God of a new order. It was there, of course, in New Testament times. I am not thinking of something extra so far as the New Testament is concerned, but I am wondering very much whether this whole matter is not largely one of a new apprehension of what the Gospel is.

We have a very widespread situation the world over to-day amongst Christians which is an altogether unsatisfactory one, and I think most leaders and responsible people realise that. I think ministers and missionaries are aware that the state of the converts and the Christians is altogether unsatisfactory and inadequate. It is a real question sometimes whether many of them have really been born again. The spiritual life of the Lord's people is a very shallow thing, speaking generally, a very poor thing. And surely to-day it is manifest that the Church generally is failing to register itself with any impact upon the world situation. There is not a word, there is not a voice to-day for the present situation. You may gather leaders together on the present situation and no one has anything to say that really goes to the heart of matters. Why this apparent hiatus, this suspension of any general and impressive working, any working that is adequate to the situation, God seeming to be doing nothing? Oh, I believe that He is doing something inwardly, but that is not what I am talking about. Why does this situation obtain?

The Need for a New Apprehension of the Gospel

Well I say, I wonder whether it is not because there has to be a new apprehension of the Gospel. I believe that it really is the demand of a late hour in the dispensation; that we have advanced in this dispensation toward the end so much that the Lord cannot any longer accept the elementary. He must have the mature, He must have the fuller. Everything surely along the line of intensification as we see it demands that.

Now, of course, until His people have come to realise the ineffectiveness and the futility, the weakness and the failure of the partial, He cannot do anything; because the Lord always works with His people, and therefore He must have them in a state which makes it possible for Him to do something. If His people are content with something less, it would be a very unwise thing for Him to give His full thought in revelation. It would be perfectly useless. They would have no sense of need of it. May it not be that that is

one of the deeper things He is doing, namely, creating and intensifying the sense of the weakness and futility of things, raising big questions even about the Gospel. I think there is reason to think that it is so. Thus it may be—I only put it in that form—that His answer is a new apprehension of the Gospel and what the Gospel is.

God's Secret

Now is it not interesting that here in the Scriptures you have such a phrase as this—"the mystery of the Gospel", and that word "mystery" is definitely stated to be a secret which God has deliberately held through ages and generations, an undisclosed, undivulged thought of His. He has verily in things throughout the ages deliberately kept a secret, had a secret, an unrevealed intention in relation to means and methods of reaching His end. And note again, it is not the mystery of some profound extra teaching, it is not that some revelation over and above the simple Gospel is the message. Oh, if that has got into your mind, get rid of it at once. The mystery is not some extra revelation of Divine truth, it is not something apart from the Gospel. I think a lot of people, when they hear words like those, "the mystery which hath been hid for ages", think that is higher truth, or something for people who are in another realm altogether from the ordinary person, that it is for some sort of spiritual aristocracy. No, it says here it is the *mystery of the Gospel*.

And then again the same word—"the mystery of Christ": and then, as we have noted, the bringing of these two things together, the Gospel of God concerning His Son, which is the mystery, the secret that had been hidden through all the ages and the generations, but which is now revealed: and Paul says, "my gospel".

Well now, what is this mystery of the Gospel which is the mystery of Christ, which is the mystery now disclosed? What is it? Can we put it into few words? We will try. In brief, the mystery is the incarnation of God in Christ in terms of sonship, with the intent that He should be the firstborn among many brethren, so that there shall be a Divine seed or family or Body. Oh, if we could but get inside of a statement like that! God's secret!

How did God decide to solve the whole problem of this universe after the chaos and ruin resultant from the working of Satan, and men's complicity with him, and the entrance of sin? How was God going to deal with this whole situation? By Himself coming right down in the form of man in terms of sonship and begetting a new race of beings as sharers of His own Divine life; not His Deity but His Divine life, partaking of His own Divine nature, becoming as a family His own moral and spiritual reproduction in the universe. I say that is infinitely—may I use the word of God?—infinitely ingenious. There is wisdom about that that is profound. Not a working from the outside to try and remedy and patch up a broken down situation, not a dealing with the thing objectively at all but Himself coming right into it, God incarnate,

God manifest in the flesh in terms of sonship; that is, in generic terms, to reproduce after His own kind. That is a secret which God kept hidden through ages and generations. God had that secret.

But how was He going to handle the whole thing? You can trace it now in the types and see it there. It is there in the tabernacle, in the ark of the testimony, it is there throughout the Old Testament in symbols. But they saw it not; God hid it. Now it is disclosed, the revelation is out. It is the mystery of the Gospel.

Sonship the Occasion of the Conflict

What is the Gospel? It is Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh in terms of sonship, to generate a new race after His own kind, to bring many sons to glory. That is it in brief. Oh, that is something very much more than getting your sins forgiven, that is very much more than justification by faith. It is that, but it is infinitely more than that, and all the other things included; the deep, deep inner secret of God, how He is eventually going to have triumph in His original purpose; and what we have been seeing is this, that the faith is not a system of doctrine at all. The faith, according to the New Testament, is sonship, and it is in relation to sonship as an inward, spiritual reality brought about by this work of God in generation, it is that which is the occasion of all the conflict. The Son came and, right at His coming, hell was moved from beneath to withstand Him and to make His entrance into this world impossible, and to get Him out of it as soon as could be. All the way along it was upon this very point—"If thou be the Son..." Hear it in the wilderness, Satan saying, "If thou be the Son..." It is an assault upon sonship in terms of doubt, to try to paralyse the effect of that sonship by introducing some question about it. "If thou be the Son..." So it was all the way through; and then on the Cross you hear that Satanic hiss again, coming through the Jews who cried, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matt. xxvii. 40). Only when we are in conditions and circumstances of extreme pressure and adversity, only then are we able to understand a little of what it meant to have that question raised at such a time. *You* the Son of God! *Poor* Son of God! Look at you, look at your condition, look at your situation! God has left you! This is the outworking of your own foolish ways, your own self-chosen way; there is no trace of sonship about this! "If thou be the Son..."—raising the question again in the light of the awful conditions. It is the assault upon sonship.

And then the assault was transferred from the Son to His seed, and we know quite well that the real nature of spiritual conflict is not around our creed, our profession; it is over the spiritual life that is in us. It is about that mystery in us of a difference. We are going the same way as He went, we are being subjected to the testing fires of adversity. The Lord allows conditions to arise in our lives which seem whole-heartedly to deny that we are sons, that we have been born out from God, that God is with us, that God is in us by His Spirit. All the conditions seem at

times to put God far from us, and there is nothing whatever to argue that we are sons. That is the test of faith.

And the faith is just that: not only faith in Him, but the faith is that we are sons, sons of God, in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation, in the midst of a world that is hostile, in the midst of a cosmos full of antagonistic spirits. Yes, the fact of sonship is there through new birth, but sonship is something more than birth, sonship is maturity. That is where the larger part of our consideration at this time comes in. It is so clear that the New Testament shows that the continuation unto the fullgrowth of sonship is as vital and as important as the beginning of sonship; that is, the bringing of the Lord's people to full spiritual growth is as important as bringing them to new birth. That is where there has been a breakdown.

That brings us right back to what I was saying at the beginning. To-day, and for a long time, evangelical leaders have put all the emphasis, or the main emphasis, upon getting people saved. They are interested in that more than anything else, and that is the direction of their main occupation. With what result? That we see a most unsatisfactory state among Christians, and that too in the face of the fact that the very existence of the New Testament itself is the evidence that to bring converted people to full spiritual growth is as important as bringing them to new birth. Why have we the New Testament, with Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and all the other letters, occupied with the fight of the faith to bring believers to fullgrowth? Every-one of them is a battle-ground.

Look at Paul's fight for Galatia. What a fight it was against those Judaizers who had come in, and were causing arrest to the spiritual progress of the believers there. Paul had to say, "I marvel that you are so soon removed...unto another gospel". Hebrews is another battle-ground. All these letters are battle-grounds, and they all have to do, not with the conversion of the unsaved but the going on of the saved, the terrific fight of sonship. Why? Because the issue is not that babes are going to oust the powers of darkness, but fullgrown believers. The Church has to come to maturity.

So the Apostle says, "When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men... and he gave some apostles; and some, prophets"; and so on. What for? "The perfecting of the saints... till we all attain unto the unity of the faith...unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 8, 11-13). The unity of the faith, the fulness of Christ. You see, that is the thing that comes to light. It is just as important for the seed or the family or the Body to come to spiritual fullgrowth as it is for it to be begotten at all. That is a tremendous thing. The mystery of the Gospel is not just getting people born again. The mystery of the Gospel is the fulness of Christ, and that only begins at new birth. This is the disclosed secret, this Gospel, and it is the occasion of the

tremendous, unrelenting conflict, a cosmic conflict with principalities, powers, world-rulers of this darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies (Eph. vi. 12). That is where the wrestling goes on.

The Focal Point of the Conflict—Its Nature and Outcome

With one word of emphasis, I close for the present. Beloved, the focal point of the conflict is the spiritual advancement of the children of God toward full-growth, and by any means whatever the enemy will seek to interfere with that. He is striking right at the heart of this thing all the time by every means in his power. God will reach His end, He will come in, in His Son in terms of sonship, to take up residence within those begotten of Him, and will grow in them, increase His measure in them, until at last, brought to the unity of the faith, they become a mighty embodiment and revelation of God Himself; not in Deity, but in what He is spiritually and morally in this universe, conformed to the image of His Son, a living expression of God's own thoughts, to fill His universe. The enemy is out against that, and every little step in that direction is challenged, the spiritual growth is countered all the time. He is striking at God's Son. Of course in principle it is quite true that the fight rages round the person of the Lord Jesus. There is a great fight going on between modernism and fundamentalism. The one stands on the ground of the absolute Deity of Christ, Christ manifest in the flesh, and the others will not have it. So the fight rages. But that is an objective fight really, a fight of creeds, philosophies, ideologies. It does not get very far spiritually. I grieve to think that some of the most unspiritual and unkind and unChristlike people have been the most rabid fundamentalists who would fight to the death for the Deity of Christ. It does not get you very far spiritually. It is something more than that, is His Deity. You see what I mean. It goes deeper than that. The person of the Lord Jesus means something more than what He is in Himself as one apart. It is what He is in this life of sonship as manifested in believers. God manifest in the flesh is not something in the way of a creed to be argued out. God manifest in the flesh is something to be proved by a life. I do not know but that it may have a meaning, that Jesus Christ came into this world and was Emmanuel, God with us, that God did incarnate Himself in that Man, and did some things, and went back to heaven. It might mean something, but I do not know that it would get me very far as something back there. If that fact of God in Christ did not become some reality right at the centre of my life, it would lack something of real value. The mystery is this—"Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. i. 27). It is the same mystery. There are not a half a dozen mysteries in the New Testament. It is the Gospel of God concerning His Son, and the Gospel is not a system of truth to be preached, the Gospel is a Person, and the power of the Gospel is not that you accept certain things proposed to you about Jesus Christ, but that Jesus Christ comes to reside

(continued from back page)

precious Blood, by faith in His atoning work there is justification from all sin, acceptance with God, deliverance from judgment. Yes, they have accepted the Cross; but all that is but the beginning, the foundation. It is intended to lead to something very much more than that. The Cross is a means in God's thought to a great end, and none of us as the Lord's people must be satisfied with just the means. We must be supremely concerned with God's object through the means.

The Cross Effects a Clearing of the Way for God's End

As a foundation, as a basis, there are various directions in which the Cross has its meaning. We must recognise these because they represent the clearing of the way for this that God is going to bring in.

It is interesting that there in the case of Ezra and those with him, those who came back from the captivity, that they spontaneously, instinctively turned to the building of the house of the Lord, as though it was the accepted thing, the thing taken for granted. It was the thing that had to be done: they simply gave themselves to it. But in order to prepare the way they put the altar in its place, and you notice what is said about that—"for fear was upon them because of the peoples of the countries". This is setting up that which gives assurance, an assurance that they can go on, that they can be established, that they can accomplish the work, that they can build the house, and although the enemies prevailed for a time, it was never the Lord's thought that the work should cease. That altar had secured a way, had

secured the accomplishment of the work. If only they had recognised and stood by all the significance of that altar, they would never have stopped building the house for those years, for you know that eventually when the work was resumed, it was because the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel and Joshua, and further exhorted the people through the prophet in the words, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. iv. 6); meaning this—You may be weak, a mere remnant back from captivity, there may be the enemies, the peoples of the countries round about all against you, but that altar has secured a way for the Holy Spirit, and in all your weakness you can go on. It is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts".

That is exactly how it worked out in the New Testament. Here were these few poor people in Jerusalem who had proved themselves so weak and impotent, having failed at every point and broken down in all directions. Now the Cross is an accomplished fact, giving a way for the Holy Spirit, and that handful of weaklings, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, go right on in the building of the house against terrific odds; but the work goes on.

They put the altar in its place and instinctively turned to the building of the house. The altar cleared the way, and the Cross is just that by which a way is made, getting rid of things that hinder the realisation of God's purpose.

(To be continued).

T.A.S.

NEXT SPECIAL GATHERINGS AT HONOR OAK

(if the Lord wills)

July 31—August 1 and 2:

Saturday, 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.

Lord's Day, 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.

Monday, 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.

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JULY—AUGUST, 1943

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The Power of Praise

We very often hear sermons in which are told the power of prayer and what can be accomplished by faith, and it is well that these should receive our attention. But to these, prayer and faith, should be added praise, for it, too, is powerful.

There is much praying—rather, saying of prayers—and many professions of faith, but the results are out of all proportion, for these are comparatively rare, and when seen, are often a matter for surprise, for wonder; whereas we ought to wonder when the prayers are not answered, when the profession of faith is not followed by definite results.

Lack of Praise the Root of Much Failure

One great cause of this failure to obtain results is a lack of praise. When we go to God in prayer we are, as a rule, so absorbed in the contemplation of our present need as to be unmindful of the many needs already supplied, and no praise accompanies our prayers. Instead, all too often, there are complaints because of the hardness of our circumstances, questions as to why we should have to endure such trials, there is peevishness, discontent, gloom.

All this shows a lack of appreciation of and gratitude for blessings already received, and small wonder if God does not continue to bestow blessings where there is so much selfishness.

Praise would change all this. Praise added to petition would make prayer fervent and effectual, "the prayer of faith" (James v. 14-16).

We do not truly pray without praising. Coming to God with a vivid remembrance of the many blessings already received we first of all offer unto Him "the sacrifice of praise" (Heb. xiii. 15), pouring at His feet the grateful love of our hearts. Then we proceed to present the petition for the supply of our new needs, and are then in condition to exercise faith for this supply. And right here will again enter praise, for where there is real faith that these petitions will be

answered there is always anticipatory praise. So we may put it thus: True prayer is always accompanied by praise for blessing already received. True faith is always accompanied by praise for blessings to be received.

D. L. Moody once said: "A requisite of true prayer is thanksgiving. The Lord has no use for grumblers, and when a man gets down on his knees and begins to grumble with a feeling of discontent in his heart, the Lord will not hear him. Our petitions should be full of praise and thanksgiving. We should rejoice in the infinite goodness of God and be thankful for all His mercies."

Hannah More wrote: "Praise is the only employment in which self finds no part. In praise we go out of ourselves, and think of Him to whom we offer it. It is the most purely disinterested of all services. It is gratitude without solicitude, acknowledgment without petition. Prayer is the overflowing expression of our wants, praise of our affections; prayer is the language of the destitute, praise of the redeemed man. If the angelic spirits offer their praise exempt from our mixture of infirmity and alloy, yet we have a motive for gratitude unknown, at all events, to the angels; they are unfallen and holy beings; they cannot say, as we can, 'Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain for us.' Prayer is the child of faith, praise of love; prayer is prospective, praise takes in its wide range enjoyment of present, remembrance of past, and anticipation of future blessings; prayer points the only way to heaven, praise is already there."

A writer has this to say on the same subject: "As gratitude responds to gifts, so should praise ever accompany petition in our worship. Asking alone is not prayer, any more than begging is earning a living. Houses of prayer are, and should be, almshouses to every broken and weary heart, but they should be temples of praise as well. Where God's grace abundantly ministers, there man's gratitude should freely

rise. It is good to put upon the walls of our dwelling places the petition 'God bless our home'; but we should not forget that it says too, 'Home! bless our God.'

"Bless God for starlight," said Spurgeon, "and He will give you moonlight; praise Him for moonlight, and He will give you sunlight; thank Him for sunlight; and you shall yet come to the land where they need not the light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light for ever and ever."

In Joshua xiv we read of the division of the Promised Land among the tribes. First of all, verse 6, "The children of Judah came." Judah means "praise". Grant says, "The spirit of praise must have precedence of all else in the land of the inheritance of the people of God and will put us in possession, most of all, of our inheritance there."

Praise a Guard against Backsliding

The passage from which my text is taken reads as follows: "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God: for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips."

This passage contains both an invitation, "O Israel, return," and an accusation, "Though hast fallen by thine iniquity."

Then the wanderer, the fallen one, is instructed how to return to the Lord, how to regain his former high estate. "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto Him, 'Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.'"

Next he is told how he can be kept from again wandering from the Lord, from again falling into sin, and that is by continually praising the Lord. "So will we render the calves of our lips." Or, "So will we praise Thee."

To those who are "saved by grace," who have been brought to the Father's house, in answer to the penitent's prayer, "Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously," Paul says: "By Him (Jesus, through whose atonement we receive salvation) let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name" (Heb. xiii. 15).

This is what is meant in our text by the words, "So will we render the calves of our lips." God does not require a burnt offering of praise, such as were offered of old, the body of a calf offered up by fire, but a "sacrifice of praise"; words of love, gratitude, appreciation, devotion, springing up from the heart and finding expression on the lips.

Referring to this "sacrifice of praise" the Psalmist, who knew all about the offering up of the bodies of animals as "thank-offerings," said: "I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock" (Psalm lxix. 30, 31).

Praise and Provision

Praise brings supplies for needs. When Mesha,

king of Moab, rebelled against Israel, Jehoram, king of Israel, requested the king of Edom and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to assist him to quell the rebellion. In the wilderness of Edom their water supply gave out, and consequently they were in great danger. Fortunately for them Elisha the prophet was in the camp. "And Jehoshaphat said, The Word of the Lord is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him. And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother (2 Kings iii. 12, 13).

The king of Israel was a backslider and well deserved the fate that threatened him. Like all such he was inclined to blame God for his troubles. And so he whines out, "Nay: for the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab." To this the stern prophet replied: "As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee."

Well was it for the kings of Israel and Edom that they had with them a man whom, probably, in their own hearts they despised, one of "the elect" (Matt. xxiv. 31); a portion of "the salt of the earth" (Matt. v. 13); a ray of "the light of the world" (Matt. v. 14), for for his sake God could and would interfere and avert the threatened calamity.

But notice the peculiar method adopted to bring the desired deliverance. "Bring me a minstrel," said the prophet. What a strange request. A minstrel? "This is no time for music and song," they might have replied, and no doubt thought. "Rather let us weep and lament; let us rend our garments and put on sackcloth and ashes."

But they did not dare say this, fearing the sharp reproof of the prophet. He knew well what the backslidden king had never learned, and what probably Jehoshaphat had but a faint knowledge of, that the best way to get victory is to get into the spirit of praise: that faith does not wait until walls fall before it shouts, but shouts and so brings the walls down: that it does not wait until victory comes before singing, but sings, and so brings victory.

The prophet had his way and a minstrel was brought to him. "And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand (Spirit) of the Lord came upon him. And he said, Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches. For thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink... and your beasts. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord: He will deliver the Moabites also into your hand... And it came to pass in the morning... that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water. And when the Moabites... rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood: and they said, This is blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have

smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil. And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them."

Note the steps:

1. The recognition of the need.
2. The appeal to the right quarter for a supply.
3. The spirit of praise—a minstrel, not mourners, being called for.
4. The obedience of faith—the ditches were dug.
5. The rest of faith—they retired and rested until the morning. Anxious watching would have hindered instead of helped.

Note the results:

1. The water came quietly and abundantly.
2. They drank and were strengthened.
3. The sun shining on the water deceived their enemies, making them careless.
4. They defeated their enemies.

And all this came about because one man was wise enough to understand that the Spirit of God prefers "the Doxology" to "the Dead March."

Praise Opens Prison Doors

Praise opens prison doors. Paul having cast an evil spirit out of a girl, he and his companion, Silas, were flogged, cast into the inner prison, and their feet were made fast in the stocks (Acts xvi.). In total darkness, breathing an atmosphere reeking with disease, their backs lacerated and bleeding, their limbs cramped through being compelled to sit in one position, surely they will bemoan their hard lot, and will bombard heaven with prayer for deliverance? But the record reads differently. "At midnight"—and it was that in more senses than one—"Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them."

Knowing what we do of these men we can imagine what occurred. First there comes from Paul a soft-breathed prayer of thankfulness to God for having counted them worthy so to suffer for Christ's sake and the gospel's. And as he warms to his subject his voice is raised until it is not only heard in heaven, but also in the other cells of that man-made hell. And Silas is very prodigal of his amens and hallelujahs. Then he prays and Paul plays the accompaniment with his fervent "Glory to God," his heart-felt "Thank God." Then follows song after song; hymn after hymn, psalm after psalm, until the echoes ring, and the other prisoners, amazed and wondering at such unusual sounds, so unlike the groans, the sobs, the curses, the execrations, the pleas for mercy and the prayers for death to which they have been so long accustomed, listen in awe.

Yes, these two men have an interested audience; poor suffering humans in whose hearts there is no song, on whose lips there is no words of cheer.

But interested as these may be, there are others still more interested. Divine and angelic as well as human and demoniac listeners are in that audience. But these are not all. There is one whom perhaps no one but God thought of at the time; but who was to

make her interest and pleasure very apparent soon. As the songs grew more and more triumphant, as the tide of praise rose higher and higher, this listener became more and more excited, and at last she, old Mother Earth, did what Paul and Silas, because their feet were in the stocks, could not do, danced for very joy.

And what a commotion her dancing caused! "Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled." What followed; the conversion of the jailer, the washing of the wounded backs, the feeding of the hungry stomachs, and the release of Paul and Silas, we all know.

Said the Psalmist: "Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together before the Lord; for His cometh...to judge the earth" (Psa. xcvi. 8). And as we read of the earthquakes of those coming days we see how literally old Mother Earth will respond. And here she was but anticipating that glorious time when for very joy of the prospective deliverance from Satan's thralldom she will dance so vigorously as to shake down whole cities, overthrowing in a moment what it has taken puny men centuries to erect.

The songs of praise of the angels who will then be in readiness to follow the King of kings in His descent to the earth on His all-conquering mission, coupled with the glad thanksgivings of the expectant saints, will make Mother Earth more sprightly than she has ever been before, and she will dance and clap her hands with a vigour hitherto unknown. The dance she executed to the music of the songs sung by Paul and Silas was but a foretaste of what is to follow, brought about by the same cause, prayers of thanksgiving and songs of praise.

Praise the Forerunner of Victory

Praise gives victory over enemies. While we have seen this to be true in the case of the victory of the kings of Israel, Judah and Edom over the Moabites, yet in that instance their victory is the secondary thought, the principal one being the supply of the much-needed water for the army. In this next instance the victory is the direct result of praise, and in it we find the devout and faithful Jehoshaphat figuring prominently, as he did in the other.

The Moabites, the Ammonites and others had united to make war against Judah, and Jehoshaphat had laid the matter before the Lord. The Lord through a prophet had given assurance of victory and instructions as to what steps were to be taken to ensure the defeat of the enemy. So the king gathered his forces, put them in battle array, and then did a remarkable thing. Instead of sending out a line of skirmishers, as is customary to-day, he sent out singers. "When he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the

beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord ; for His mercy endureth for ever."

And was this plan a success ? Let the Word answer. " And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against " their enemies, " and they were smitten." (2 Chron. xx. 20-30).

The singers were of more value to Israel that day than were the spearmen, and songs of praise were more effective in bringing the victory than were the showers of arrows.

It is in this way that we must meet our spiritual foes if we would gain victories over them.

Of course there are those who will say there is no

common sense in this sort of thing. Well, let them talk common sense and suffer defeat, while you act faith—which is uncommon sense, so few, comparatively, possessing it—give praises, sing songs, and gain the victory.

That was good advice which Paul gave to the Ephesians. " Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess ; but be filled with the Spirit ; speaking to yourselves is psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." (Eph. v. 18, 19). He had learned from experience that no enemy could withstand him when he used this weapon, and since he always used it he was invariably victorious.

Selected.

The School of Christ

No. 8.

The Governing Law of Divine Love

READING : John i. 4 ; ii. 3 ; iii. 3 ; iv. 13-14 ; v. 5-9 ; vi. 33-35 ; ix. 1-7 ; xi. 1-6, 17, 21, 23, 25-26.

A Zero Point

All these passages which we have read are really a sequence. They are the outflow of the first. " In him was life and the life was the light of men." And you will notice that they all represent a zero point. The mother of Jesus said unto Him, They have no wine : there is nothing to draw upon ! The next chapter is only another way of saying the same thing. Nicodemus came to Jesus and sought to commence at a point which he considered to be a good point from which to begin negotiations with the Lord Jesus, but it was a point far in advance of that which the Lord Jesus could accept : so He took him right back to zero, and said : Ye must be born again. We cannot start at any point beyond that. If you and I are going to come into any kind of living relationship, we must get right back there : we must come to zero and start from zero. Ye must be born again. For except a man be born anew, he cannot see. It is no use our starting at some point where, after all, we are incapacitated from seeing. Chapter iv is but another way of setting forth the same truth. The woman after all is found to be bankrupt, at zero. Jesus gradually draws her out and the final expression from her side is, in effect, Well, I don't know anything about that, I have not anything of that ; I have been coming here every day, day after day, but I know nothing about what you are talking of ! She is down at zero : and then He says, That is where we begin. The water that I shall give is not the drawing upon your own resources at all, not bringing something out of your well, it is not something that you can produce and I improve upon and make better. No, it is something which comes solely and only from Myself ; it is a new act altogether apart from you ; it is the water that I shall give. We begin all over again in this matter.

Then Chapter v. The Holy Spirit is careful to make perfectly clear that this poor fellow in Chapter v was in a hopeless state, that every effort was abortive, every hope was disappointed. For thirty and eight years, a lifetime, the man had been in that state, and there is the note of despair in the man. The Lord Jesus does not say to him, Look here, you are a poor cripple ; I am going to take you in hand, and after a course of treatment I will have you on your feet, I will make those old limbs over anew, I will improve on your condition. Not at all. In an instant, in a moment, it is a start again. The effect of what He does is as though the man were born again. This is not curing the old man, this is making a new man, in principle. This is something that comes in that was not there before, and could not be produced before, the ground of which was not there, something which was uniquely and solely Christ's doing. It was zero, and he began at zero.

Chapter vi, a great multitude. Whence shall we buy bread enough for this multitude ? Well, the situation is quite a hopeless one, but by His own act He meets the situation, and then follows on with His great teaching to interpret what He has done in feeding the multitude. He says, I am the Bread which came down from heaven ! There is nothing here on this earth that can meet this need ; it has to come out of heaven, Bread out of heaven for the life of the world : otherwise the world is dead. We begin at zero. (The loaves and fishes may represent our small measure of Christ which can be increased.)

Chapter ix, the man born blind. Not a man who has lost his sight and is having his sight recovered. That is not the point at all. The glory of God is not found in improving, the glory of God is found in resurrection. That is what is coming out here. The glory of God is not found in our being able to produce something or put something into God's hands, something of ours, that He can take up and make use of. The glory of

God is something solely out from God Himself, and we can contribute nothing. The glory of God comes out of zero. The man was born blind. The Lord Jesus gives him sight, and he never had sight before.

Then Chapter xi gathers it all up. If you like to sit down and look at Lazarus, you will find that Lazarus is the embodiment of "They have no wine". He is the embodiment of "Ye must be born again". He is the embodiment of "the water of life that I shall give shall be in him..." He is the embodiment of a bankrupt state; in the grave four days; but the Lord coming to that. Lazarus is the embodiment of Chapter vi: I am the Bread of life which came down from heaven for the life of the world. Lazarus is the embodiment of Chapter ix, a man who is without sight, who is given sight by the Lord Jesus. Lazarus gathers it all up. But if you notice, in gathering up everything, the Holy Spirit is very careful to stress and emphasise one thing, namely, that the Lord Jesus will not touch the thing until it is far, far removed from any human remedy. He will not come on to the scene, or into association with it, until from all human standpoints it is bankrupt, it is at zero. And this is not a question of lack of interest, lack of sympathy, or lack of love, for here the Spirit again points out that love was there. But love is bound by a law.

The Governing Law—the Glory of God

Divine love is bound by a law. Love has a law where God is concerned. God's love is under a law. God's love is under the law of the glory of God, and He cannot show His love only in so far as showing His love is going to be to His glory. He is governed by that. In all the showings of His love, His object is that He may be glorified, and the glory of God is bound up with resurrection. "Said I not unto thee that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" "Thy brother shall rise again." The glory of God is in resurrection, and therefore love demands that everything shall come to the place where only resurrection will meet the situation; no curing of things, no remedying of the old man.

Oh, let me start right back at the beginning if it is necessary. There are still a lot of people in this world who think that there is something in man that can contribute to the glory of God and that Christianity is only the bringing up out of man of something that is for the glory of God. That is a long, long standing fallacy and lie. It is not true. Call it what you like; it goes by various names, such as "the inner light" or "the vital spark". The Word of God all the way through is coming down tremendously on this thing. I start at zero, and zero for me means that I can contribute nothing. Everything has to come from God. The very fact that the gift of God is eternal life means that you have not got it until it is given to you. You are blind until God gives you the faculty of sight. You are dead until God gives you life. You are a hopeless cripple until God does something for you and in you which you can never do. Unless God does this thing, unless this act takes place, well, there you lie. Spiritually, that is how you are. You can contribute

nothing. Nicodemus, you have nothing to give, you must be born again; I cannot take you at the point at which you come to me! Woman of Samaria, you have nothing, and you know it and confess it: that is where I begin! Man of Siloam, you can do nothing, and you know it: then it all rests with Me! If ever there is to be anything, it rests with Me! Lazarus, what can you do now, and what can anybody make of you? If I do not come right in as out from heaven and do this thing, then there is nothing but corruption!

This is one of the great lessons that you and I have to learn in the School of Christ, that God begins for His glory at zero, and God will take pains through the Holy Spirit to make us know that it is zero; that is, to bring us consciously to zero, and make us realise it is all with Him. You see, the end is always governing God, and the end is His glory. Take that word through this Gospel again—the glory of God in relation to Christ. We were saying in a previous meditation that God's great end for us in Christ is glory, fulness of glory. Yes, but then there is this—that no flesh should glory before Him. And where does that come?—"He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (I Cor. i. 29, 30). And what is that connected with?—He is made unto us from God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord". It is a question of what He is made to be. No flesh is to glory before Him. "My glory will I not give to another" (Isa. xlii. 8; xlvi. 11). Therefore it is all the Lord's matter and He will retain it in His own hands. "And when he heard, he stayed where he was four days" (John xi. 6). In love, governed by love, that the glory of God might be revealed, He kept away.

Have we got settled on this? We take so long to learn these basic elementary lessons. We do still cling to some sort of idea that we can produce something, and all our miserable days are simply the result of still hoping that we can in some way provide the Lord with something. Not being able to find it, but breaking down all the time, we get miserable, perfectly miserable. It takes us so long to come to the place where we do fully and finally settle this matter, that if I lived as long as ever man lived on this earth, I will not be able to contribute one iota which can be acceptable to God, and which He can take and use for my salvation, for my sanctification, for my glorification, not a bit. All that He can use is His Son, and the measure of my ultimate glory will be the measure of Christ in me, just that. There will be differences in glory, as one thing differs from another in glory; one glory of the sun, another of the moon, another of the stars. There will be differences in degree of glory, and the difference in degree of glory ultimately will be according to the measure of Christ that each one of us severally has. That in turn depends upon how much you and I by faith are really making Christ the basis of our life, the very basis of our living, of our being, how much the principle of these familiar words has its application in our case, "Not what I am, but what

Thou art". Christ is all the glory, "the Lamb is all the glory in Immanuel's land".

Beloved friends, whatever you go away with, go away with this, that from God's standpoint, the glory of life depends entirely upon our faith apprehension, appropriation and appreciation of Christ, and there is no glory at all for us now or in the time to come only on that ground and on that line. I know how simple that is, how elementary, but oh, it is such a governing

thing. Glory—that the Lord shall be glorified in us. What greater thing could happen than that the Lord should be glorified in us? The glory of God is bound up with resurrection, and resurrection is God's unique and sole prerogative. So that if God is to be glorified in us, you and I have to live on Him as the resurrection and the life from day to day, and know Him as that as we go through life.

T.A-S.

"By My Spirit"

READING: Rom. viii. 1-14; Matt. iii. 16-iv. 1; Lam. iii. 1-3, 18; Zech. iv. 4-6; Gen. xxiv. 58.

I think most of us will need no reminding that in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans the Spirit is the pre-eminent factor. If we look at the earlier chapters in this letter, we find a strange absence of the mention of the Spirit—not a complete absence, but very nearly so; but when we move into what we call the eighth chapter—for there are no chapter-divisions in the original—we find immediately that the Spirit of God comes right into view, and that He comes into view as the One through Whom alone everything that has already been revealed becomes possible and actual. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

An Effect of True Revelation

The earlier chapters of Romans have been an unveiling of redemption, the completeness of the work of the Lord Jesus, and that work as something fully available for us. But—and here is the necessity of our seeing the meaning of the Spirit's work and knowing the reality of it—just before the end of the previous chapter all the revelation of a full redemption has ended in a cry of despair! "O, wretched man that I am!" What a strange effect of the redemption plan! There is certainly no question about the completeness of the redeeming work accomplished by the Lord Jesus; the whole matter of righteousness before God has been settled (chap. iii.), and sin, both as to its guilt and power fully dealt with (chaps. v & vi), and yet chapter vii seems to be a terrible anti-climax and contradiction of all this. "The good that I would I do not; but the evil that I would not, that I do." But is that not true to the experience of so many of the Lord's children?

The Holy Spirit Alone Equal to the Need

Why this is so and the answer to it are to be found in what is now set forth in this eighth chapter. The explanation is found in the fact that it is the Holy Spirit Himself Who alone can make true *in us* all that the Lord Jesus accomplished *for us* in His redeeming work. Whatever we see objectively as the provision of God in Christ remains but an idea and an aspiration until it is made subjectively true *in us* by the Spirit, and we cannot make it true by our own efforts. So the lesson of our bitter experiences is that in the things of

God we cannot of ourselves accomplish anything; it must be the Spirit Who makes everything real in us as we trust Him.

Now all this presupposes basically that we have left altogether the ground where the Spirit does not operate, the ground of "the flesh" or what we are by nature (see verses 7 and 8). The Spirit only operates "in Christ Jesus"—and the flesh has been ruled out in the death of the Lord Jesus (when He died, we died—II Cor. v. 14, Gal. ii. 20, Col. iii. 3). As we accept this fact and take our place as "in Christ Jesus", the Spirit undertakes to make true all that God purposes in and for us. In His baptism the Lord Jesus figuratively went down into death as to His own natural life, and lived henceforth only "by the Father" (John vi. 57) and not "out from Himself" (John v. 19, 30). So it has to be with us if we are to know the Spirit's unhindered operation. The anointing came upon the Beloved One in Whom the Father was well pleased: the Spirit is given and works upon the ground of Christ and not upon the ground of the natural man.

The Issue of a True Committal

What will be the effect of a true committal to Christ as our all and to a position of utter faith in the Holy Spirit in us to do everything? Will it be a sense of exaltation and accomplishment? In the case of the Lord Jesus it was not so, but rather a way of "darkness, and not of light". True spirituality will be accompanied by a sense of utter weakness, and a way that will be one of faith, and not of sight. God will weaken our strength in the way, until more and more our consciousness will be of having nothing and of being nothing. But we will learn that not in us but in Christ is all our hope, and as we stay there, the Spirit of life Who is "in Christ Jesus" will give ascendancy over the power of sin and death, and work in us the conformity to the Son of God which is the purpose of all His dealings with us, and is the goal of all the mighty redemptive work of the Lord Jesus (Rom. viii. 28, 29).

May the Lord find us willing to accept the end of all our own ways and strength, and, taking Christ as our all, to trust the blessed Spirit Who is in us to work in us the will of God and likeness to His Son. "Wilt thou go with this man?" was the challenge to Rebekah. Will our answer like hers be, "I will go"? The Lord grant it.

C.J.B.H.

Seeking the Glory of Christ as Son of God

"God...bath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things" (Heb. i. 1-2).

"...the kingdom of his Son...who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist" (Col. i. 13-17).

"...the glory of Christ...we preach...Christ Jesus as Lord" (II Cor. iv. 4-5).

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...All things were made through him: and without him was not anything made that hath been made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John i. 1, 3-4).

"For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and greater works than these will he show him, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son also giveth life to whom he will...For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself: and he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man" (John v. 20-21, 26-27).

"...the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John xvii. 5).

There are three main directions in which spiritual sight is necessary; firstly, with regard to the place and significance of Christ in the Divine scheme of things; then, with regard to the place and significance of man in that scheme; and thirdly, concerning the reality, ways, and objective of the evil spiritual powers in this universe. These three things very largely comprehend the Scriptures. Here, we shall be mainly occupied with the first of these.

The Place and Significance of Christ

There are two sides to Christ's person and work. (1) Christ as the Son of God. (2) Christ as the Son of Man. When we have gathered up all that is said and intimated in the Scriptures about Jesus as the Son of God we are led to one comprehensive conclusion. It is this, that God's sole rights and prerogatives have been vested by Him in His Son, and God has bound Himself to be personally and definitely known only Son-wise. There is neither access nor knowledge of a personal nature, nor fellowship, apart from the Son. "No man cometh to the Father but by me" (John xiv. 6). "No one knoweth the Father save the Son,

and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him" (Matt. xi. 27). That revelation is in the Son alone. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9). Then we have to ask, What are those unique and sole rights of God which are vested in the Son?

The first is

The Prerogative of Life

When we really come to deal with life, we come to deal with God. While there is something of life present man may have a place. He may help, stimulate, feed, and co-operate with it. But when life has departed man has no more place and it is God's matter alone. Only God can deal with that situation. The question of life from the dead is God's matter alone. For a whole generation this question raged as a battle, and very largely it raged around one man—Louis Pasteur. During the whole of his life-time the question of spontaneous generation flamed and fumed and divided men into schools of fierce antagonism. But before he died the question was settled and to-day no knowledgeable person believes otherwise than that life only comes from life, and never from death—that is, in the realm of nature. Thus the field is left clear for the supernatural, and life out of death is God's unique sphere. What is true in the natural is also true in the spiritual. The life which we all have in common as the life of soul and body is one thing, and the above law holds good with regard to it. But there is another life; it is uncreated life, Divine life, what we call spiritual life. That is another thing altogether. A hundred or more people may be here together, all of them alive in the first sense, but only a few may be alive in the second sense. The majority, while very active in the life of soul and body, may be quite dead with regard to uncreated, Divine, life. Thus are people divided, and in this way they are two entirely different orders of creation, species of beings.

Much has been said and written about the IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL. The Bible does not teach this. Continuity and immortality are two distinct things. Immortality is a Divine prerogative and feature. "Who only hath immortality" (I Tim. vi. 16). Immortality is that Divine nature which is characteristic of Divine life. It is something altogether higher than just survival of physical disintegration and the grave. This latter without immortality or immortal life must be a very horrible thing. It is what the Bible means—metaphorically—by being "naked" and "ashamed". So the apostle speaks of immortality as being "clothed upon", that "mortality may be swallowed up of life."

Thus the giving of that life is with God alone, and those who have it are thereby different in an inward

reality from all others. They possess the basis of a complete transformation, which is the meaning of being "glorified".

But our particular message is that God has vested this life in His Son Jesus Christ, and that it cannot be had apart from Him. "As the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself" (John v. 26). "As the Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son giveth life to whom he will" (John v. 21). The gospel of the glory of Christ is that God has given Him the glory of being able to give eternal life, incorruptible, immortal life to those who believe on Him. "This life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life" (I John v. 11-12). Once have that life imparted and all the glorious thoughts and purposes of God for men have been started on their way to realisation. So that what comes in with Christ is the life of a new creation, a new universe. Everything is to be realised on the biological principle, but it is a life which is different in nature, capacity, and consciousness from all other life. Being peculiarly God's own Divine life it is the basis and link of true inward fellowship with Him. In this way we are able to see something of the immense and vital significance of Christ.

To accept Christ in a living and positive way is to receive a life which means an inward and secret difference in our very constitution, and to be in the way of possibilities which are denied all others.

To reject or neglect Christ is to lose or miss all that God ever intended when He created man and put him on a probation of faith. Herein lies the immense peril of prevarication or procrastination. It is not in man's power to say when that life shall be offered to him. When Christ is presented, that is the time when life and death are in the balances of our acceptance or rejection, and the very greatest eternal values and issues are bound up with that decision.

To all this the great enemy of men's eternal glory

would blind them and keep them blind. One of the blinding lies of the Devil is the lie of evolution. While we all believe in a certain development and progress, the doctrine which declares that man started with the amoeba and in the course of many thousands—perhaps millions—of years passes through numerous stages—e.g. of ape, primitive man, civilised man, angelic being, and so on—and finally becomes a god, having attained deity!—this is a lie and a deception, and is intended by its Satanic inventor to keep men from accepting Christ. For all this progress (?) is said to be made altogether *without any outside* intervention. Someone writing on this matter has put it in this way: We have heard of a wonderful machine which, with claws, takes hold of so much leather at one end and draws it in and, without any outside intervention, takes it through stage after stage, and pours it forth as shoes at the other end: without any outside intervention! And, says the writer, that is evolution; the claws take hold on the amoeba and draw it in, and then evolution is supposed to take it through various stages and at last turn it out as angels and gods. But, says he, unfortunately the amoeba at a certain point gets caught in the mesh and in the end beasts come out, tearing one another to pieces! Are men really nearer angels and gods to-day after these thousands of years? Is the moral life of the race so much higher after all? Only the very blind will say it is.

Ah, it is just in that little clause "outside intervention" that everything is found. There will never really be any true conformity to God's likeness without outside intervention. It will not work like a machine. This outside intervention is set forth in the words of Christ: "I am come that they might have life" (John x. 10). There is no hope of man reaching God by himself, but God has intervened in the person of His Son and with Him offered the life which has in it the power to bring us into oneness with Him in likeness and fellowship.

(To be continued).

T.A.S.

The Cross, the Church, and the Conflict

No. 1.

The Cross the Basis of the Church

READING: Ezra iii. 1-4, 6, 8, 10-13; iv. 1-2; Matt. xvi. 18, 21.

We have read those two portions of the Word of God, not because we are going to dwell upon them in particular, but because they bring very clearly and definitely into view the matter upon which the Scriptures as a whole come with very great weight and forcefulness. Both in the Old Testament in type, and in the New Testament in reality, this thing is made very clear, namely, that the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is meant by God to lead immediately and directly to the Church, and that, when the Cross and

the Church are really brought spiritually into view, then an intense state of conflict is set up. That is stating very briefly what, as I have said, the Scriptures throughout make very clear.

You will at once recognise that those three things are clearly seen in the passage in the book of Ezra. They set the altar in its place. That is the Cross. They came to build the house of the Lord. That is the Church. And when the adversaries saw it, they drew near. That is the conflict.

In the passage in the Gospel by Matthew, Chapter xvi, you have it again. "Upon this rock I will build

my church." "From that time Jesus began to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day raised up." That is the Cross: and the Cross and the Church being in view, the conflict is begun. And so you will find it everywhere.

Go further back in the Old Testament to the twelfth chapter of the book of Exodus, and you have the same thing, remembering that the book of Exodus opens with a presentation of the sons of Israel, and you know that the sons of a prince with God are found in bondage and are about to be emancipated. Typically the Church is in view. Chapter xii brings the Cross in as the ground of that emancipation, but it is all surrounded by intense conflict. The battle is joined when the bringing out of those elect people is begun, and the ground upon which the battle is really fought out is the ground of the Cross. You come to the book of the Acts, and it is just the same: the Cross, the Church and the Conflict. It is the three C's all the way through the Scriptures. Well, then, we need to see God's mind about this matter.

In the thought of God, the Cross of the Lord Jesus is meant to lead immediately and directly to the Church. Any apprehension or teaching of the Cross which does not lead directly to the Church is either a misapprehension or only a partial apprehension, and it will inevitably result in a limited spiritual life and a limited spiritual service! The Cross, in God's intention, is never an end in itself. It is a way, it is a means, it is a basis, it is intended to lead to something else.

You go to another part of the Old Testament type of this, You remember when David, provoked by Satan to number Israel, to take account of natural resources, brought that awful judgment upon the people, the angel with the drawn sword smote up and down the land and was about to strike at Jerusalem itself, when the Lord intervened and said: It is enough, stay now thy sword. David was then by the threshing floor of Ornan, the Jebusite, and Ornan was threshing wheat, and David drew near and bought the threshing floor and built an altar unto the Lord, an altar by which this sin was dealt with, this iniquity was removed, by which the Lord was given His place, and that threshing floor of Ornan where David built the altar became the site of the temple in Jerusalem. It was the very foundation of the temple. If you dwell upon that a little more you will see how many elements of tremendous significance there are in that.

Yes, the Cross is a foundation, a basis, and it is the basis of the Church. They set the altar in its place and then they built the house of the Lord. I repeat, the Cross of the Lord Jesus in the mind of God is intended to lead directly to the Church, and unless it does that there will be progress only within certain very limited dimensions. There will be a straitened spiritual life and a service to the Lord which is lacking in those greater fulnesses of Divine meaning and intention.

I am most anxious that you should see more than I am saying, that you should really grasp the signifi-

ficance of this, and not just take it as something said. It can be put in many different ways.

We can put it like this, that the Lord Himself sees through the Cross a great heavenly object, and that object is His Church. "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it" (Eph. v. 25). There is your precise statement that, in the giving of Himself, which is the Cross of the Lord Jesus, there was an object in view, and that object was the Church. "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it", and if you and I are going to come into God's meaning of the Cross, it will be something more than the forgiveness of sins, something more than justification by faith, something more than the possessing of eternal life, something more than deliverance from Satan and hell, and entitlement to heaven. If we come into God's thought concerning the Cross, we shall very soon come into a heavenly revelation of the Church. The one must follow the other if we are right in oneness with the Lord's thought.

The Result of an Imperfect Apprehension of the Cross

In saying that, beloved, one is touching a good deal of tragic history. There has been a great deal of teaching of the Cross, preaching of the Cross. It has been faithful, it has been sincere, but for want of seeing this very thing, namely, what the Cross is meant to lead to, the results have been very unsatisfactory. That is to say, vast numbers of those who have come into those elementary benefits (if I may so call them,) of the Cross of the Lord Jesus have just remained there, elementary Christians all their lives, and there has been no touching, or very little touching, of the great situation on the earth which is such a terrible denial of God's thought about His people.

You look at the Christian world to-day, the people of God upon the earth, and what do you feel about the situation? The more you look, the more you know, the more your heart aches and the more you are driven to despair. The conflict between true children of God is the most terrible thing. They are all at variance with one another, they are suspecting one another: suspicion runs rife amongst the people of God. They even go as far as to pray hard against one another. This is not against the enemies of the Lord as pronouncedly so. One could say much, and not exaggerate, about the situation, for the more you know, I say, the more you feel what a situation of impossibility it is amongst Christians on the earth. Ought these things to be so, brethren? No, we cannot accept that situation as representing God's thought.

Then something is wrong. There is some explanation. It ought not to be so. Why is it? The answer is here. There has been a misapprehension or an imperfect apprehension of the Cross of the Lord Jesus, for the Cross of the Lord Jesus was intended to meet such a contingency and make it impossible: and yet all those concerned have accepted the Cross, that is, they have embraced those elementary values of the Cross, that Christ died for their sins, that by His

Editor's Letter

BELOVED OF GOD,

Space permits of only a few lines. The question which is occupying the minds of many of the Lord's people in these times is, "What is *the* object which God has in view particularly?" and therefore "What is *the* message for the hour?" While we will not claim to possess any special knowledge in this matter, with some conviction we would present the following for serious consideration.

(1). God's object in this dispensation has never changed, and is the same as ever.

(2). From time to time His emphasis has rested more particularly upon different phases of that object, and He has thus sought to recover its fulness.

(3). At the end of the dispensation there will be a Divine concentration upon the *whole* object, and less upon mere aspects of it.

(4). The inclusive object is His Son and "the One New Man": Christ as Head and the "called out company" as "Body"—one corporate man: organic, living, related, interrelated, interdependent, and spiritually authoritative under the One anointing—Head and members.

(5). To this all "*things*" must give place, whether they be teachings, traditions, institutions, missions, organisations, etc. The Lord will not be interested in anything only in so far as it *directly* and *immediately* ministers to His sole and utter purpose.

God is after a Man, a Race-Man, a Corporate Man; "conformed to the image of His Son"; to "have dominion"; and this demands that—as not since the beginning—Christ should come into His place as Lord and Head. The great 'movement' at the end should be a "Christ Movement"! *Everything* in the world points to this necessity.

The Lord give us a new apprehension of the greatness of Christ!

Yours in His fellowship,
T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.

Conferences in London. Usually the first week-end in each month.

In Glasgow, usually the second week-end in each month.

Literature

"The Centrality and Universality of the Cross."

Chapter I. "The Cross and the Person of Christ."

(With coloured diagram).

Chapter II. (In the press). "The Cross and the Holy Spirit."

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NO. 5, VOL. 21

The Representation of the Invisible God

No. 1

Representation a Principle with God

READING: Gen. i. 26; Col. i. 15; II Cor. iv. 4.; Rom. viii. 29; Col. iii. 10-11; Eph. iv. 13, 15-16; v. 22-32; John xx. 21-23; Acts i. 8.

In the first and second series of passages, there is one word common to them all, as you will have noticed. It is the word "image".

"And God said, Let us make man in our image."

"... who is the image of the invisible God."

"Christ, who is the image of God."

"... conformed to the image of his Son."

"... the new man... renewed... after the image of him that created him."

Our English word has behind it in the New Testament two Greek words—*idol* and *ikon*. Heb. i. 3—"the very image of his person". Rotherham translates, "the exact representation of his image" or "of his substance". It is that word "representation" which has taken hold of me, and which seems to be the key to our meditation.

Representation an Eternal Principle

You will at once see that in the passages which we have read, that is the governing idea; firstly as to the Lord Jesus, representation of God. He is said to be the image of God, the image of the invisible God. Then the thought is transferred to the elect, the Church, foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, a new man renewed after the image of Him that created him; and alongside of that, passages in which the actual word does not occur, but where the thought is still the dominant thought—"the measure of the stature of Christ", "a fullgrown man" (Eph. iv. 13). That with reference to the Church, the Lord's people—representation.

Then those final passages bring it into a very practical realm—"As the Father hath sent me, even

so send I you"—placing the emphasis upon the "as". Then, with the question which must arise, "Who is sufficient for these things?" the answer is, "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses", the latter word of which is only another word for representatives.

(a) Before Creation

This, then, is an eternal thought, a thought which has come out of eternity, God purposing to be represented in His universe, to have representation in man, and that eternal thought lies behind everything. It is before creation, before the fall, and therefore before redemption. It is the pure thought of God unclouded at all by sin and sin's consequences and sin's necessities. It stands back there as governing all the thought of God projected into the future. It is as though God decided He would have representation of Himself, the invisible God, in visible form, in man form, that He would be seen, be known, be understood; and, more than that, He would constitute upon a basis of fellowship, living relationship, in terms of representation, that which would represent Him not merely officially but in nature, after His own heart. By that means He would make Himself known, would give Himself, and would bring the creation into something more than mechanical obedience and response to His sovereign will; into agreeable, desired, loving fellowship with Himself, with His own heart, along the line of consent, and not of compulsion. That is what representation means in brief. It is exactly what it means in the case of the Lord Jesus being the image of the invisible God, and exactly what it means that the Church is conformed to the image of His Son. The thought, I say

again, lies behind everything, goes before creation, and then governs creation.

(b) In Creation

The creation is brought into being by this one governing thought of God, that the whole creation should, in a variety of ways, express Him, represent Him, speak of Him, and all the ordinances of heaven and earth as established by God, and all the relationships in creation, should in some way represent God's thoughts. If we had eyes to see, we should see Divine thoughts in all that God has done. The whole creation is the embodiment of this desire of God to be represented.

(c) In Redemption

But not only so, for when we come on to the matter of redemption, it is the same thing. Of God's dealing with the necessity which has arisen, representation is at the heart of it, and the representation in redemption is twofold, it has two sides. By reason of what has happened to the creation, and of the judgment pronounced upon it even unto death, there is a nullification of that order of things. If that sentence is carried out nakedly, barely and utterly, creation will be dismissed from God's universe, there will be nothing left. But representation again is the way of redemption, and in the person of His Son a representative position is taken under judgment, condemnation, and death, and in Him representatively the creation passes out, dies. We to-day surely do come afresh upon this aspect of things with new gratitude, that is, that you and I are saved from the awful fulness of judgment upon the creation because One has been our representative in that judgment. He representatively died as a cursed and judged and doomed creation because of sin. He died for us and as us, and we died in Him. That is a simple and very familiar truth.

But there is the other side in redemption. In resurrection, exaltation in glory, He is our representative. The Divine thought of representation is taken up again, not now in despair but in hope. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I Pet. i. 3). In resurrection He is our representative, in glory He is our representative, and just as truly as in His death we died in Him, we were included in death, so now we are included in Him in glory, in exaltation. As the "Captain of our salvation" He is bringing "many sons to glory", where He is as their representative.

Bearing upon that, the leaving out of two words which have been introduced into our translation, but which do not occur in the original, give added emphasis. I mean in Rom. viii. 29. "Whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son." They have introduced the two little words—"to be". Those words do not occur at all, they ought not to be there. They were put in because it sounds blunt and awkward to leave them

out, and just say, foreordained conformed to his Son. Before the world was we were so, in the thought and purpose and power of God Who is not of time. There is no past, present and future with Him. All future is with Him in one moment. When He determined it, it was then done in Him. You and I may be undergoing a process of conforming to the image, but that is only on our side. From God's side it is all finished, it is eternally accomplished before ever we started. These are mighty foundations for faith that, so far as God is concerned, there is no hap or chance about this. It is all an accomplished fact. "Foreordained conformed to the image . . ." So you see this Divine thought, this eternal thought of representation, does lie behind everything; creation, redemption, death, resurrection, glory.

(d) In the Church

But it comes right into the very centre of our lives as the Lord's people who have believed. The Divine thought concerning us is just this, that we are hers for one purpose in the thought of God—to represent Him. The Church is constituted for that one purpose—to represent Him. All the dealings of God with us have that one thing in view, the perfection of representation. That is but to say in another way that the discipline, the chastening, the dealings of God with us are to perfect our representation of Him; that is, to make us more like Him, not just as a thing in itself, but because He has ordained this to be the agency of His self-revelation, His self-manifestation. "The image of the invisible God". That with reference to Christ. The image, we might say, of the invisible Christ is the Divine thought for the Church and all its members.

It seems to me that is the very essence of this idea—"the church which is his body". Well, there is such a thing, of course, as reading one another's spirit, but even that is exceedingly difficult without their bodies! What we know of one another inwardly, we so largely know through our bodies. Even our personalities are expressed very largely through our bodies. If we are familiar with a person, more or less it is by some physical expression that we know who they are. A little child indoors knows daddy is coming down the road. Why? Because he or she knows daddy's step. You may be in one room and certain people in another, and you hear them speaking and you are able to say, There is so-and-so, I know their voice! There are doubles, perhaps, in that, but you are not often mistaken. You know they are there because that voice is their's. We are known by some physical expression. We watch one another, we touch one another, and we read and register one another's inner life by a look in the eye, a look on the face, a tone of voice, a mere gesture, a mere grunt! Yes, and a history lies in the slightest physical indication if we are alive to one another.

The Church which is His Body stands in relation to Him in that sense, and He, by His Spirit being present, indwelling, is indicated by means of His members. The purpose of the Church as His Body is

to represent Him, and this is the very essence of all—shall we say—missionary work, all ministry, all service. The dominating idea of all service or ministry is representation; not first of all things said, preached, proclaimed, but what we are, what is conveyed of Christ by our being. In the case of the Lord Jesus that was predominant. It was His presence which registered the Divine impact upon this earth; sometimes His silence was more terrible than His words. When He, on that Good Friday, that first Good Friday, was silent, that was an awful silence which men could not bear, under which they writhed and

would by any means make Him speak and break that silence. He came into the country of the Gerasenes and, without a word from Him, those possessed with demons cried out. His presence! It is representation.

What a mighty thing this is if it is there in the power of the Holy Spirit. You do not always have to begin to preach. If you are a Spirit-filled man or woman, your presence will make sinners uncomfortable and saints happy. What I am trying for the moment to emphasise is the truth, the principle, the law, that of representation.

(To be continued).

T.A.S.

Spiritual Sight

No. 6 (continued)

Seeing the Glory of Christ as Son of God

God's Prerogative of Light Vested in the Son

The second prerogative of God is light. It was God Who said, Let there be light, light shall be! Light is with God. Of course, there are many intimations in the Scriptures of that in the natural realm. God makes darkness and light, and God, when He chooses, can break into the ordinary course of things in that matter and turn light to darkness or darkness to light. He can divide in the same territory between light and darkness; when all Egypt is in darkness, gross darkness, with the plague resting upon it, the children of Israel have light in their dwellings. Right within the same land, light and darkness simultaneously existed by a Divine intervention from the outside. Yes, light can be preserved and maintained by God beyond the due course, and darkness can be brought in prematurely when it ought to be light.

There is much in the Old Testament about that, and it is carried over into the New Testament. When the Son of God was crucified, darkness was over the face of the land until the ninth hour. Put out God's Son and you put out God's light. That is the point. Light is God's prerogative.

What is illustrated by God's dealings in nature is the great truth of spiritual light; that spiritual light is God's prerogative, that He can bring light into darkness at any given moment, He does not have to wait for a course of things: and He can shut out the light at any given moment. It is in His power to do that. To turn from darkness to light is a miracle in the spiritual world and an intervention from the outside, and it is equally a Divine intervention of judgment when the light that is in us becomes darkness. That is with God.

Thus this second prerogative of God, namely, that of light, is also vested in Jesus Christ, His Son, and bound up with Him. "I am the light of the world" (John ix. 5). "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". "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten

Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him", "he hath revealed him" (John i. 18). It is the glory of Christ to be able, at any given moment, to break in upon our darkness, and has it not just been that which has brought His glory into our hearts and brought glory out from our hearts to Him, when by that blessed touch of His finger (the Spirit of God) we have been able to say suddenly, I see! I never saw it like that! What is then the spontaneous desire of our hearts? It is to worship Him.

We revert to that man born blind, to whom the Lord gave sight and eventually interrogated him with the inquiry, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? "He answered and said, And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him? Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that speaketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him." Why did he worship? Because the Son of God for him was one thing with having his sight. The two things went together. Having his sight was bound up with this One Who could be none other than the Son of God to give sight. That is what the Lord meant by having that incident included in that gospel, the whole purpose of which is to give evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. You know how John concludes his gospel—If everything was written that could be written, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written; but these things are written, "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John xx. 30). And this is written in the book which has that as its object. When the disciples say, Lord, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?, the Lord Jesus dismissed that superstition by saying, "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him". And the Son is the instrument of the works of God. The Lord Jesus had already said that the Father works, and the works that the Father does, the Son also does, and greater works than these will He show

Him. The works of God—giving sight, through the Son, to those born blind, leading to worship; and God does not mind you worshipping His Son, He will not be jealous of His Son, because He has bound Himself up with His Son and put His Son on an equality with Himself, and vested His own rights and prerogatives in His Son. To worship the Son is to worship the Father, because the Father and the Son are one.

Well, that Jesus is the Son of God is evidenced by people getting spiritual sight, and that is the glory of Christ, to be able to do that, leading, as we were saying, to worship: It is a great thing to recognise even a little of this. It is a great thing to have our eyes opened. It is a great thing to have our eyes opened initially and foundationally; it is a great thing as we go along to have our eyes opened again and again to see what no one has been able to show us, what we have struggled to see and understand; and then God sovereignly, by intervention from outside, touches our spiritual eyes and we see. Is it not a great day when we see like that?

Some of us know what it is to have something in the Word of God. We sense there is something in that passage that we have not got; there is the Divine meaning, but we cannot get it; and we have walked round it, we have looked to see if anybody could help us. We have gone to all the authorities on that particular passage, but we have not got it. There are a lot of good things being said, but somehow we are not getting what we sense is there. We put it back to the Lord and say, Now, Lord, if you want us to have that, you show us at the right time when it is necessary, not just for the sake of information but when it is going to serve a purpose. And we have gone on and left it with the Lord, and going on quietly, perhaps occupied with something else, the whole thing has just come up and been broken upon us, and we have seen it, and our faces have become wreathed with smiles. We can put

our finger upon many things like that in the course of our life. They have just come and we have received them. You cannot take that away from us.

Now my point here is simply to illustrate what a tremendous thing this breaking in of light upon us is, how it lifts us out, how it fills us with glory, how it changes the outlook when there breaks in spiritual light, light which never was on land or sea, light from above. And the Lord Jesus is the sum of that Divine light. He is the light. If only our eyes were opened to see the significance of the Lord Jesus, what a tremendous difference it would make, how we should be emancipated. The need is that, to see the Son of God as having vested in Him the prerogative of Divine light-giving, because He is the light. It is with Him to come right into our scene of darkness and drive the darkness out. That is His glory, and you can know the glory of the Son of God, you can worship Him, because your eyes are opened.

He is here. Just as He, being the resurrection and the life, means resurrection at any moment, and not merely at the last day—you remember Martha said, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day", and the Lord, in effect, said, Stop, I am the resurrection and the life, and I being here, the last day may be here so far, as the resurrection is concerned; it is no time matter when I am present, it can be now!—so He, being here, there may be a new creation now with a new creation light: not, I shall get light later on, but now; by this glorious intervention from without.

The glory of Jesus Christ which He had with the Father before the world was, the glory of the Son is that; that He has this sole Divine prerogative, right, power and ability to bring light. No one else can give it; it is not possible to attain unto that light. It is His gift, it is His act. That is His glory.

(To be continued).

T.A.S.

From the Wilderness to the Land

No. 1

The Distance of Difference

"It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by way of mount Seir unto Kadesh-barnea" (Deut. i. 2).

"Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness" (Deut. viii. 2).

This is not a new thought. We are familiar with both the fact and the reason of the extension of what could have been in eleven days to forty years, but what meaning and significance has been pressing in on me somewhat more of late, and I feel that so far as I am concerned any word for this moment arises out of this. It is what we might term the distance, not of space or geography, but the distance of difference. If the Lord had been only interested in getting a people to the point where they gave Him some

simple gesture of trust in His salvation from the world, its master and its tyranny, its bondage and its conditions, to become His people by desire; I say if He had been only interested in that much with the people, then there is no reason at all why He should not have transported them by the short route, the direct course, and have landed them in eleven days in the place which He had already chosen for them. The Lord could do that sort of thing if it were all objective or outward. If to-day, that is to say, He presented to us the values of the Blood of His chosen Lamb and called for that simple gesture of faith in that Blood which appropriates its efficacy, and we in our hearts thereby signified that we desired to be the Lord's people; if that were all,

then we could enter to-morrow into everything that He had designed for us, everything in His purpose, we could go straight in.

But few, very few, there have been who have gone that way. It has not, in the vast majority of cases, worked out like that. There is a necessity which sets up a barrier of impossibility. While the Lord would have it so, and has provided for it to be so, the actual position is such that it cannot be. The eleven days are extended to forty years, and then—and then a death! No, it is not the distance even of years of time or of measurement in the natural sense. It is the distance of difference and it is the measurement of the difference between Christ and ourselves, and that is a lesson which it takes most of us a very long time to learn—the greatness of the expanse, the long, long way which lies between ourselves as Christians and Christ, between the “spirituality” (?) of the flesh and the spirituality of the Spirit, between being Christians after the flesh and Christians after the Spirit. That lesson is a long one, a deep one, a painful one. Indeed, it is a lifelong lesson. It takes a whole generation to learn it, and when at last it is learnt, the whole-hearted acceptance of a necessity is made, and that necessity is to die.

I mean this, that in this way you and I come more and more to the place where we feel it is necessary to die, that the only thing for it is to die. You know what I mean by that, not physically just to abandon everything, but that we die out, what we are in ourselves, the self-life; there is nothing for it but to die. The longing to die *in that sense* grows.

Transplanting this truth from the Old Testament to the New, you can see it coming up in more than one connection. It came up with the disciples while they were with the Lord, when He was here in the flesh. They were His, they belonged to Him: He said, “Ye did not choose me, but I chose you” (John xv. 16); they were His. But there is a tremendous distance between them and Him, a distance which it was impossible to bridge. Mentally there was the distance of this great expanse between Him and them and between them and Him. His whole thought, mind, ideas, judgments, His entire mentality was different from theirs and they could not follow Him. Disciples, yes, in an outward way, but in a wilderness. They could not follow Him in mind. He had to intimate some things and at once their mentality revolted. Never!—was their reaction. This shall never be! “Thou shalt never wash my feet” (John xiii. 8). The mentality of Christian disciples in relation to the Lord is, Never!—only another way of saying, Impossible, it cannot be! we cannot see it, we cannot conceive of such a thing, it is altogether foreign to our idea of things! The distance of difference in mind.

In heart, they could not follow Him. Their desires were so different, so far removed. In will it was just the same. Their whole being was far removed, and although a crisis came and a tremendous change took place with the Cross and the resurrection and the coming of the Spirit, the whole thing was not

done then. Years afterward, Paul has to withstand Peter to the face (Gal. ii. 11). You can see there is room yet for approximation, even in the innermost Apostles; they are still on the journey, they have not yet arrived, and with their latest breath they will say, “Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect; but I press on” (Phil. iii. 12).

Again the truth is seen in companies of the Lord's people. We think of the Corinthian company, not necessarily only of those resident at Corinth, but all whom they represent, a Corinthian kind. They were the Lord's, blessed with many blessings, having the Spirit, but oh, what a gap between them and Christ! So much so, that Paul himself in visiting them resolutely determined to keep utterly to Christ, and Him crucified, because of the distance, accounting that to be the only thing that could meet the situation.

And is it not this very thing which arises again in connection with the churches as we find them at the beginning of the Revelation? Here is the Lord Himself presented to them, first of all in that very full way with those symbolic features, and then to each of the churches in a particular way, and both in the general and the particular it is a challenge; it is intended to be a challenge, a challenge to this distance which lies between them and Himself, this difference, the distance which has come about because of difference, the difference which has made a distance.

The Difference Between the Lord and Ourselves as Christians

Well now, what does all this amount to, to what does it bring us? I think it brings us to everything. We cannot touch anything but what we find this applies to it. But the one thing which perhaps will help us most now will be this lesson that you and I have to learn, which the Lord is trying to teach us and which we are bound to learn if we are going on with the Lord, and which we shall not escape, namely, the utter difference between the Lord Jesus and ourselves even as Christians. Perhaps we have thought that having reposed faith in the Lord Jesus, in His redemptive work, His atoning Blood, and having declared ourselves for Him, that simply opens the way for us to go right on straightway in full acceptance in every sense, and that the next thing to do is to turn outward and begin to do everything and anything that we can think of, that our minds and our wills and our hearts, our emotions and our enthusiasms can possibly do for Him, and we begin to do it.

Now I do not want you to misunderstand what I have just said. Acceptance in Christ is complete, is utter. In Christ we are accepted from the beginning. But there is another sense in which there is a vast amount that is not Christ which is not accepted, never is accepted, and the lesson of our lives is that of learning what is not accepted by God even though we are in Christ, and it is a terrible, grave mistake for us to think that, because we have become Christians and now belong to the Lord, that anything we may do, anything we can think of, anything that

rises as a generous impulse for the Lord within us, and any plan that we can put into operation and any zeal that we can exercise for the Lord, is acceptable. I say that is a grave mistake.

To be Christians after the Spirit is altogether a different thing from being Christians after the flesh. It is this Christianity after the flesh which has brought into being a vast system of things on this earth to-day which is not really serving the Lord, which is not really of vital consequence in this world, which is but an outward formal thing, which not only occupies the ground but is a menace to the genuine, the true; for so many say of it, If that is Christianity, I have no room for it! So the true is rejected and refused because of the false thing which is "Christian".

No, that which is after the Spirit is very different even from Christianity after the flesh. This latter can carry us a long way. We can have the very fulness of Christian teaching and truth in words, we can go right on to the fullest presentation of Christian doctrine and truth, getting right into what might be called the deeper things of the Word of God, and it may all amount to nothing more than our own natural interest in spiritual things. It is possible for us, for instance, to take up such a matter as the Scriptural difference between soul and spirit and to have a grasp of that as truth, as doctrine, and be able to analyse and present the analysis of that difference, and for it still to remain our own natural mental interest, a fascinating subject, something of interest, and for the thing to be without the unction of the Spirit to precipitate a crisis, to effect something of God. I have only taken that by way of illustration. We can preach the Gospel in the flesh and make it of none effect, said Paul, because it is preached in the wisdom of words, in the wisdom of men. (I Cor. i. 17). The very thing preached is nullified because of the source from which it comes, a natural interest, a natural drawing to that kind of thing, mystical Christianity; it does not get anywhere, it goes round and round in the wilderness. That which is of the Spirit creates a crisis, that which is of the Spirit takes a direct course, a direct route, that which is of the Spirit is a straight way.

Dear friends, what is the Lord doing with us? That is what we want to know. What is He doing with you and me, and with those who are really in His hands?—Is He not doing with us that which He has done with all who have come completely under His hands, that is, leading in a way and realm where human understanding and ability are completely confounded and exhausted, where it is totally impossible to cope mentally with His ways, or to explain Him? We cannot see, we cannot understand; neither is it in us to do, to achieve. We are learning that all our resources are of no avail, and that everything depends upon the Lord Himself; His wisdom, His strength, His grace.

Well now, if it is your experience so far and at this time, understand that it is quite right, it is not all a mistake. True, it is very painful, it is testing. It is

testing up to that point where your feet have to touch the very brink before you prove God. You have to come to an utter end of one way and to a beginning which is a beginning even to the point of lifting your feet to take a step to prove God, for God to come in. You say that is very utter. Yes, but it is this utterness of the difference between the Lord and ourselves that we have to learn, and that is going to set us over against the colossus of false doctrine, of the iniquitous lie which is being built upon this earth up to heaven, the lie of humanism.

That is the greatest lie that has been brought into this universe, that it is in man to be his own saviour, that it is in man to rise to perfection, it is in man to be God. It is all in man, the roots are in himself. I say that is Satan's colossus of iniquitous untruth, and God is working out the contradiction of that in a company, in His Church. It is being wrought, worked out, in the unseen, and, while it is so difficult to accept it in the day of suffering, weakness and darkness and inability to understand, if we knew the truth, the probability is that it is just this: God is doing with Satan in and through the Church what He did with Satan in and through Job, answering his challenge and his lie. Here is a broken, shattered, helpless little vessel of saints, bewildered, stripped, thrown back upon their God, unable to do or to understand, clinging to Him and seeking to prove Him, and through that the greatest iniquity in this universe is being assailed by God and answered.

The lie! There never was a time when that lie has reached greater proportion than it has to-day. Of course, it represents the greatest enigma that confronts us, when what is going on shouts at the top of its voice what kind of creature man is after all, yet at the same time men are pinning their faith to humanism as never before. But in you and in me, poor broken ones, God has His answer, and it does mean something to the Lord that we have been emptied out to the last drop, thrown back upon Him, where He is our wisdom, He is our strength, He is our life, He is our very breath. That means something to Him.

The Otherness of Christ

To return to the central issue of this whole matter, namely, the great lesson of the vast expanse, the desert expanse, which lies between Christians in themselves and Christ. Karl Barth has coined for us a phrase which has gained a great deal of strength and place, and it is a very useful one—"the altogether other-ness of Christ". Oh, that goes much further than we realise, certainly much further than most people are prepared to believe. Even yet in evangelical Christianity there is a clinging to the idea that we transfer everything to Christ and to Christianity when we are born again. We transfer all our faculties and our powers over to the interests of Christ and then, instead of using them for ourselves and for the world, we use them for Christ. That is the meaning of consecration, of surrender, as the terms are used so largely to-day in evangelical Christianity—the

consecration of ourselves, our gifts, our faculties, our everything, to the Lord and to His service. But that falls short of something, and that is the meaning of the forty years in the wilderness. If that were all, then the eleven days would be enough. But no, it is not. It is not the transference and the consecration of everything that we are to the Lord to be used straightway as it is over on His side, for His interests instead of in the world. Christ is other yet, Christ is still different yet from consecrated natural life, oh, so other! Something has to happen, our entire mentality has to be changed, transformed. The mind has to be renewed, we have to have an altogether different kind of outlook, even about the things of God. It is a constitutional matter, not merely a directional one.

You have heard this many times and I want to emphasise it, I must emphasise it, because this is the meaning of the Lord's dealings with us, namely, to get a new mentality, a new conception, another, not our old one transferred, but another, and the distance, I said, is not the distance of time or geography necessarily, it is the distance of difference, and we make faster or slower progress spiritually according to how we learn this lesson. It need not be forty years, the Lord has not fixed it at forty years; He never did. It need not be.

The Secret of Spiritual Progress

What is the secret of it? What is the secret of spiritual progress? It is the letting go of our own will and mind to the fact, to the truth, that after all, though Christians at our best, wanting to be a hundred

per cent for the Lord, it is not in us either to be or do. Our will can never do it, our reason can never accomplish it, our impulses and desires can never get us there. We have to come to a brokenness and yieldedness where nature is laid low in the dust and all our treasure is with the stones of the brook and the Almighty becomes our treasure (Job xxii. 24-25); the Lord alone our wisdom, our strength and vision, our desire. Until you and I have learned the lesson of that utter brokenness and yieldedness and letting go to the Lord, spiritual progress is delayed.

You look at all that came into the forty years in the wilderness, and you will see it was but the working out of that principle. The Lord was working to keep them close to His Christ, to make His Christ the basis of everything, but they wanted it in themselves, for themselves, and so that generation never attained. The strong word so often repeated in the New Testament about that episode is that they could not, they could not enter in—"so we see that they could not enter in" (Heb. iii. 19). Why could they not? It says, because of unbelief. But what is the basis of unbelief? Is it not desire to have it in ourselves, to see it, to feel it, to know it, to have it according to our minds? What is faith? Well, faith has nothing under its feet but God, just God. It is the Lord.

May the Lord just indicate the meaning of the word, show us the great distance that lies between ourselves as Christians and Christ, and give us a heart that yields to the Spirit's work in teaching that lesson and making it good and bringing us more and more to the measure of His Son. T.A.S.

The Cross, the Church, and the Conflict

No. 1. (continued)

The Cross the Basis of the Church

(a) The God-ward Aspect of the Cross

The Cross first of all has its God-ward aspect or direction; that is, the Cross secures God's rights in righteousness. There is no hope of any Divine purpose being realised, there is no hope for the Church to become an actuality according to God's mind until that has been dealt with; until God's rights in righteousness have been secured. The Lord Jesus, then, came, and coming to John at Jordan to be baptized of him, John would have refused: but Jesus said, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt. iii. 15). In the same record later on He will say, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18). But there is no hope for that until this has been settled; all righteousness, and that in His baptism, type and figure of His Cross, His burial, His resurrection, all righteousness settled. That is to say, God in the first instance has His place, has His rights secured.

How does God have His rights in righteousness secured? Well, by dealing with the unrighteousness in man, the unrighteousness of man, the unrighteousness in this world, the unrighteousness which from the beginning has been standing in God's way. Now, in this representative One, all that unrighteousness is taken up and brought under judgment and death, the final judgment of unrighteousness in the death of Christ. Jordan, of course, is a very passive figure of it. The active positive view of the meaning of that can only be seen and understood if in any way the Holy Spirit shows us the meaning of that great and terrible cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46). If ever a soul were to be fully alive to the eternal meaning of being God-forsaken, then such a one would understand the meaning of unrighteousness, the awfulness of eternal abandonment by God because of unrighteousness. To deal with that the Son of God came and went to the Cross.

God has something which He demands as His rights

and that something is righteousness, perfect righteousness, righteousness filled full, fulfilled, and that must obtain before anything else can be realised. God must have His rights secured in utter righteousness.

But that means, of course, an utterness of abandonment to the will of God. Abandonment to the will of God—that is righteousness. God having His rights means that He has undivided allegiance, devotion, abandonment. That is the note from Genesis to Revelation. Whenever God gets anything which resembles that, you will notice there is something very, very wonderful that comes out from God. You think of it. We only dare take one instance, that of Abraham in the offering of Isaac. Here, you see, is an abandonment to God, an utterness, unquestioning devotion to the will of God. That is the only thing that governs; no arguments: and he might have argued. God said, "Take now thy son", and Abraham neither argued, reasoned, nor held back, but made his way to the appointed spot and virtually enacted the Divine requirement and offered Isaac. What was God's reaction? "Because thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed..." (Gen. xxii. 16-17). But, more than that, Abraham became the friend of God. The friend of God! I do not think there is any other title in the Bible which approximates to that in its meaning. "Abraham my friend" (Isa. xli. 8). Think of Almighty God saying that of a man. Here is an utterness of devotion to the will of God. But that is the Cross, that is always connected with the Cross. With Abraham, it was, in type, bound up with the Cross, the offering of his only son whom he loved. It was the Cross.

But it is a figure, after all, of something greater in the Lord Jesus and His Cross. His was an abandonment even unto death, unquestioning devotion to the will of God. "I come to do thy will" (Heb. x. 7). "I delight to do thy will" (Psa. xl. 8). "Not my will, but thine" (Luke xxii. 42). The will of God, that is the Cross, God getting His rights. Oh, beloved, you see what the Church is founded upon. Had the Church truly seen and taken its character from that, there would have been none of this situation which we find on the earth to-day amongst Christians.

Yes, the Cross God-ward means that God comes into His place. If you and I are going to say anything about the Cross, if we are going to preach and teach the Cross, let us understand that, from God's standpoint, this is what the Cross means, not merely a question of the benefits we derive, but what God Himself gets in us and through us by His Cross. That is the other aspect. God has His eye on that all the time, and that to which God has a right is this abandonment to His will without question. Upon that rock the Church is built.

The Man-ward Aspect of the Cross

Then there is the man-ward aspect of the Cross, that is, that not only does the Cross clear the ground for the Eternal Purpose of God in Christ by its answering

to God's requirement of absolute righteousness, but it clears the ground of man, man's nature, man's being; for the Church can never be composed of man as he is by nature. That is just where things have gone all wrong, and that is why we have such a situation. The old man has come into the Church, and he has no right and no place there. Yes, Jacob is there; whereas he ought to have been smitten, to have become a prince with God. You and I *by nature* have no place whatever in the Church, and the Cross deals with that and clears the ground, and will forever keep a clear line of demarcation registered between what we are by nature and what Christ is in us by grace. Do not forget that. The Holy Spirit by the Cross draws that line, and if you and I are really going on into God's fullest thought and purpose, that line will be constantly kept in view by the Holy Spirit, and we shall be made aware of it all the time—Yes, that is you, that is not Christ, that has no place here at all and you must leave it out! In this place, the House of God, the Church, it is Christ and only Christ, and you can only abide in this House as you abide in Christ; which in turn means that you must keep out of what you are by nature and keep what you are by nature out. The Cross has for ever put those two asunder, cleared the ground for God's purpose.

You know that, you know it all, I have not told you anything fresh. Ah, but it is very necessary for everyone of us to be continually reminded of this lest we are found to be in God's way, lest we are found, after all, to be fighting against God; lest we are found to be bringing stuff into God's house which has no right there. Oh, that is a terrible thing. You know what happened in the days of Nehemiah over that, how Nehemiah had to turn the furniture of an enemy from the very House of God; how place had been given to that which was inimical to God's thought by the very people of God themselves. Oh no, God will not have anything of that!

Well, to come right on into all that fulness which is God's thought, the Cross has to come very powerfully and very drastically down, cleaving and cutting between what man is in himself and what he is in Christ, and keeping that difference always very distinct and very clear.

You will notice the Holy Spirit is very uncompromising, and we must never think that patience and forbearance of the Spirit with us means compromise on His part. The Lord may treat us gently and kindly for a time, but the time comes when the Lord would say, I have borne with you a long time on this matter and you have been presuming; you have been presuming upon My patience, on My long-suffering, on My mercifulness and kindness, and you have interpreted My patience with you as My condoning of your flesh, that I am not so particular, after all! That has been your attitude. If you have not said it, that is exactly what it amounts to, and then the time comes when the Lord says, "Judgment must begin at the house of God" (I Pet. iv. 17), and it begins with those who have been indulging the flesh because of the patience of God. The Holy

'Spirit does not indefinitely permit that. No, the Cross, in God's mind, is intended to clear the ground of all that, in order that there may be a place where Christ, and Christ only, is seen and known.

That is God's thought about the Church, for upon this the Bible is clear throughout, that you can never make Christ one thing and the Church another. I mean this, that, wherever you find the Church, you find that the Church is Christ. Take the tabernacle, the tabernacle in the wilderness. You cannot get away from the fact that this tabernacle represents something corporate. Here are all those boards bound together by ties, and that is a number of units bound together into one. You cannot get away from the fact that that is a type of the Church.

And yet look again, and can you discriminate between that and Christ? It is all Christ, every bit of it is Christ. Every substance, every form, every measurement, it is all Christ. These two are one. That does not mean that Christ has no separate, personal existence in glory as an entity. But Christ and His Church are one. But you and I and Christ are not the same. I would not dare to say that I am Christ, would you? Not at all. You see what I mean. There is that about us which is other than Christ. Christ is one thing, and we are another thing, and yet there is a union within with Christ which makes us one in the sight of God. The outworking of that at length is going to be that, in seeing the Church perfected, you will see Christ glorified. You will see what it means that Christ is glorified, "when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed" (II Thess. i. 10). That is not only identification in relationship, that is identification in nature. That is the end. Well, the Cross has to prepare the way for that by dealing with man in what he is and putting him in his nature aside, in order to bring in Christ in fulness.

The Satan-ward Aspect of the Cross

One word more. The Cross has another aspect, and that is Satan-ward. God-ward, man-ward, and Satan-ward. Many scriptures will at once leap into your minds in this connection. "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (I John iii. 8). When did He do it? He put off from Him the principalities and powers and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in His Cross (Col. ii. 15). As He moved to that Cross, He cried, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." (John xii. 31-32). And again, "The prince of this world hath been judged." (John xvi. 11).

The Cross undoes all the work of Satan. It removes all the ground of Satan's further work and closes the door to him. Oh, this is very utter, but it just

means this, that if you and I really did live on the ground of the Cross utterly, Satan would never have a chance of doing anything. To put that round the other way, is to say that all that Satan is able to do is because we do not live on the ground of the Cross. The Cross undoes all his work and it deprives him of the ground of doing any more, and then eventually it results in the casting out of his kingdom altogether, in that day when it shall be made universally actual. That is secured in the Cross of the Lord Jesus.

The Church issues from that, follows upon that, is built upon that—the work of the Cross. The Church takes its character from that in the thought of God.

Well, we must leave it there for the time being. But if all this is true, beloved, you understand the conflict. It is not to be wondered at that there is terrific conflict when the Cross is really brought into view and the Church according to God's mind issues therefrom. There is bound to be conflict; there is, and we know it! They set the altar in its place, they laid the foundation of the house of the Lord, and when the enemies heard, they drew nigh. That is the synopsis of a book, a story, a very big story.

That is a very brief word about the Cross by way of re-emphasis, but I am quite sure you will agree with me there is a tremendous need for bringing the greater meaning of the Cross before the people of God continually, before our own hearts. I am quite sure of this, the day will never come when the Holy Spirit will cease to speak to us, the Lord's people, about the Cross of Christ, that is, while we are on this earth. His emphasis may rather grow stronger and more emphatic. He will constantly bring us back to that Cross. Every degree of spiritual increase results from some further spiritual apprehension of the Cross. It is basic to everything. Of course, this is a superstition, but I believe in some parts of South America, when putting up a building, they start with a cross at the foundation and, as every layer of stones and bricks is set on, they lift the cross as they go. It is a superstition, and is supposed to keep off demons, but there is something by way of illustration there. It is exactly what the Holy Spirit does. We do not grow, there is no increase, only by the Cross. At every stage, the Cross is applied anew. I think some people's idea is that you come to the Cross and then you leave it and you go on, and you go back to the Cross merely in testimony, in thought, as to the time when you were converted: that was the Cross, and that was forty or fifty years ago. For many Christians the Cross is always something that is away back in the past history of their spiritual life. Oh no, not in God's thought. The Cross ought to be more than ever it was yesterday, or any of the yesterdays. It ought to be far more, and it will be if the Holy Spirit has His way.

T.A.S.

NEXT SPECIAL GATHERINGS AT HONOR OAK—OCTOBER 2nd and 3rd

(continued from back page)

good pleasure witnessed to in your heart, the Lordship of God in Christ established. We can never in reality believe in the absolute Lordship of God and not give Christ His place. That is a contradiction. For the Lordship of God to be a reality, Christ has to be Lord in our hearts. We need to see that.

The Practical Issue

What I really want to leave with you in this last word is this: do pray the Lord to open your eyes to the meaning of the Lordship of Christ. You know, beloved, all our troubles circle round that issue. Other lords have had dominion over us. What are those other lords? There are lords many. Our own souls may be having dominion, our own sentimentalities, our own likes and preferences and judgments, our own dislikes and antipathies, our own traditions, our own teachers: these may be governing us. Oh, the lords are so many, and they may just be governing. The Lord is desirous of bringing us into a larger and freer place, and a place of an opened heaven: something is still tyrannizing: we are in the centre, the natural self-life is on the throne, we have a horrible way of drawing everything to ourselves. Immediately anything is raised, we step into the centre of the arena, the self-life ruling on the throne: and what kind of life is it? Well, it is a life of shadows, to say the least of it; it is a life of limitation, of variableness, up and down, of weakness and uncertainty. If we want to come right out into the light, the full light, to go right on in the full light, in the glorious liberty of the children of God, all those other lords have to be deposed, and Christ has to be Lord.

Now, while I am saying that, you agree with me absolutely. You say, Yes, of course we want Christ to be Lord, we want nothing more than that Christ should be Lord, and we know He has to be Lord: we know that God has made Him both Lord and Christ! We assent. Beloved, that is all right, but what about it? When he have assented, when we have agreed, are we still going to assert our own judgments, are we still going to meet others and things in our own strength? Are we still going to be in the picture, are we still going to allow those old dominations to influence us? This establishment of Christ as Lord is a thing which can only really be

done, not by assent, not by agreement, although that may be required: it can only be done by our being broken down, and we have to say to the Lord, Lord, You break down everything that You find in the way: take in hand whatever there is that obstructs Your absolute Lordship.

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy Throne
And worship only Thee".

There may be something very dear, a part of our very being, and it is in the way: our very life, our very self. There is something to be done right in us, but oh, that we should see how much hangs upon the place and significance of Christ in the Divine economy of things, Christ as Lord. What hangs upon that? It is the glory of Christ.

Have you ever got through to a new position with the Lord where His Lordship has been established in some new way, in some new matter, in some new sphere? Have you ever got through and been miserable about it, felt you have lost everything? You know to the contrary. The experience may have been a very deep and terrible one, but when you are through, you glorify God. When the Lord is dealing with things that are in the way of His Lordship, it is a dark time, full of suffering, but you are going to come to the place where you thank God for every bit of it. How can that be? If the Lord should make windows in heavens, might this thing be? That is what we feel when we are in the process, but I am certain, and experience in some degree bears it out, that when we are the other side of that and the Lord has a new place in our lives, we thank Him for the depths, and we say, You were right, faithful and true. You can say that as a bit of your faith, but it is a great thing to say it as a bit of your experience. Faithful and true!

The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the glory of Christ, the gospel of the glory of Christ as Son of God is all brought to us in terms of life and light and lordship—the three L's of the glory of God's Son. The Lord lead us into that.

T.A.S.

SPECIAL GATHERINGS AT HONOR OAK

November 13 and 14: Saturday,* 11, 3.30 and 6.
Lord's Day, 11, 3.30 and 6.
January 1-3: Saturday,* 11, 3.30 and 6.
'Workers' Lord's Day, 11, 3.30 and 6.
Conference) Monday, 11, 3.30 and 7.

* Attention is drawn to the morning gatherings.

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NOVEMBER—DECEMBER, 1943

NO. 6, VOL. 21

The Representation of the Invisible God

No. 1 (continued)

Representation a Principle with God

With regard to this matter of representation, I would have you pre-eminently occupied with it in relation to the Lord Jesus Himself. He is the sum of all Divine thoughts, and the Incarnation is the supreme expression of this one thought of God to be truly, adequately, fully, perfectly represented; so that it was possible for the Lord Jesus to say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9). There is the mystery of Christ.

What is the mystery of Christ? The mystery of Christ is God veiled in this Representative. You say, A representative of God, and yet God veiled?—a contradiction! No, no contradiction; not necessarily veiled, for a New Testament or a Scriptural mystery is not something which cannot be known, but something which, for certain reasons, has not been known but can be known. When those reasons are set aside, this which has been a mystery, a hidden thing, is a mystery no longer, but it remains a mystery while those things obtain.

You can see it in the days of His flesh. Here is God in representation, but how many saw Him? "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father". But I think that word "seen" means something very much more than just looking upon Him as a man. "He that hath seen me..." "Whom do men say that I am?" Some said this and some said that. Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And He said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 13-17). That is what it means to see: it is by revelation. It is that which is the mystery. The fact is there, the true representation or representative of God in person, yet unrecognised, unseen. "The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Cor.

iv. 4). The mystery is men's inability to see a great fact, or a great fact present still undisclosed.

Now, the Resurrection and Pentecost seem to me to have meant just this one thing—the seeing of Christ. You remember when He was considered dead and buried, even disciples were in black despair and eclipse of faith and hope, and some went on the way to Emmaus very sad indeed, and their words were, "We hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel" (Luke xxiv. 21). But before the end of that episode was reached, we are told that He opened their understanding that they might know the Scriptures. Having taken up the Scriptures right from the beginning and spoken to them things concerning Himself, He opened their understanding, and it was just that that was marking His appearances during the forty days after His resurrection. They were in some altogether new way coming to see Him. Oh no, not now physically merely, that He was alive, that He had a body; it was not merely this that was being borne in upon them very powerfully. They were seeing Him, Who He was; the mystery of His Person was breaking down. They were seeing Him, and the day of Pentecost seemed to bring that through to full birth. The forty days were moving up to that day, and then on that day by the coming of the Holy Spirit the thing was consummated, and in the full blaze of Who He was the Church was born. It seems to me that the Church was born—yes, by the Holy Spirit, but by the Holy Spirit's breaking open to men Who Jesus was after all. It seems to me that is how every one came into the Church. They saw by an operation of the Holy Spirit Who Jesus was. That is how Paul came in on the Damascus road; he saw who Jesus of Nazareth was. On the day of Pentecost, Peter stood up with the eleven, as under the power of the Holy Spirit they opened their mouths, and the spontaneous declaration was all

about Who Jesus was, and they are men in a new revelation.

Oh, I know from our fundamentalist standpoint, this is nothing very much. I do not suppose there is one here who does not believe that Jesus was the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh. You all believe that as a bit of your faith; but what is the effect of it? What was the effect of that at the beginning? The witnessing, the representation, is not just attesting historical facts, nor doctrinal facts. When they went out as witnesses unto Him, it was not just to say things which, while they were true, were only truths. They went out in the power of having seen, having had their eyes opened to the Lord Jesus. It was as though they had been men moving in the shadows during those years, groping, sometimes feeling an assurance, a certain amount of certainty, but then questionings, uncertainties coming in, shadows all the time. But at last the heavens were rent, the blaze broke through, and they saw. It was in the light of that they were constituted witnesses, representatives. It was in the light of that the Church was born. It was in the light of that the Church went on its way so effectively. The fact was that, wherever they came, it was the impact of God in Christ by their presence. Their presence stirred hell, because hell felt anew—God is here! It touched men who were in the grip and under the control and influence of higher intelligences, spiritual intelligences.

We know how true that is now in measure, that the presence of a true child of God, without words, provokes men, annoys men, irritates men, disturbs men. They want you out of the way, they don't like you. They don't know why, but they want to get rid of you. You could almost feel they have a supernatural intelligence about you, though they have not. If you ask them why, they do not know. There is the other deeper thing, they sense something that makes them uncomfortable. It is the presence of God in the child of God, and God is represented by their being there. That is how it was with Christ. "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." It is in this way, on this line, on this basis—representation.

Representation Based Upon Identification

But we must realise that representation stands upon the basis of identification. It was the identity of Christ with God the Father that meant everything. They were identical. It was not that He would say or could say, He that hath seen me hath seen God's representative. That can mean anything. You can send anything and anybody as your representative. But He could say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father", seen God; not a representative of God, not someone sent as a kind of ambassador, altogether different, two personalities, two natures in a different category, but identical. The presence of Christ is the presence of God and God is present in Christ.

Now, you say, how are you going to work that out in extension to the Church and to the member of the

Body? In principle it holds good, and therein is found the whole requirement that you and I should lose our own independent, separate life of self-interest, self-motive, and growingly come to the place where it is "no longer I, but Christ". Oh yes, there will always be those things about us which remain our human features and marks, but the real and essential implication of our presence will not be ourselves, it will be the Lord; that there has come about within us, at the very centre of our being, by the residence of the Spirit of Christ, an identification with Him so that He and we are one; one in life, in motive, in thought, in desire, and whatever people have to say about our frailties, our weaknesses, our imperfections, if they will be honest they will have to say, But despite that, when you meet so-and-so, you do meet the Lord! It is a terrible thing if people are unable to say that, and have to say the contrary: When you meet so-and-so as a professed child of God, there is nothing of the Lord that you touch in him, and you come away grieved at so much that is otherwise. That is a terrible thing.

Does it not occur to us very strongly that it is a denial of our very existence as members of Christ's Body if we can tolerate things which are a contradiction of Christ; such a matter as unforgiveness, harbouring in our hearts an unforgiving attitude or spirit, nursing a grievance, wounded pride, divisions. Oh, dear friends, where are we as Christians, what is the Christian life, what are we for as Christians, what have we taken up, what have we assumed? Have we assumed certain things in the way of doctrines as a kind of professional matter, a business kind of thing altogether out of relation to our own personality, our own nature? Well, that is not the New Testament Christianity, that is not the real Christian life. The fact is if you and I are true Christians (and "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his"—Romans viii. 9), if we are true Christians and have the Holy Spirit, this ought to be the truest thing about us, that we can never be unforgiving without having a most miserable time about it, never suffer from wounded pride without being altogether thrown out of gear in our spiritual lives, never be un-Christlike without having a crisis over it. It is a living thing inside. Why? Because of identification in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ and He has come into us to make us one with Christ, so that we cannot live a detached life from Christ and just go on anyhow indefinitely without being met by the Lord. That is quite impossible on the basis of a life in the Holy Spirit, and there is no other basis for a Christian. Many of us thank the Lord with all our hearts that this is the kind of experience we have, that we have a miserable time because of some un-Christlike thought or attitude. We thank God for that: it shows that things are alive. If you or I could possibly harbour anything un-Christlike in our hearts and not have a bad time, we have reason to question whether we are born again. Every bad time is an evidence that we are alive, for dead people do not suffer.

Identification is basic to representation, and it is a vital, an organic, thing, not a thing of doctrine merely.

Representation Based Upon the Spirit's Sovereignty

Well, that is what Pentecost did. Oh, how we are launched into a realm of things when we recognise that. Peter, standing up with the eleven, what is he saying? Peter has heard the Lord saying, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth". Well, both he and the others are going to come into the good of it. Not so very long before, some of these disciples were saying of these very people to whom they were now to be the representatives of Christ, the messengers of His gospel of grace, "Lord shall we call down fire from heaven upon them?" You cannot go on like that when you come under the power of the Holy Ghost. Burning people up from heaven—that is not a Holy Ghost governed life. You see what I mean.

As to Peter, this is going to carry him a long way further yet; he is going to be taken well out of his depth. It is a glorious thing to see what the Holy Spirit does when He is really sovereign. He makes you say things altogether beyond your traditions and your intentions, though you do not recognise it. The Holy Spirit means a great deal more than we do when we say things, that is, when we say things by the Holy Spirit. We say a lot of things by the Holy Spirit's government which will take us a long way beyond what we ourselves mean at the moment.

"Unto the uttermost part of the earth"! Peter will endorse that. Or again in his address on the day of Pentecost, he will use words like these: "The promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts ii. 39). He says that under the power of the Holy Ghost, but he does not mean that. A little while afterwards he will be asked to go to the house of a Gentile in Caesarea. He sees a sheet wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts and creeping things of the earth and birds of the heaven, and a voice says, Rise, Peter; kill and eat! But Peter said, Not so, Lord! This thing was done three times and the sheet was caught up into heaven. Three men stood at the door (Acts x). Not so, Lord!—"As many as the Lord our God shall call." He said it by the Holy Spirit, but he did not mean it.

Now he is up against it. The Holy Ghost will carry him out of his depth, his tradition. That is what the Holy Ghost does when He gets hold of a life. He makes demands far beyond what we at the moment are ready for.

Thus the crisis will test you as to whether you are ready to adjust to the Holy Spirit? If not, your representation of the Lord breaks down. Are you ready to adjust? Is He going to have His way completely? I am keeping close to the Word. "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you... Receive ye the Holy Spirit."

My point at the moment is that the sending as His representatives was on the basis of the absolute sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, and you and I will individually fully represent Christ only by that sovereignty, the Spirit's sovereignty, because the Spirit alone is big enough to bring Christ in, the Spirit alone is great enough to represent Christ. Can you or I represent Christ? Why, we do not know anything about Christ yet. Our thoughts about Christ would make a very little Christ. Peter, with all the big things that he is saying on the day of Pentecost, in his own interpretation of those things would have narrowed Christ down only to the Jews, but he came to discover that the Holy Spirit meant a great deal more than he, Peter, did about Christ, and what representation of Christ meant. And so it is by the Holy Spirit alone that an adequate representation of Christ can be made.

I do hope that we shall see that for which we are here, what it means. This is a very real thing, this matter of Christ being represented, brought into view, our presence meaning that. Oh, I am sure we all feel that, if things had been kept strictly there all the way along, the impact upon this world would be so infinitely greater than it has been. The thing has become mechanical; we cannot say that the Church in all its parts has really brought an impact of Christ upon this earth. We have to get back somewhere perhaps on this matter. It is not in doctrines, in words, in truths; it is in a mighty work of the Holy Spirit inwardly, which results in our being able to say, "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me that I might preach him among the nations" (Gal. i. 16): the representation within first, the preaching afterward; not the signing of a statement of fundamental doctrines, but a revelation of Christ in the heart.

T.A.S.

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Ye Are Come

Notes of a Conference at Honor Oak

READING: Rev. xxi. "The holy city, new Jerusalem." Heb. xii. 22—"Ye are come... unto the heavenly Jerusalem."

The spiritually minded already thus function (I Cor. ii. 15)—they "are come" to the City.

I. The City—Its Essentially Spiritual Character

The City, as set forth in Rev. xxi, is a whole system of Divine thoughts set forth in symbols—the presentation in consummate form of all the working of God—a *spiritual* state and position seen in a whole people constituted according to His mind. It presents features that are precious to God, i.e. features of Christ. These are foundation factors (c.f. the *precious stones* of v. 19). In its principles it is therefore not only future, but is operative now. "Ye are come..." The background and basis of everything that counts for God in our lives is *spiritual*.

The City is one of the several designations in the Word of God (c.f. Body, House, Temple, etc.) to describe the people of God, the Church. Each designation has its particular significance. A city is a governmental centre. (The number 12, the number of government, is much in evidence in Rev. xxi). The City therefore sets forth that which governs; first in the lives of the Lord's people themselves, and then through them in the universe. Government is entirely a *spiritual* matter with God: it is spirituality that directs the course of things (c.f. II Thess. ii. 6, 7—"one that restraineth"). Whatever the exact significance of this, it is without doubt an essentially spiritual factor that is already governing the course of the age.—Divine government is vested by predestination in the Church.—Our influence is the measure of our spirituality. Are we seeking the increase of *spiritual* values?

II. The City—A Corporate Expression of Divine Features

"The tabernacle of God is with men" (v. 3)—fulfilled in Jesus Christ, "Emmanuel"—similarly in the Church, in terms of sonship: to be realised as a *spiritual* entity expressing God's thoughts, judgments, etc. Details of the City are the varied expressions of God—what He is like; e.g.:

(1) "Having the glory of God" (v. 11)—Glory can be defined as the satisfaction of God in expression. Whenever we know that God is well-pleased in us we taste glory and "are come" to the City. (How well we know that when God is not well pleased in us we taste the reverse of glory!)

(2) "Light...clear as crystal" (v. 11)—All cloudiness, duplicity, etc. gone. God is effecting this in us now by child-training, "that we may be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. xii. 1-13). Sons are being perfected. We "are come" to the City.

(3) "Walls" and "Gates" (v. 12)—Features of discrimination and of government as to what is according to God's mind and what is not, to admit or to exclude. Spirituality alone can determine this.

III. The City—The Bride of the Lamb

"Bride" suggests first love—undividedness of heart, joyous devotion to the Bridegroom's interests, jealousy for Him, realisation of the tremendous cost and grace wherewith He, as the Lamb, has bought her by sacrifice.

Ephesus was the climax of Paul's ministry and love is specially associated with that church. (Note the atmosphere of Acts xx. 17-38, and Rev. ii. 4). Ephesus departed from her first love—the love of her espousals (Jer. ii. 2).

Love is the climax of the Lord's working. The City as the Bride suggests a corporate love—a company in a spirit and atmosphere of a great love for the Lord Jesus; a shared love, that finds expression in a life laid down for His interests in other lives. Is there not need for us to seek recovery of first love that we have lost?

IV. The City—The Cost of Experimental Apprehension

Men who have come into the place of vision and true spiritual apprehension have invariably had a 'prison' background, literal or otherwise—c.f. Jeremiah (Jer. xxxii. 1, 2), Ezekiel (Ezek. i. 1), John (Rev. i. 9, 10), Paul (Eph. iii. 1, etc.). Such men were locked up to the consequences of the spiritual position they had taken up—c.f. Israel in the wilderness; they had left Egypt and come out to the Lord. This necessarily meant they no longer had the resources of the world available to them and they were shut up to receiving everything from Him: and how they murmured and rebelled and were sorry for themselves!—All who seek to be spiritual will know a prison in one form or other. Why? Firstly, because God is after something in them of such spiritual value (to be the governing thing in His universe), that He must shut them up to Himself for training; and secondly, because all opposing spiritual forces will try to bring under restraint so that expression and survival are rendered impossible. But the Lord is sovereign over Satan's work and makes the prison the very place of discipline and enlargement.—Every bit of real spiritual knowledge is wrung out of suffering. We shall never come to knowledge of the Lord without that knowledge being *necessary*.—Are we wanting spiritual knowledge? Then are we ready to pay for it? (c.f. Rev. iii. 18). If so, let us draw encouragement from our imprisonment.

But note: sufferings do not *necessarily* enlarge us. What is the needed condition? Like John, we must be "in the Spirit" as well as "in Patmos". This means "in the Lord" and out of ourselves. If we are wrapped up in ourselves, in the trials, etc. of our "prison", we shall see nothing and make no spiritual

advance. We must let go to the Lord, in acceptance and submission. Thus shall we be spiritually enlarged. The measure of our capacity is the measure of our spirituality, not of our intellectual attainment, etc.

V. The City—Realised through Faith and Patience

Abraham ('Faith') first got a glimpse of the City (Heb. xi. 10). Once you have seen it, you need intense faith to hold on for it and to accept nothing less. Realisation may look hopeless, but the hopeless and the impossible can come to pass (c.f. Gen. xviii. 14; Rom. iv. 18).

God's City has never come into view until Man's City has been judged and dismissed—c.f. Babel, then Abraham and the City of God; Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon overthrown, then Jerusalem restored;

'Babylon' (Rev. xviii), then the New Jerusalem (Rev. xxi); the nominal 'Church', then the true Church. While the earthly is having its day, those who are waiting for the heavenly have need of patience. They may not see much now, but their stand will count in the afterward.

Men of spiritual vision always committed themselves by acts of faith to what they saw—c.f. Jeremiah in the purchase of the field (Jer. xxxii). In the day of a double imprisonment—shut up in the court of the guard in a city which was itself surrounded by the army of the enemy—he staked his reputation and his money upon a day of Divinely promised recovery.

Have we seen God's full thought for His Church? If so, have we committed ourselves to it, to wait for it in faith and patience, as Abraham did?

The Man God Approves

READING: John viii. 31-2; 36-50. I Thess. ii. 1-12.

Paul is here reminding the Thessalonians of his own ministry among them when he was there in person, and this I judge to be a very important verse—"Even as we have been approved of God to be intrusted with the gospel, so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God which proveth our hearts".

It is evident from these two letters to the Thessalonians that they were magnificently strong, virile, Christian people at Thessalonica. They are the type that make us say that we would that every saved soul were like that, for then the Church would truly have a testimony, and it is very profitable to study what could have produced such converts as these, for they were but young as yet in the faith. Paul himself says, "Ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord" (I Thess. i. 6). These magnificent live Christians were imitators of those who preached the Gospel to them. Then if we want the secret of the converts' virile state, we evidently have to look at those who preached the Gospel to them, and we shall have the secret very largely of their condition. Hence it becomes of real value to see what Paul says about himself and his two companions who preached the Gospel at Thessalonica, and in this second chapter—not exclusively here, but in this chapter there is a real unveiling of the qualities of the preacher, and it is that I want to take up with you.

Ministry Entrusted to Men Approved

First of all, look at verse 4. "Even as we have been approved of God to be intrusted with the gospel, so we speak". Before we come to study the qualities of the Apostles themselves, take note of the principle that is found in this verse. Here are men to whom a ministry has been entrusted. In their case it was the ministry of preaching the Gospel, but the principle is equally true whatever may be the specific character of the ministry. It says here that the ministry

was entrusted to men who had been approved of God. That is very important: If God is going to entrust a message to anyone, He will entrust it to someone who has proved himself fitted for that ministry. God does not just give out ministries in an indiscriminate way, and it is just the want of recognition of that very fact which accounts for much of the failure of ministry in Christendom to-day. God gives ministry to those who are approved; in other words, who have been tested and found to pass the test. It may explain so much of the withholding of the Divine callings and entrustments of ministry. It may explain our case, that God has not found us yet such as He can entrust a ministry to, and that may be the explanation.

All Ability of God

Now, what is it to be approved of God so that He can entrust with a ministry? This proving is a matter of character, and not a matter of personal capability. You will remember such outstanding cases in the Word as those of Moses and of Jeremiah. The qualification in them which evidently God approved was not their ability for their ministry, but their conscious inability for it. In the case of Moses, his sense of ability was his disqualification. For forty years he had to be put through discipline until God could prove him, and when God was able to approve him, Moses' whole attitude is that of shrinking back from the ministry entrusted, on the ground that he is not sufficient for it. In the case of Jeremiah the same thing is true. His word is, "I cannot speak."

We are not exactly told what Paul's personal experience was in the beginning, but we get a peep behind the scenes at the very time of the writing of these Thessalonian letters when he was at Corinth, and you know his own confession is that he was at Corinth in fear and trembling and much weakness (I Cor. ii. 3): and at Corinth the Lord appeared to

him and said, "Fear not, Paul, but speak, and hold not thy peace" (Acts xviii. 9). So that, even if we are not told of Paul's personal sense of incapacity in the beginnings, we get hints that on the way he was like other true servants of God, very conscious of his inability. Thus if God has in view the entrustment of a ministry to us, be that ministry what it may, let us be clear about this, that in the moment when God as it were comes to us and says, "I call you now, being approved, to this ministry, and I entrust this calling to you", we do not judge the matter by whether we feel able for that calling.

Unless we are awake to it, it is a subtle thing. We say at once, I could not do that! That is your qualification, not your disqualification. It is contrary to nature altogether. So let us be on the watch. This is not a question of our ability at all. In this realm all ability is of God in terms of the Holy Spirit's capacitating and enabling.

A Heart Matter

Then, secondly, ability is a matter of the heart. You find a little later in this letter when Paul is expressing his great longing to see these people again, he says, "Night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith". When he writes to the Romans, he says, "I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established" (Rom. i. 11). There is his ministry, and the exercise of it, in his view. What is it that is drawing him on for the exercise of that ministry? It is not, it cannot be, we cannot admit the thought that it is this: I am the great Paul so well able to do this work that I long to come to you and let you see my capacity! It is quite clear that a man who has a ministry given him of God as this man's ministry was, if he yearns to exercise it, it is not in the consciousness of his great power—I do not believe even in the consciousness of the great anointing of the Spirit upon him; because a man

under anointing does not as a rule feel conscious of it—but it is by the impelling of a heart that greatly yearns to be used for the blessing of these other saints.

Thus a call to a ministry may become consciously ours, in the first place, not by our sense of our ability to meet it, but by the longing of our hearts in that direction. We see a need, our hearts are drawn out in the direction of that need, and we say, I wish that need could be met, I wish the Lord would raise up somebody to fulfil that ministry. And the temptation is for us to look around and say, I wonder who it could be, who would be the best person for this bit of work? Perhaps the Lord is saying, By awakening desire in you, that is My hand on you for this ministry; I want you for it. Then we say, Lord, I could never do that! No, exactly. If it were a matter of ability, you might be ruled out, but callings to a ministry in the Holy Spirit do not depend upon any kind of confidence that thinks to itself: I could do it very well! The awakening of deep heart concern may be God's first indication that you in whom the concern is found are the one whom the Lord's hand is upon to meet that need. Now He says, Go in and meet it, you have My Spirit; not through any capacity of yours by nature will it be done, but by My Spirit. Will you take that simple fragment, because it may very well be that some of us are standing in front of a real opportunity waiting for the Lord to raise up somebody to meet it. Ask the Lord if you are the one. It was like that with Isaiah. The Lord said, "Whom shall we send and who will go for us?" (Isa. vi. 8)—this in the ears of a man whose heart was newly awakened with love for the Lord, and then there is a Divine call for hands and feet to serve, and his answer is, Here am I. Well, so much for the matter of how the Lord may call us into a ministry, be it what it may. On the matter of ability, we see it is not what we are. It is what we shall know of His enabling by the Spirit.

(To be continued).

G.P.

Striving in Prayer

A Conference Message

READING: Phil. i. 29-30; Col. i. 28-ii. 2; iv. 12.

There is much more in the Word of the same nature that could be added to these passages, but these are sufficient, I think, to indicate something we need to lay to heart. I always feel that one of the great factors in our own spiritual enlargement is a real active concern for others; not in the sense that we look after another's vineyard and neglect our own, become "busy-bodies" as the Apostle would term it, occupied with everybody's business except our own, but there is a right and proper and fruitful concern for others. What the Scriptures that we have read bring before us is that God's great revelation of purpose in the Church is not going to be realised without

some tremendous and terrific conflict. There have to be those who throw themselves into that conflict for that end.

The Importance of Taking the Initiative

So here the Apostle says, "What great conflict I had for you and for them of Laodicea", and for many others. "Striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily". "Epaphras...a servant of Christ Jesus...always striving for you in his prayers". It is the laying to heart of this matter about God's desire for His people in such a way as to draw us into tremendous spiritual conflict over it. Now, we are meeting the conflict perhaps, without seeking it

directly, but it is a very true thing that very often the advantage is with those who take the initiative. Do you not recognise that when the enemy takes the initiative in the matter of spiritual assault, we usually find ourselves at a disadvantage. When it comes from his side, we turn in upon ourselves, we begin to ask questions. We find ourselves sometimes almost paralysed by the pressure, the tenseness and the forms in which his assault comes. It affects us in such a way as almost to overwhelm us and put us out. That is because he is taking the initiative, and he knows enough of strategy in warfare to know that it is with the one who takes the initiative that a great deal of the advantage lies.

Now we shall always of course meet that and he will always be doing it, but what about the other way round? Paul met a very great deal of the onslaught of the enemy upon spirit and mind and body. It came along every line and by every channel and means conceivable. He tells us a good deal about the nature of his conflicts, spiritual and temporal, in his ministry and life, but Paul by no means left things there. He also makes it perfectly clear that he took the initiative as well, and these words which we have just read concern the initiative of the Lord's people on this matter. If the enemy is out with all his might and all his cunning to frustrate this purpose of God in the saints, namely, their coming to the fulness of understanding, their having the full knowledge of Christ; I say if he is out by every means to frustrate that, there has to be some initiative from the other side. There has to be a real throwing of ourselves into this matter in a spiritual way against this assailing of the children of God, so that God's end shall not be frustrated.

"What great conflict I have for you", says the Apostle, "striving". You know how he uses that word in his Corinthian letter about the Olympic games. "If a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (II Tim. ii. 5). He sees this man in the arena or on the track stretched out, throwing himself into the battle, striving for the mastery. It is the same word. And here it is striving for the mastery over the enemy and for the will of God, that His people might know the mystery of God, even Christ, unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, and so on. Well, the emphasis is clear and does not need a great deal added to it of words from me.

My deep feeling is that there has to be another side to our concern about this matter of the Lord's desire for His people to come to fulness, beyond the personal, and until that other side is brought in the end will not be reached. That means there must be those who will really throw themselves in to strive, by the enablement, the energy of the Spirit, to strive over this matter.

An Old Testament Illustration

When I was thinking about this, there came back to my mind the very familiar story of Elisha and the Shunammite, and her son. It seems to me to be a

propos of this very matter. Elisha, as you know well, sets forth in type that which was ordained to remain here on this earth after the Lord was risen, had passed through the Jordan, the Cross, and been translated to heaven, and the great issue upon which that continuation of the testimony here depended was that there should be with him a double portion of his master's spirit. His request was that. He was put on probation over that. He was tested and drawn out concerning that, but, having been approved, he received a double portion of the spirit of his head. The sons of the prophets always spoke of Elijah in those words—"Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day?" (II Kings ii). Elijah was his head. Now when the head was received up into heaven, the double portion of the Spirit came upon Elisha. He was here on this earth in the power of the Spirit to maintain and carry on a testimony of life, so that at every move, in every connection, Elisha is found meeting conditions of death. He is called upon to prove that the Spirit is with him as the Spirit of resurrection by having to encounter death in many forms.

Amongst these many instances is the one of the Shunammite's son, full, I think, of helpful features and elements if we were dealing with it as a whole. We only have one thing in mind at the moment. Here, for instance, in grace the Lord had visited her and given her that son; for I think it is quite evident that she had closed that chapter in her life as something which would never be. You remember she asked the prophet not to mock her, and then later when the son died, she said, "Did I desire a son of my lord?" as much as to say, I had closed that chapter, that was something which I killed in my heart, I was not any longer thinking in that direction; you did that. It was something that could not be, but the impossible was done. The thing that she no longer dared to think about or hope for had become an actuality by the grace of God. It was something God had done in grace, and the son existed.

Now the son dies. Strange mysterious ways of God, to give something altogether of Himself, something beyond our powers and beyond our expectations, and then, having done something so much of Himself, to allow it to fall under what looks like a mere calamity, to die. Strange ways of God! The Lord does do strange things, things that are strange to our understanding. He is beyond us.

When the boy is dead, there is one there who has not been by the way of the Cross and the anointing, namely, Gehazi. He was not there to go through the Jordan with Elijah and Elisha. He did not come back again across Jordan in the power of the anointing, triumphant over death. He was not under the anointing of the double portion; he was a mere professional, not an anointed one. He came to a very sad end, a very tragic end. The leprosy of Naaman the Syrian came to him. That, by the way, happens to people who take up Divine things not crucified, uncrucified people, unanointed people. Gehazi went to this death chamber and tried to do something for

this boy, and nothing happened, and he had to go away acknowledging that there was nothing. Elisha came, and you remember his procedure. He went in and he stretched himself upon that body, hands to his hands, feet to his feet, lips to his lips, eyes to his eyes. He got right down on this situation, so to speak. He got into it, he identified himself with it, he made himself a part of it. But he was in the good of the power of resurrection. It is safe to do it when you are there. He was under the anointing, and because he was a man under the anointing on the ground of resurrection, he could come into touch with that situation, not to his own undoing but to the undoing of it. It was as though he literally lifted that boy out of death.

Few things in the New Testament more amply describe that sort of thing than these words about Epaphras: a servant of Jesus Christ striving for you in his prayers. It is like that. I am not just giving you Bible Study. This is the point: I do not believe things are going to happen until we get down to it. I believe God is waiting for a getting down to this situation. There have to be some people who really do get down to it.

The Factor of Prayer in Relation to the Lord's Purpose

Take the present situation among the Lord's people. God has a purpose, but are we taking it for granted, are we waiting for something to happen, looking out all the time, observing, spectators, weighing it up, judging it? This is not happening and that is not happening, this is all we can see! I do not believe anything will happen until a people really get down to this; a people, mark you, who stand on resurrection ground, who have the anointing, and then get down to it to break the deadlock of death, to break the bonds which bind. It is real business. There has to be a striving over this matter. It is not going to happen, it is not just going to come to pass. All this that Paul says and all that is here in the Word is sheer nonsense if the mere fact of a thing being in the will of God ensures its happening, apart from any other consideration. What are you striving about, Paul? There is no need for all that agony, travail, striving of yours! The Lord purposes it, it is the will of God; you just believe and be quiet and it will come to pass, the Lord will do it! Well then, all this is unnecessary, and therefore it is nonsense. Is it? Does this not represent something, count for something? You see what I mean.

In Colosse, in Laodicea, and for many others who had not seen his face in the flesh, all those churches, their being knit together in love unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding that they may know the mystery of God, be presented every man complete in Christ, that hangs upon this man's conflict and the conflict of Epaphras and others. How much of this are we doing? It is so easy to criticise one another's spiritual life, and the spiritual life of other people. It is so easy to take account of small measure, little growth, the arrest and limitation.

It is so easy just to be lookers-on. Yes, in our hearts we are troubled, we are perplexed. In a way, we ask the Lord continually to do something, we are not detached altogether, but are we quite sure that we are where Paul was? "How greatly I strive for you". How I get down to this, how I identify myself with this situation, this need!—this that has come in which is just the opposite of what God intended, this that has interfered with the continuation of progress and development in a life that God produced, this which undoubtedly is of the Lord but locked up, fallen under something in the way of a blight, a lack, an arrest, a hold up.

There is the sovereignty of God, of course, in this, the sovereignty of God which works over the enemy in order to draw out some people. As we said at the beginning, our own enlargement is bound up with our vocation; or, to put it in another way, we shall not make much progress spiritually until we take spiritual responsibility. It is vital to our growth that we have concern for souls, our own spiritual growth. I do not believe people do grow, however much information they accumulate along spiritual lines, if they are all the time turned in on themselves. Responsibility is a tremendous thing for enlargement, and here is a man who took responsibility to the full. But he turns to these Philippians and he says, "To you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer in His behalf", and these sufferings are very often along this line, soul suffering for the saints. "I... fill up...that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ...for his body's sake, which is the church" (Col. i. 24). The sufferings of Christ; it is given to you to suffer with Him. The sufferings of Christ for His Body's sake which is the Church—I fill up that which remains of that.

It might be that the edge of a great deal of the enemy's assault upon us would be blunted if we were a little more of the assailing kind. I think we feel the keenness of it because we wait for it. I think there is something that really does save us when we are turned out in the aggressive. There are values, great values, to our own spiritual life, safety and growth, by a positive and an aggressive spirit in the interests of the Lord; for undoubtedly a positive state is a protection. To be fervent in spirit is a great protection.

I do not want to say a great deal more. I felt that the Lord wanted that emphasis this evening. You are concerned and I am concerned in a way. We recognise a need, a great need, and in relation to that need perhaps we come to wonder why this and why that. Then we begin to try and interpret it and explain it, and we give this interpretation and that interpretation, and all too often it again becomes a turning in on ourselves or on ourselves collectively.

Well, let us face this to begin with, that the Lord's people never did in all their history come through to His end for them without terrific conflict, a great withstanding. It was always so, and they have never come through only as the Lord has had a vessel which

has taken up that issue in a most positive way. It was like that with Israel in their getting through to the land. Joshua and Caleb took up that issue and fought it through, and by them a generation came in. Daniel took up that issue when the people were in captivity and fought it through in the heavenlies. The coming back of the remnant was undoubtedly to be laid instrumentally at Daniel's door. And here is Paul in the same thing on the higher spiritual level: Satan out to withstand this coming of the Church to God's end in fulness. Amongst others, here is Paul taking it up, fighting it out. It always has been, it always will be. In every city Paul had to meet it and fight it through. He is there himself on resurrection ground under the mighty anointing, but look at Philippi and the jail and the stripes, look at Corinth. There was evidently very real need for the Lord to say to Paul about Corinth, "Fear not, I have much people in this city" (Acts xviii. 10). It was very necessary for the Lord again and again to come alongside and fortify His servant because of what he was meeting in the city. See what he met in Ephesus: the sentence of death, he despaired even of life. Right in the conflict in every city, but fighting it through. The Lord needs that kind of instrument.

Again I say, while there may be various subsidiary causes for arrest or limitation, here is the big issue, that the enemy is out to prevent our going through, to prevent the Lord's people from knowing what His thoughts are about them, being brought into touch or led into touch with that which will be for their enlargement. It is all a mighty campaign of the enemy, blinding, nullifying, neutralising, hindering, putting up blankets, clouds and smoke, everything and anything. It is all a part of this determination of his that the saints shall not be brought through to completeness in Christ.

Over against that, there have to be those who, together in the Lord, standing on the right and sufficient ground, take up this issue in the Name of the Lord and fight it out. "How greatly I strive" has to be true of a company of us.

The Lord give us grace for this and really work in us, and we shall see things breaking. No one will doubt, no one will dispute, that we are in a life or death issue. We are going to live and live triumphantly, or we are going to die, going to fade out. Perhaps in the Lord the issue rests with us along this line. The Lord add to the company of Epaphras!

T.A.S.

Spiritual Sight

No. 6 (continued)

Seeing the Glory of Christ as Son of God

God's Prerogative of Lordship Vested in the Son

One final word with reference to the glory of Jesus Christ as God's Son. The Divine prerogative of government is vested in Him. The third prerogative of God is government. In the last issue, the decision is with God in all matters. Over and above all things, God is: He rules, and He rules in the kingdoms of men and among the armies of heaven. He governs, but He has now vested that government in His Son. "Neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgment unto the Son" (John v. 22). This Divine prerogative of government, therefore, is vested in Christ.

What does that mean for us now? "The gospel of the glory of Christ". "We preach Christ Jesus as Lord". That is in substance one statement—the glory of Christ, Christ Jesus as Lord. I think I must leave a great deal of the detail and leap right to the end of that. The glory of Christ is only really recognised when He is Lord, but it is recognised when He is Lord. I mean that God is satisfied when His Son comes into the appointed place, and God can never be satisfied in any one direction without the one affected being aware of it. There is always an echo here of something in the heart of God which affects us. I mean that if heaven rejoices over one sinner that repenteth, that sinner will never fail to have the echo of heaven's joy. The joy which comes to a

repentant sinner is not just his own joy, it is the joy of heaven, it has come of what is going on above. When the Father is well-pleased, it will be witnessed in the one in whom He is well-pleased. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17). The Son knows in His own spirit, His own heart, the delight of the Father. "The Father loveth the Son": He can say that without any conceit or presumption: and when the place to which the Son has been assigned by the Father is given to the Son in any life, or in any company, or in any place on this earth, then you may take it that the heaven is opened there, and the Father's gratification will be registered there. You never get through a struggle and battle on some question of His Lordship without knowing a new Divine joy and peace and rest in your heart. A struggle has been going on over a matter of obedience to something in the will of God, something the Lord has said: there has been a battle over it for a long time and at last you get through—"My stubborn will at last hath yielded"—and you are through. The Lord's Lordship is established, and what is the result? Rest, peace, joy, satisfaction. You say, What a fool I was to keep that up for so long! What is it? It is not just a psychological relief, that you have got past a difficult place: it is the Spirit of God bearing witness within. It is the Holy Dove lighting upon your spirit. It is the Father's

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SPECIAL GATHERINGS AT HONOR OAK

(If the Lord wills)

January 2, 3 and 4 :

Saturday, 3.30 and 6 p.m.

Lord's Day, 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6 p.m.

Monday (Workers' Conference), 11 a.m.,
3.30 and 7.30 p.m.

(continued from back page)

faith. It may work out that way, it may at times have to do with that, and doubtless it does include that, but there is something very much deeper than that. Right in the innermost part of our being we know there is a spiritual conflict going on, and that spiritual conflict has to do with whether we are going on

with the Lord, and that going on with the Lord is the development or outworking of sonship, it is coming to the consummation of sonship. That is where the challenge is, and anything the enemy can bring in to stop that, he will.

The Lord give us light on all this.

T.A-S.

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