
"A Candlestick of Pure Gold: of Beaten Work" Exodus 25. 31.

**A WITNESS
AND
A TESTIMONY**

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



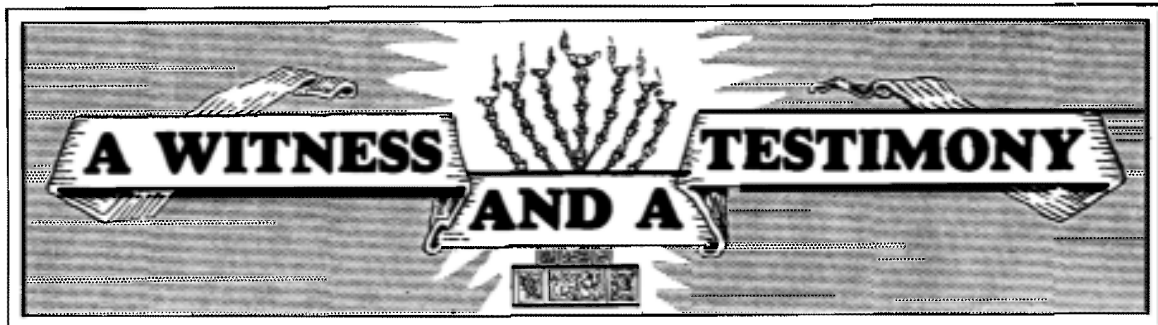
THIS MINISTRY

THE OBJECT OF THE MINISTRY of this little paper, issued bi-monthly, is to contribute to the Divine end which is presented in the words of Ephesians iv. 13—" . . . till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge (literally—*full knowledge*) of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we be no longer children . . . "

It is not connected with any 'Movement', 'Organization', 'Mission' or separate body of Christians, but is just a ministry to "all saints". Its going forth is with the prayer and hope that it will so result in a fuller measure of Christ, a richer and higher level of spiritual life, that, while bringing the Church of God into a growing approximation to His revealed will as to its 'attainment', it may be better qualified to be used of Him in testimony in the nations, and to the completing of its own number by the salvation of those yet to be added by the Lord.

This ministry is maintained by the Lord through the stewardship of those who value it. There is no 'subscription', but gifts can be sent to the Editor, 'A Witness and A Testimony', 30, Dunoon Road, Forest Hill, London, S.E.23, England. All cheques should be made payable to 'Witness and Testimony A/c'. The paper is sent only to those who personally desire it, and we count on friends to advise us if this is no longer the case, or if they change their address.

'Personal' letters should be addressed to Mr. T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.



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EDITORIAL

"And thou shalt remember all the way in which the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years . . ."
(Deuteronomy viii. 2).

ALTHOUGH with this issue of this little paper we commence its forty-fifth year, this year marks a particular point in our history. With last month we completed forty years since we moved into what has been known as The Christian Fellowship Centre, Honor Oak. It was a real move of faith, but with such evident tokens following that it was truly of the Lord. In the years immediately preceding that step the Lord had been doing a wonderful work of reconstitution on spiritual principles, making very real the meaning of the Cross, revealing the true nature of the Church, and leading into an apprehension of the fullness of Christ. This meant that a company of His people was being prepared to serve Him in a much greater way than that of a local community. A vision was given of the three greatneses of Divine revelation—the Greatness of Christ: the Greatness of the Cross: and the Greatness of the Church. In this way the

Lord, who saw further ahead than we did, prepared for the big step which would have to be taken. So it was that in December 1926 we occupied the premises which were to see the development of a worldwide spiritual ministry, not unlike that of the church in Thessalonica: "From you sounded forth the word . . . everywhere . . ." (I Thessalonians i. 8).

The details of that transition and occupation make a story of Divine grace, wisdom, and sovereignty, which lead us to bow in worship when we "Remember". I have been reading through the records of that work during those early years. The gathering of ever-increasing numbers of the Lord's people and servants from ever-extending distances: the steadily expanding ministries in many places: the goings out of younger brothers and others both to near and far places to preach the Gospel and minister to believers: the strength and vitality of the local fellowship in prayer and the Word: and (for this is also a very real mark of anything that counts for God) the growing opposition from without, and more than a little suffering within, by which the believers were ever kept on strong

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outreach to the Lord. It is no small battle against the power of Satan that things should be maintained in essentially spiritual purity. Yes, there is something to remember in those Forty Years.

But only heaven and eternity will show the true measure of values which have to be hidden from our eyes for safety's sake. That was certainly something that the Lord wanted in order to serve a purpose. Through and by the medium of a company constituted on the principles of the Body of Christ a ministry has gone *spontaneously* from Far East to Far West. A door was opened to the nations. We know from the case of New Testament churches that, for a time, they were lights and vessels to the nations. The churches are no more, but what God gave and did lives on. The *spiritual* values live for ever. We trust that it will be like that from these past years. That ministry continues in and through those who have gone to other spheres, some to far places, and what God has done in His people can never be undone. Also in this little paper and the related printed books the ministry continues in life and is ever expanding. Of course, in the period of forty years many have gone from our midst into the presence of the Lord, where "His servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face".

A new generation is fast replacing that passing one. Some of us who have been in from the beginning may not have much farther to go. But—and this has always been our position and testimony—time and natural features are not the criterion. It is the God of resurrection and Divine life who is "our life and the length of our days". This is where we stand today, and what He wants He is able to perform. There have been *many* times in the forty years when appearances were that the end had come, but "God who raises the dead" had other thoughts. It might be thought that after so much battering and toiling a period of respite would be given, but the fact is that this ministry is being more fiercely assailed today than at any time before. By printed and radio opposition, falsehood and calumny are being disseminated against us. No effort is made to ascertain the truth or "prove all things". Perhaps, in this, we have to accept what we have so often said—that the battle will be fiercest as the end draws near. It does truly seem that all those who have stood most utterly for "the testimony of Jesus" are having fierce and relentless pressure and trial today. Many who do not know of our own pressure write from far places telling us

of the intensifying trial of faith and spiritual pressure. There is consolation to be drawn from the fact that we know without any doubt in our conscience that we have stood—and are standing—*only* for the greatness and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and not for anything that we 'hold dear to ourselves' as of this world.

What this new year may hold we do not know, but what we *do* know is that "He abideth faithful, for he cannot deny himself". There may be more in the foreknowledge of God in our being led to make the motto for this year what it is. How often in the forty years has the motto just fitted into the year's need!

Let me repeat what I have said more than once before. We only look upon this ministry as an auxiliary or complementary ministry. We thank God for all that which is of Him and for Him. We know *our* calling. It is not *the* thing and superior to other ministries, but just to supplement them. It is for the "building up of the body of Christ". How we love to preach the Gospel to the unsaved, and love to hear it truly so preached! But the Lord has held *this* ministry to the purpose of maturing those who are being saved. This is perhaps a more difficult function, for several reasons. Deepening is something which is peculiarly costly, and means that the vessels have to be taken into deep places. Then evangelism so often has quicker and more apparent results, and is therefore much more popular; it gives so much more exhilaration and pleasure for such reasons. The realm of 'teaching' is fraught with so many more perils, and is therefore watched so closely for any ground of controversy and suspicion. Perhaps the devil has a particular fear and hatred for the *increase* of Christ. I think that the New Testament bears witness to that.

Now, in closing this preface to another year, I just *must* thank those many faithful, loyal, and appreciative friends who have given, and still do keep our hands held up, by prayer, helpful letters, and other means. It is impossible to send letters to all who write, but our thoughts go out to you—even to the remote places far off—with thankfulness to God for your encouragement. May this year with a seven in it—1967—be a year of *spiritual fullness* for you, for seven is the symbol of that.

Yours in His grace,
T. AUSTIN-SPARKS,
Editor.

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THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

8. THE CROSSING OF THE JORDAN

WE are considering the greatness and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ as represented in the ark of the covenant, and we now leave the wilderness and come to the crossing of the Jordan. Thus we have open before us the Book of Joshua, especially the first three chapters. Here we are in that great forward movement of the ark from the wilderness to the land—and let us keep in mind all the time that we are not thinking so much of the ark as we are of the testimony of Jesus. We are not living some thousands of years ago, we are living today. We are told that “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for *our* learning” (Romans xv. 4), so that what we are concerned with is what the Lord Jesus means to us today, and that is all centred in the ark of the Old Testament.

WARFARE IN VIEW

There is one thing of which we must take note right at the beginning. This movement from the wilderness, through the Jordan and into the land, was entirely with warfare in view. It is necessary for young Christians especially to recognize this, but if the older ones are wondering why there is so much conflict in the Christian life, we had better remind ourselves at once that that is the nature of the testimony of Jesus. If we are really associated in heart with the testimony of Jesus we are going to find that we are committed to warfare. Perhaps we know the *fact* of conflict, but we very often have questions about it, and even think sometimes that because of the conflict things are all wrong. I think it would be right to say that any Christian who knows nothing about conflict has not really entered fully into the meaning of the Christian life. Of course, we all sing very heartily “Onward, Christian soldiers!”, but we have some very big questions when we find ourselves in the battle. The journey of the testimony of Jesus is therefore a journey of warfare.

I remember hearing a very famous preacher put it this way: On Sunday morning the Christians go to church and sing “Onward, Christian soldiers!”; on Monday night they go to the theatre; on Tuesday night they say: “We will have a cocktail party”; on Wednesday night they decide to go to the pictures; on Thursday night they play cards at home; on Friday night they go off and visit some of their friends; on Saturday night they say: “Now, what shall we do tonight?”—and on Sunday morning: “Onward, Christian soldiers!” Now, that may

not be true of any of you, but a Christianity that only sings about Christian soldiers and never goes into the battle is not true Christianity.

So I remind you that when we come to the Book of Joshua there is a movement entirely with warfare in view. In chapter one the Lord is preparing Joshua for the battle, and the word which constantly occurs is: “Be of good courage.” ‘Courage’ is a great word in that chapter! Joshua was a man of courage before—all his history shows him to be so—but this new movement needs more courage than ever before. The ark is moving on to new ground, and there are many great enemies to this testimony.

In chapter two the Lord commands that they send out their spies in order to take the measure of the people, so that the people of Israel might really recognise what they are up against.

So in chapter one there is the preparation of the leader and the people for war, and in chapter two the being quite intelligent as to the kind of enemy that they have to deal with. Then, with those two things done, in chapter three the ark comes to the foremost place. So chapter three is our present occupation, for it is the ark, or the testimony, with which we are occupied.

THE SUPERLATIVE SIGN

In chapter three, verses 10 and 11, we have: “*And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Hivite, and the Perizzite, and the Girgashite, and the Amorite, and the Jebusite. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan.*” The superlative sign of victory is in the ark passing over into Jordan.

It says: “*Jordan overfloweth all its banks all the time of harvest*” (iii. 15), which means that at that time Jordan would normally be in a state of flood. I think you are familiar with the fact that Jordan always speaks to us of death, and that in the Bible it is always a figure of death, so that when the ark entered the Jordan at the time of flood, it represents the Lord Jesus moving into death at its greatest and fullest. When Jesus entered into death, death was at its full floodtide. I think it is important for us to remember that the death of the Lord Jesus was in relation to death in all its full-

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ness. Jesus in His death took death in its absolute power.

Human judgment would have said: 'It would be very much better if this whole thing had been arranged at the time when there was no flood in Jordan.' Naturally this would have been an argument against the wisdom of God, but He, who was in charge of this whole matter, arranged that it should be just then, at that time. It was a part of His Divine wisdom and plan to have this thing just when normally Jordan overflowed all its banks.

You see, God knew what He was doing. He was giving a great illustration of what the death of the Lord Jesus really does mean. The Cross of the Lord Jesus was not something that just touched the shallow waters of death. You remember that John said about Jesus: "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" (John i. 29), and Paul said: "The wages of sin is death" (Romans vi. 23). Therefore sin with death in its fullness is represented here. Jesus entered death at the flood. He has taken the full measure of death. There is no degree or aspect of death that Jesus has not dealt with in His Cross.

There is a difference here from that which happened at the Red Sea, for when they passed through that the waters stood up like a wall on either side of them, and when the Egyptians entered into that passage the wall fell on them. At the Jordan the waters did not stand up like a wall. We are told that it began right away up the Jordan at the city of Adam, and it was there that God cut off the waters. "The city of Adam has been placed 16 miles up the river, and it seems probable that a stretch of 20 or 30 miles of the river bed was left dry" (Amplified Bible). I am tempted to dwell upon that for a long time, for I think we could make a lot out of that word 'Adam'! However, in the Cross of the Lord Jesus, God went a long way back to deal with death. The entering of the ark, or the entering of Jesus into death, meant that the waters were cut off a long way back—"Far back at Adam" (iii. 16).

THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST'S DEATH

Dear friends, the Lord Jesus has done a very great thing in His Cross, for He has dealt with death a long way back. That is the backward work of the Cross. I am so glad that the Lord Jesus had dealt with sin and death before ever I came into this world! We have come into something that He did long before we had a life on this earth. I have heard of some young Christians being asked the question, when they have been baptized: 'When were you crucified with Christ? When did you die

with Christ?', and they have answered: 'When I was baptized.' Oh no, it was a long, long time before that. We have come into a very far-reaching victory of the Lord Jesus over death.

Now that brings us to the ark carried by the priests. This is an interesting point, for a change has taken place. It was the Levites who carried the ark through the wilderness, but now it is not the Levites. It is the priests, and this has its own particular meaning. What is the special function of the priest? It is to deal with sin. It is the priests who have to take the blood of atonement, and by that blood cut off the power of sin.

Now here we have a very interesting thing. We said that the Cross of the Lord Jesus went a long way back. If you look at the fifteenth chapter of the Book of Genesis, at verse 13, you will find that God is speaking to Abram, and telling him of the future history of his seed—"Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge." "That nation" was Egypt. Then God says to Abram: "And in the fourth generation they shall come hither again" (verse 16), and that is the land of Canaan, where Abram was at that time. Now, in that 16th verse, there occurs this little phrase: "For the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full." What does that mean? The Lord's people could not possess that land of promise while the Amorite was there, or until the Amorite had filled up the cup of iniquity, but when the Amorite had filled it up to overflowing, then God would bring Abram's seed into the land and destroy the Amorite. You will have noticed that the Amorite is mentioned as one of the seven nations in the land, and several times in this Book of Joshua the Amorite is used as representing all the others. Whatever was happening in Egypt during the four hundred years, God was watching the Amorite. He was watching the people in the land and seeing the cup of sin become more and more filled. When it became *full* of iniquity, God said: 'The day has come. Now is the time for My people to occupy the land.' So the River Jordan overflowing all its banks represents sin at its fullest, and the ark moving into the Jordan says: 'The day of the Amorites is finished.' Sin and death at the flood are *now* to be judged. That is why the priests carried the ark, for the priests are the people who have to do with sin.

MAN'S WEAKNESS AND GOD'S POWER

But there is another side to this. It is the side of Israel. There was the side of the Amorite and all

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the other nations, but there was also the side of Israel, and what does that side represent? Surely it speaks of human weakness. These people had failed terribly in the wilderness, and had proved themselves to be a very weak people. Everything here at the Jordan speaks of human weakness. Look at the Jordan! What a powerful thing it is! Look at all those nations in the land! What powerful forces they are! In other words, what is man in the presence of sin and death? What can man do when he meets the full power of sin and death? How weak we all are before those great forces of evil! If these nations in the land represent 'the principalities, the powers, the world-rulers of this darkness and hosts of wicked spirits' (Ephesians vi. 12), what can we do before those awful powers of evil? Why, those powers have only to do a little thing to us and we go to pieces! Satan has only to attack us in one small way, and we feel how helpless we are! So, on the side of Israel, it was a picture of human weakness faced with terrible powers. But the ark goes right in, and from this time onward all the powers in opposition will have to give way. Jesus has gone ahead of us and has met all the powers of evil in His own person. So the ark does represent the greatness and the glory of the Lord Jesus! He stands for us in the midst of all adversity, and in all our weakness He becomes our strength. The ark stands in the midst of the flood and holds the ground in victory.

THE LOOK OF FAITH

Do you notice that it is commanded that there shall be a space of two thousand cubits between

(To be continued)

the ark and the people? There is a great distance between the Lord Jesus and us. It is what He has done *for* us. So the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews says: "Looking *off* unto Jesus the author and perfecter of faith" (xii. 2). Death focused all its forces upon Him, and He focused His superior forces upon death. That is why the Apostle wrote those words with which we are so familiar: "The exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe" (Ephesians i. 19). Jordan, as the mighty power of sin and death, may be very great. All the principalities and powers in the heavenlies may be very great. But the Apostle says: 'the power which is for us exceeds all those powers'. It is the perfect work of a perfect Person for us. We have a perfect Person who has done a perfect work, and has gone on before us, like the ark. Of course, it is a question of faith; if we believe that we shall come through. One generation never went through the Jordan, and the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews says: "They were not able to enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews iii. 19). This is the generation of faith.

We ought to spend some time upon that, because there is a very interesting thing here, but will leave that for another time.

But let us remind ourselves of the thing with which we are really occupied: the greatness and the glory of our Lord Jesus. I think you are beginning to agree that this ark represents something very wonderful. It is not just an Old Testament object; it is an everlasting truth. It sets forth what Jesus Christ is, and what He has done, and it has very much more yet to say to us.

BUILDING ON CHRIST

"According to the grace of God which was given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder I laid a foundation; and another buildeth thereon. But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire" (I Corinthians iii. 10-15).

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TWO KINDS OF MATERIAL WITH WHICH WE MAY BUILD

IT is not difficult to realize what the Apostle was thinking, whether of Corinth, the city to which he wrote, or whether of Ephesus, the city from which he sent his letter, for the same thing would be true in both. Looking out upon the city he would see those substantial, costly buildings made of marble and other valuable and durable material; and, such was the nature of those cities, that he would see, right by the side of them and under their shadow, other meaner, humbler dwellings of wood and hay, and it would be an obvious reflection that the value of those different habitations would be-

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come apparent in a moment if a fire passed over them. The wood and hay dwellings would simply disappear, and only the durable ones would abide.

It is in that way that he wrote concerning the building of the church at Corinth, and it is in that way that the Spirit of God applies the message to every man. You notice that four times over it speaks of each man's work. It is, perhaps, a surprising thought that you can build wood, hay and stubble on the true foundation. We have so often used this idea in Gospel connections that we are apt to think that if we are on the true foundation, well, we are all right, and the building will be all right. What the fire will burn up will be those flimsy structures of lives which are built upon anything other than Jesus Christ. That is not the thought in view here, for you will notice that the Apostle is only speaking of those who are on the true foundation—"other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid". In other words, under our consideration at this moment are only those who are built upon the one sure, solid foundation of Jesus Christ. Let us forget the others for the moment, because this concerns us, if so be that we are thus builded, and it concerns us in a solemn reminder that the end is not achieved when the foundation is laid, nor is the building necessarily decided upon as to its structure when the foundation is laid. But, having got the foundation, having received that so freely by the grace of God, every man has his own solemn responsibility to make sure what he is building on it. He may build the durable, the costly stones, the gold and the silver. Thank God, every man may do that! You do not have to be an Apostle to do that. But, alas, every one, even an Apostle, can do the other—put this shoddy, unsubstantial structure, that will not abide the test, on the true foundation. Oh, if only the people of God generally could understand the difference—even for Christians, even in Christian life, even in sincere Christian service—between the durable and the perishable! I think that for many of us our whole attitude would be changed.

What it really amounts to is completing the building according to the nature of the foundation. You will find that Jesus Christ is the precious, costly stone. If you know anything about Scriptural symbolism, you know that gold speaks of Him, and, from another point of view, silver speaks of Him and His work. So this foundation is of a certain character, and the building that abides is the one which is of the same character; not our building something on Christ, but Christ completing His building in us. On the other hand, with the best of intentions, we may erect a structure

which is our contribution to Christ, and when the light and the fire of eternity come to bear upon it, it will be seen to be of a different nature from Christ—built on Him, but not of Him—and the Apostle says that will go, to the disillusionment and mortification of the ones concerned. It is quite obvious that he is not speaking of those lapses, or even sins, in the life which we all regret. He has in view the continual, constant structure of our lives. It is not just that, in the course of the good spiritual life, we have a lapse. We do, and we need to go back to the Lord for forgiveness for it. But that is not the challenge in this case. It is rather that the Apostle is speaking, not of the isolated event, but of the constant, steady accumulation of life as it is lived. After all, building is not a desultory little hobby of which you do a little bit here and there. It is a constant occupation, to be persevered with until the whole edifice is complete. Life is like that, and so are we, and the question arises in that daily, continual, persistent course of our life for God, for those of us who are upon the true foundation: Are we constructing that which is of the earth, of our own effort and wisdom, or are we really building Christ into our lives by faith?

Of course, the wood and hay are near at hand. It is what you have and what you can contribute. The stones and the gold and silver represent labour, searching, concentration and effort. Do we put into our lives just what we have to hand, or are we prepared to pay the cost of seeking the right materials from the Lord? It is not that they are not available. Thank God, they are! But the very word "*costly stones*" surely must remind us that not only were they costly to the One who provided them—our blessed Lord Himself—but they are costly to get. They involve something extra of concern and of willingness to pay a price.

GOD PROVIDES THE RESOURCES FOR THE BUILDING THAT PLEASURES HIM

For our comfort, may we remind one another that the Lord would never exhort us so to build if He did not provide the material, and the Apostle would never say that every man ought to build like this if he was not quite sure that every man *could* build like it. So this is not the question of our resources. In fact, it is the very opposite of that, for, whereas when Paul looked out on his cities he would immediately see with the eye what was good and what was bad, in spiritual things only the fire will show it, and what may be very improper and insufficient material may look very fine. What we have to offer, and what the Corinthians had to

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offer, may seem, on the face of it, to be very fine material, but it is not Christ. It is what we provide, and, therefore, when eternity comes to bear upon it, it will be seen in its true nature. And what is of Christ now often does not look like the costly stones, and the gold and the silver, and that is why we are so easily discouraged from so building. The building which is of spiritual material always requires faith, always requires a patient persistence in well-doing with nothing to show for it, and always requires a repudiation of human values and popular approval. In a word, it requires that we should not only build on Christ, but we should learn Christ.

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE TWO KINDS OF MATERIALS

Now I think probably the contrast between the two materials is best shown by the Apostle himself in the thirteenth chapter of this letter. We read in verse 8: "Love never faileth", and what that really means is: 'Love shall never pass away'. It is permanent; it is not wood, hay or stubble. 'Love shall never pass away'—"but whether there be prophecies, *they* shall be done away; whether there be tongues, *they* shall cease: whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away"—and how the Corinthians loved knowledge! Here, then, is the contrast between the abiding, the permanent, and the temporary. The prophecy, the tongues and the knowledge all speak of that which has an appearance and a show for the time being of something especially of God. The love is the constant display in character of the true nature of Christ. Now, it is not that prophecy has no value, but that prophecy without love has no value. It is not that because we might build in the flesh, we are not to build at all. That is a completely wrong understanding of the Cross. It is that any service, however effectively done in our own eyes and however well approved by others, which is mere work done by us without a corresponding experience of that work within us by the Holy Spirit, will be passed over by the fire and there will be nothing left.

So here are the Corinthians having a fine time in spiritual things, in the Gospel, in the meetings, in the preaching, in the Bible Study, in this, that

and the other, and working hard, and the Apostle says, in effect: 'Beware lest, when eternity comes to bear upon that phase of your life, it will be found—as far as spiritual values go—to have been worthless.' And here is the Apostle having a hard time (read chapter iv)—"made a spectacle unto the world, both to angels and men"; "made as the . . . offscouring of all things", despised, criticized, but maintaining all the time a spirit of Christlikeness, of patient perseverance in true testimony and loyal love for Christ, and a love even for those who maligned him, if they are Christ's. Here is the Apostle, weak and despised in men's eyes, but at the end of his life he is able to say: "I have finished my course" (II Timothy iv. 7). In other words: 'My work of building is complete, and the building will last for eternity.' Love, which is not only Christ living His own life, for He is love, but love which is Christ living His own life in us shall never pass away.

Oh, the encouragement to go on steadily laying fresh, and ever fresh materials into the structure of a life lived in humble faith and obedience and love to God! Whether we seem to be doing a lot, or whether we seem to be doing a little, let us never be discouraged in that labour, for the day shall declare it. What the Lord longs for us all is that eternity should not be disillusionment because of the loss, but amazement to discover the gain. It is a wonderful thought. You and I, who are so working in the dark now—for we have not got the plan of our lives and the Lord does not let us see—paying the price for the materials that we build, may one day be startled to see the magnificence and the glory of what God has done in our lives. It is worth faith and patience, and spiritual following after the Lord. And it is so much better than to be putting up this great structure which brings satisfaction to our own vanity and wins the approval of earthly-minded men, but concerning which the Apostle says that the flames will devour it all and leave us alone on the foundation. Thank God, the foundation will not go when the flame comes. We shall be there; but, oh! that we may be there with something precious of Christ, to our own joy and unto His praise and honour. Amen!

H. F.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

THE VOICES OF THE PROPHETS (XI)

"They knew not . . . the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath" (Acts xiii. 27).

THE VOICE OF EZEKIEL (*continued*)

HAVING laid the foundation for these messages, but making some essential distinctions and differences, especially regarding symbolism and reality, and mysticism and spirituality, we can now proceed to indicate how Ezekiel and his prophetic message falls into our basic purpose. That purpose is to show that it is possible to be very familiar ("every sabbath") with the words of the Divine message, and yet, at the same time, miss the inner meaning, the 'Voice'.

If we take only one major aspect and instance of this, it will indicate how serious this is, as well as obvious, to us who have the fuller story.

It will be known to those who are familiar with 'Ezekiel' that one of the most common characteristics of that book is the form of God's address to the Prophet. No fewer than ninety times Ezekiel is addressed as "Son of Man".

It does not concern me very much that in the Hebrew the term simply means 'Son of Adam', and is repeatedly used simply to indicate a human being, just mankind. I am impressed with two things in this book: one, that in no other case is it anything like as characteristic of an Old Testament book; and, two, the persistent and exclusive reiteration of the designation. There are deeper things than these which we shall draw out as we proceed; for it is in the deep significance of the two things noted that we shall find our message. This book is a book of visions, revelations, disclosures. It is a book of portents and predictions. It is not least a book of movements, activities, and energies. But in all of these God is addressing Himself to, and through, one whom He invariably calls "Son of Man". In every matter it is by keeping to this form of address. Very well, then, if that is noted, we can go further.

The "visions of God" which comprise this book are all governed by an inclusive and initial vision—

THE VISION OF THE CHERUBIM

We are not going to move into a study of the Cherubim from the Garden of Eden to the book of the Revelation—the first and last mention of them. We shall keep to Ezekiel with but one object. By the river Chebar the Prophet was given the vision of what has been called 'the chariot-throne

of Jehovah', borne by the Cherubim. The Cherubim are a symbolic representation of creation. Four is the number of creation, and the representation is of the four realms and governments of creation. The lion, king in his realm. The ox, king in the realm of domestic creatures and the service of man. The eagle, lord of all the realm of the air. And man. It is common knowledge that in this symbolism the man-feature is pre-eminent. The fact that it is the 'chariot-throne of Jehovah' that is being borne by the Cherubim is meant to show the absolute sovereignty of God in His creation. This sovereignty is chiefly expressed—in the creation—manwise. "What is man? . . . Thou madest him to have dominion . . ." (Psalm viii. 4, 6). In the three instrumentalities and methods of Divine government, i.e. Priest, King and Prophet (the Old Testament order), the Prophet is always represented as the man particularly. Man particularizes the *speech* of God. By his very creation in "the likeness and image" of God he speaks as God's representative. Of course, it is true that the Priest—the mediator—is man. The same is true of the King. But these have their own symbolism in the lion and ox, while the man is particularly indicative of the Prophet. The Prophet runs right through the Old Testament, so far as function is concerned, but he comes into full measure when Priest and King are either in weakness or needing special counsel from heaven.

I think that we have now reached the heart of 'Ezekiel', and there we find in as full a way as anywhere in the Old Testament the representative of God's mind in speech by vision, word and deed. That is why the Lord said to Ezekiel: "Son of man, say unto the people of Israel, I am your sign." "I have made you a sign . . ."

We lift out of this book the teaching and truth that the sovereignty of God in *creation and redemption* is *manwise*. Man—let us repeat—is God's representative in His government, and His instrument in redemption. (See Romans v. 12, 19, and I Corinthians xv. 21.)

THE PROPHET AS A SUFFERER

One other factor must be mentioned as essential to this particular message, for, without it, the whole case will break down. It is the *suffering*

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aspect of God's representative in redemption. *The Prophet is invariably a suffering man*. Suffering for God's people is a very real thing whenever and wherever the prophetic function is in operation.

This that we have said is the voice of the Prophet Ezekiel.

Now we are ready to make

THE TRANSITION FROM EZEKIEL TO CHRIST

The link between the two is largely found in the name, with a difference. In Ezekiel it is "Son of Man". In the Gospels it is "*THE* Son of Man". Here again, on the best of grounds, we reject (despite the Aramaic language) that it is just and only 'a man', one of the human species called 'man'.

This is a title chosen by our Lord as particularly His favourite. It occurs eighty-two times in the New Testament, and in all but two it came from His own lips. This alone gives it a significance that is more than the general 'a man'. But the main strength of its uniqueness is found in its various connections.

It is used in relation to:

1. His first coming.
2. His life here in union with heaven.
3. His ministry and work here among men. (His authority.)
4. His going out of the world.
5. His "lifting up"; the Cross.
6. His coming again.
7. His glorification.
8. His judgment of men and the world.

Inclusively and comprehensively the title is always with a supernatural context.

Jesus never referred to Himself as "Son of Abraham", "Son of David", "Son of Israel", etc. This keeps us to the real significance. Why did Jesus prefer and love this title?

First, it goes right to the heart of God His Father. It leads us to that great and dear concern of God for *man*; a creation in which God has vested so much for His creational glory and pleasure. It touches the deep sorrow of God because of man being "lost" (see Luke xix. 10 and xv. 4, 6, 9, 24, 32). It is therefore the Redeemer title; the title of the 'Kinsman Redeemer'. It is a name of universality; the whole race. It is more than any earthly category of nationality, colour, language, temperament, sex, age, culture, or zone. Herein is the "Voice" of the Greatest of all Prophets, it is "the voice of the Son of man" (John v. 27-29).

So, with a vast subject only hinted at, we come to our particular point. Why did Israel not hear this voice, although hearing the words every Sabbath, and hearing His *words* for over three years? There are two answers, or two factors to the one answer.

One was their national and exclusive prejudice.

Their horizon was Israel, and all others were "dogs", outsiders, and worse. They had lost their vision and vocation to the nations. They had narrowed God down to Jewry and Judaism. Still worse, they had come to believe that they alone were righteous, and all others were "Sinners of the Gentiles". It was not *men* for whom they cared, but for themselves as Israelites. Hence anything that did not conform to their exclusiveness was anathema to them: and Jesus did *not* conform! He refused to be trammelled by their legalistic strictures, the 'heavy burdens which they put upon men's backs'. He was already breaking down that legalism against which He later swung His great Apostle Paul like a battle-axe. Prejudice, born of exclusive self-rightness, will always result in blindness, confusion and limitation.

But there is another factor in their inability to hear; the last one mentioned in relation to the Prophet's ministry.

The idea of the Messiah being a *man* was not strange or foreign to the Jews. When Jesus was in popularity with the multitude they were ready to acclaim Him the Messiah. But a hitch and affront came to their enthusiasm, as it came to the disciples themselves when He introduced the subject of His approaching death, and that by 'lifting up', that is, the Cross. The word which expressed their reaction to that intimation was "Offended". The point was reached when everyone, even His disciples, lost confidence in Him. A *suffering* Messiah? "Far be it from thee, Lord, this shall *never* come to *thee*." "The Son of Man must go . . .", but surely not *that* way! So the multitude changed their minds and asked: "Who is *this* Son of Man?" (John xii. 34). Unwillingness and unpreparedness to accept the Cross, "the fellowship of his sufferings", will certainly make blind and deaf to the full knowledge of Him, and hinder the fullness of the "New *Man*". The movement from the *one man*, Adam, to the One Man, Christ, is ever and only by way of the Cross. The ear has to be a crucified ear if it is to hear "the Voice of the Son of Man". Until the Cross has separated between the old and the new, the natural and the spiritual, there is no faculty for hearing "what the Spirit saith".

Words, yes words; year in and year out; but at the last the 'voice' has not really been heard.

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FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

WHEN CHRIST TAKES CHARGE

THAT evening Terry could hardly look his father in the face. He felt so miserable that he would much rather have said nothing to anybody. But in the end the whole story came out.

It was such a change from the exciting evening when he had rushed to meet his father with the news. "Father!" he had almost shouted, "I'm a Colt." "I know that," said Father, "and a very unruly colt sometimes." Terry did not enjoy his father's idea of humour, and proceeded to explain that what he meant was that he had been chosen for the school's Junior Cricket Team, which was usually called "The Colts". Father, of course, knew this really, and was very proud that Terry had been chosen. Still, he liked his little jokes, and after this he often called Terry "The Colt".

On this sad evening he could see that there was something wrong with Terry and tried to cheer him up with the usual stale joke about being a Colt. "But I am not a Colt any longer," he objected, "I've been dropped." It was then that, as we have said, the whole story came out.

Terry went regularly to Crusaders as well as to church, but he had never publicly committed himself to following Christ. He knew that he ought to do so, but the truth was that he was too self-willed to let anyone control him.

He called this control being "sat upon", and was most emphatic that nobody was ever going to sit upon him! He respected his father and mother, and usually tried to please them, but he always resented any attempt on their part to "sit upon" him. He was really quite fond of his brother, but in spite of this, often quarrelled with him. "You may be older than me," he would argue, "but you are not going to sit upon me!"

It was just the same at school. He was not bad at heart and really worked hard so long as he was not actually forced to do so. On several occasions, though, he had come to a head-on collision with his Form Master on this very matter of refusing to be "sat upon".

Now this self-will had got him into real trouble. Terry had got it into his head that the Games

Master was trying to "sit upon" him, and had refused to do as he was told, with the unhappy result that he had been dropped from the Junior Team. No longer in the Colts! No longer with a hope of one day getting into the School First! No wonder that Terry was miserable, and in fact just a little bit ashamed.

Father listened to the story in a kind way, but said very little at the time. Later on, however, he took out his Bible and asked Terry to look at Mark, chapter eleven and verse two. To his surprise Terry read these words: "... a colt . . . whereon never man sat." "I imagine," said his father, "that that colt was like a certain young Colt in this home, and that he had made up his mind that no one should ever sit upon him! Never! Isn't that rather like you? How often have I heard you say that you will never be sat upon?"

It was very true. Terry wondered what was coming next, but he soon found out when his father asked him to read verse seven: "And they brought the colt to Jesus . . . and he sat upon him."

Did the colt kick? Did it try to throw the Lord Jesus off its back? Did it struggle? Did it try to rush off in a direction of its own? No, it did none of these things, but quietly allowed Christ to ride on it and to guide it. It had been mastered. And so it became the most famous donkey in history.

Terry realized that he had not only been a Colt, but had been a donkey, too. Yet the Lord Jesus loved him and was ready to take charge of his life if he would only let go of that stupid pride of his. He and his father prayed together, and for the first time in his life he really committed himself to Christ as his Saviour and Lord.

Did he get back into the Colts? Did he later play for his School? What does that matter beside this most important thing that he had been mastered by Christ? It may be that as you read this you recognize yourself as a self-willed "Colt" who has been saying "Never!" If you yield to the Saviour and let Him take control of your life you will have found the secret of true happiness and usefulness.

H. F.

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“THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM”

2. THE NATURE OF THE CITY

WE are engaged upon a consideration of the last chapters of the book of the Revelation, especially with those parts that deal with the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven. In that connection will you look at three verses of Scripture in the Letter to the Hebrews:

“By faith he (Abraham) became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (xi. 9, 10).

“But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (xii. 22).

“For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come” (xiii. 14).

Before we continue with our consideration of this city I do want to say a very serious word about the purpose of these meditations. I want to say to you that this is not just a subject for a conference, nor just some Bible study for a series of meetings. My own strong conviction is that this is a word from God in this serious time in which we are living, and we are living in the most serious time in the history of this world. If we knew what was happening in the nations of this whole world today, one question would fill our minds: How much longer can it go on? Things are happening which make it very possible that many alive today will see the great change in this whole world. We are not exaggerating if we say that it is quite possible that within the next twenty or twenty-five years the end of this present world order could come. That would mean that this could happen in the lifetime of the middle-aged people, and certainly of younger people. It is not my desire to be an alarmist, but what I have just said is very possible, and so many things are happening in the world as to make the time very short.

I am not prophesying, so no one will be able to say that I was a false prophet if it does not happen! I am only saying that it is very possible, and if this is true, then we might expect that God would send a message to His people to prepare them. So I repeat: this is not just some bit of Bible teaching for a week. This could be a message from the Lord to prepare us for what is coming very soon.

Now I must take you back to the main thing which we said earlier, because that is the thing

which is right at the centre of everything else. It is that the thing which governs everything in the history of this world is the nature of God. When God created this world He created it to be an expression of His own nature, so that wherever you looked you could see what God is like. When God created man He intended him to be an expression of Himself. He said: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Genesis i. 26), which just means that when man is as God meant him to be, we should see what God is like. When He finished that creation He said “it was very good” (Genesis i. 31), and when you think of what God is like, for Him to be able to say ‘It is very good’ of anything, it means that it really must satisfy His nature.

Then everything went away from God and became displeasing to Him. When He looked out in the world He could not see His nature being expressed, so He put a curse upon everything. In effect, He said: “That no longer satisfies My nature. I do not want it.” From that time onward God was always seeking to find something that would satisfy His nature. That is the story of the Old Testament—it is just the story of that which does satisfy God and that which does not satisfy God. And God accepts or rejects just according to how far His nature is satisfied. It is a long story; but running through that long history was one golden line, like a golden thread in a black fabric.

ABRAHAM’S QUEST

It is a long history. It reaches right back to the beginning, and then it was taken up by Abraham, who, it says, “by faith . . . looked for a city”—now note—“whose builder and maker is God”. Not a city built by sinful man. However wonderful such a city might be, it would never satisfy God. It had to be a city which satisfied the nature of its Maker, God. That vision was put into the heart of Abraham, and he could say: ‘Somehow I have come to understand that God wants a city, and if He wants anything, it will have to be like Him, and be made by Him. It is a “city whose builder and maker is God”.’ So we have read that Abraham went up and down the land, and as he did so he saw some cities. He saw the city of Sodom, and said: ‘No, that is not it. That could never satisfy God.’ Then he saw the city of Gomorrah. ‘No,’ said he, ‘that is not the one.’ And then he saw the city

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of Salem, the original Jerusalem. 'Now this is very much better than Sodom and Gomorrah,' but the Spirit said to Abraham: 'No, not even that one.' So he went on moving up and down the land, and this Divine conception of the city never materialized. Seventy years, eighty years, ninety years . . . and then he died, and he never found the city! This Letter to the Hebrews says: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises . . . God having provided some better thing for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect" (xi. 13, 40).

THE END OF THE QUEST

And then this same Letter says: "But ye *are* come . . . unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." It has been a very long spiritual pilgrimage, but it is at an end now. Abraham has got it now. He is a co-inheritor with us.

Yet once more we have to change our ideas. There is a long, long story of Jerusalem in the Old Testament, but that Jerusalem, even in its best days, never finally satisfied God's nature. Everybody who knows his or her New Testament knows this. Have you read Peter, Paul, John and Stephen? They very largely make up the New Testament, and everybody knows from them that the things in the Old Testament were only patterns of some spiritual thing in the New Testament. Read Peter's Letters again, and there you will find that he is speaking of God's new Israel, and the *new* House of God in Israel. He calls it "God's spiritual house", and speaks of the offering of "*spiritual* sacrifices". This is the new Israel. Read Paul again, and you will find him writing to the Galatians: "Now this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to the Jerusalem that now is: for she is in bondage with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother" (iv. 25, 26). And then he will say in his Letter to the Philippians: "Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Saviour" (iii. 20). That is the transition from the earthly to the heavenly, from the temporal to the spiritual.

You know, John builds his Gospel around Jerusalem; that is, the Gospel by John is centred in and circles around the Jerusalem which is below, but when you move on to the book of the Revelation, written by the same man, the centre is the heavenly Jerusalem. He is walking around her, noting her walls. In these two great writings John has moved from the earthly to the heavenly. And then this wonderful Letter to the Hebrews says

that we, the believers of this dispensation, "are come unto mount Zion . . . the heavenly Jerusalem".

But, you see, this is all spiritual language. It is that of a spiritual character which God is seeking to possess.

Well, let us say it again, very strongly: This is only symbolism. What does it really mean? It just means what all the Bible is about: God is going to find His full satisfaction in His Son, and in a people conformed to the image of His Son. It is not a thing, nor a place—it is the Son of God and the sons whom He is bringing to glory.

THE PRESENT PREPARATION

Let us bring that city right here. Dear friends, if you are really a born-again child of God, you are a part of the city which God is now building. God is now building something, and this building is going on inside of us—or it ought to be! God is, by His Spirit, building His Son into us. Christ is being built up in us, and we are being built up into Christ.

This is a tremendous business! When we are born again the Holy Spirit gets hold of these pieces of rough stone—and what poor bits of humanity we are! What poor pieces of material we are for a heavenly city! We have a lot of corners, like a piece of stone, and the Holy Spirit says: 'We will knock off some of those corners,' and so our spiritual experience is one of having the corners knocked off. You know what I mean by 'corners'? If you don't think that you have any corners, you know that other people have! We are very awkward people and do not fit in anywhere, so we have to be made to fit into this heavenly city. You see, this heavenly city is very practical. It is all very well to sing about 'Jerusalem the golden', but when the Holy Spirit is knocking off the corners, that is not what we mean when we sing. The symbolism may be very wonderful, but the actuality is through suffering. But when the work is finished we will say: 'God has done a wonderful thing in me. What a difficult person I was! How difficult it was for me to fit in with others! Indeed, I often wanted to run right away from everyone because I did not fit in, but God has done His work faithfully. All the awkward corners have gone and Jerusalem is a city that is "compact together".' Do you remember those words from Psalm cxxii? "Jerusalem, that art builded as a city that is compact together" (verse 3), and Peter says: "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house" (I Peter ii. 5). Yes, God is building His city.

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BUILDING FOR ETERNITY

Not only are we people with corners: we are people with a very rough surface, and when we rub up against one another there is a lot of friction. You know what I mean! We just do not get on smoothly together, and then the Holy Spirit takes the sandpaper to smooth us down. But, oh no, He does not take a piece of paper and rub us smooth—He puts us up against someone else who is not smooth, or He puts us in a situation in life which is not smooth. We want to get away from that person because he, or she, rubs us up the wrong way, and we want to get away from that situation because it does rub us up the wrong way so much. We want to have a smooth time, but the Holy Spirit does not let us have it. We shall never have a smooth time until we are smooth—and do you know what it is that makes us smooth? It is the grace of God in suffering. We have to say a lot about that when we further consider the city.

Now you have got away from symbolism, have you not? We have come to spiritual reality! And this city is just the embodiment of these spiritual principles.

(To be continued)

When you are talking about the heavenly Jerusalem you are talking about something eternal, and that is something of which we are very conscious now. Here again we have come into the realm of what is spiritual and not temporal. The point is this: What God is doing in the small fragment of time in our lives is going to be revealed to His glory for all eternity. To use the words of the Apostle Paul: "Our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (II Corinthians iv. 17). God is doing in these little lives that which will correspond to the city "coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God".

I do trust that you are already beginning to see what God is working at, and what He is now building for all eternity. So we cease to think of the city as a place, and think of it as a people conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. "Partakers of the divine nature" (II Peter i. 4).

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS THE SPIRIT OF ANOINTING

"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor" (Luke iv. 16-18).

"Jesus of Nazareth, how that God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts x. 38).

"And ye have an anointing from the Holy One. . . . And as for you, the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but as his anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, ye abide in him" (I John ii. 20, 27).

Matthew xiii. 1-13.

ONE of the great needs of our time is to recover the meaning of things with which we are familiar. We, as Christians, know many things, but we have lost much of the meaning of those things. We are going to think a little about the meaning of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of anointing.

You will notice that that word 'anointing' occurs in three of the passages which we read. The Lord Jesus said that His Father had anointed Him to preach. Then Luke, in the book of the Acts, said: 'Jesus of Nazareth, whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit', the result of which was that He 'went about doing good', and registering the impact of His anointing upon the devil. Then John, in his Letter, says: 'Ye have an anointing from the Holy One.'

Now in this very big matter we just want to put our finger upon this one thing: what it means to have the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of anointing. And may I say here, at once, that every Christian is supposed to have received the Holy Spirit. The Word of God says, most emphatically, that if we have not received the Holy Spirit we do not belong to Christ. That Scripture says: "If any man hath

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not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans viii. 9). Well, I suppose everyone reading this would claim to belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. Would you say: 'I belong to Jesus Christ'? Do you know what that means? Do you know that the very name 'Christ' means 'Anointed'? So to belong to the Lord Jesus Christ means to be joined to the Anointed, and that just means that we are joined to His anointing.

That is very simple, and I expect old Christians think I am being too elementary. Well, wait a minute—I have not finished yet!

Would you say that what the anointing meant in the case of Jesus Christ it should also mean in our case? Is it possible to be joined to the One who is anointed and not take the anointing from Him? If you are a married woman, when you married you took the name of your husband. His name came down on your head, and you bear his name as long as you both live. Now the New Testament says that we Christians are married to the Lord Jesus. Do you know what happened when people came to the Lord Jesus in New Testament times? They were brought in front of the assembly of the Lord's people, and the apostles or elders of that assembly put their hands on the heads of these believers and called on them the name of the Lord Jesus. They declared that His name now rested upon them, and from that day they were called 'Christians'. They had the name of Christ upon them. Christ always meant to them 'the Anointed', and so they called the anointing upon these believers. That is meant to be true right from the beginning of our Christian life, but there is a difference between having the Holy Spirit and knowing what it means. My business is to tell you what it means, and, as I have said, we are just going to put our finger upon one thing that it means.

There was nothing neutral about the Lord Jesus Christ. There was something positive about Him right from His birth. When the old man Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms, he said: "This child is set for the falling and rising up of many in Israel" (Luke ii. 34), and that meant that human destiny was bound up with that little life. That little life was going to decide the rising or falling, life or death, for many in Israel, so that right from His birth there was something very positive about Him. Why was that? Because He was born of the Holy Spirit. The angel said to Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee" (Luke i. 35). Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit, therefore there was nothing neutral about Him. Things about Him were very positive because of the Holy Spirit.

Now naturally you may be twenty, thirty, forty,

fifty or sixty years old, but spiritually you may be only a day old. Naturally you may be six feet tall, but spiritually you may be just a little baby. But if you have been born of the Holy Spirit human destiny is bound up with your life, even as an infant. There ought to be something very positive about you, even as a spiritual babe.

Or you may have grown up to be twelve years old spiritually. When Jesus was twelve years old everyone knew that there was something very positive about Him. He was taken up to Jerusalem, to the great temple where were all the very wise men, with their grey hair and beards, and this little boy of twelve years of age began to ask them some questions. These old men scratched their grey hairs and said: 'What are we to say to that? Where did this boy get all this? This is no ordinary boy! There is something different about him from other boys.' Then the old men thought they would have a turn, and they asked Jesus some of their very wise questions. He just answered them without any difficulty, and they looked at one another and said: 'What sort of a boy is this? He seems to know all the answers.' There was something quite positive about Him, and all the people knew it: 'He has a knowledge that we do not have.' Why was that? Because He was born of the Holy Spirit.

Then in manhood He "went about doing good . . . for God was with him". In every realm of life He registered something positive. Was it in the realm of the empty religious world? How His presence made all their religion seem so empty! In the simple realm of human life, day by day, people felt something when Jesus was there. In the official realm it was just the same. Men like Herod and Pilate did not know what to make of this man! There was something about Him that they could not understand and with which they could not cope. Then in the spiritual realm of the devil and his kingdom; Jesus did not have to say anything when He came where demons were in possession—the demons cried out. His presence disturbed them. Whether it was individuals, or whether it was groups of people, or whether it was the multitude, the presence of Jesus was positive in its effect, and that was because He was anointed of the Holy Spirit.

Do you see what I am saying? Do you see what is the meaning of having the anointing? If it is true that you and I have been anointed of the Holy Spirit, as we ought to be, our presence in this world ought to register something positive for God. It ought to be impossible for us to come into this world, and go out of it, without having registered something upon it. People in this world ought to

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feel something when we are near them. The devil himself ought to take notice that, because we are here under the Holy Spirit, Jesus is here. It is impossible for Jesus to be anywhere without something happening, and now Jesus is here by the Holy Spirit in believers. Therefore there ought to be nothing neutral about any Christian.

Now I expect you are wondering why we read that parable of the Sower. I will tell you why: for this very reason of which we are speaking.

"The sower went forth to sow. . . ." Jesus said later that the sower is the Son of man, and the seed is the Word of God (Luke viii. 11). I have often heard it said about this parable that three parts of the sowing resulted in nothing—the seed which fell by the wayside, the seed which fell on the rocky ground and the seed which fell amongst thorns all came to nothing. Are you sure that is right? The Bible says, from God: "My word . . . shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish . . ." (Isaiah lv. 11). Here is the Son of God giving the Word of God. Will you say that three parts of the sowing of the Word of God by Jesus Christ is for nothing? We have to think again.

Here you have four classes of people, and they are brought right out into the full light and for all time (two thousand years at least). You see what kind of people they are. The truth about them is made manifest for all history to see. Is that negative? I think that is very positive!

"Some seeds fell by the wayside, and the birds came and devoured them." Is that all there is to say about it? No, there is a kind of person described there, the person who is careless and indifferent about Divine things. The things of God brought by the Word of God don't matter at all to him, and so he writes them off and says: 'Well, they don't matter.' So far as he is concerned, Jesus Christ has worked in vain. But stop! Listen to Jesus: "The word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John xii. 48). These people will stand before the great judgment bar of God without any excuse. They will never be able to say: 'I never knew . . . I never heard.' Oh no, there is nothing neutral about Jesus! If His word comes our way, we may be careless and indifferent, and not interested, but that word is coming back in eternity. "This child is set for the *falling* and rising up of many" . . . "My word . . . shall not return unto me void."

Some seeds "fell upon the rocky places, where they had not much earth". Here is another class of people lifted up for history to see. These are those shallow people who have no sense of the value of the things of God. These people, when there is

something being spoken from God, say: 'Oh well, I don't think I am going to the meeting today. I am going for a walk'—or, 'I am going to have a drive out in the car', or, 'I am going to do this . . . that . . . or something else.' They have no sense of the infinite value of Divine things which would make them say: 'I will not miss that. There may be something that will make all the difference to my life if I am there.' Do you know those people? Jesus has lifted them up for all history to see: people whose eternal destiny is bound up with their attitude toward Divine things.

"And others fell upon the thorns; and the thorns grew up, and choked them." Is that all? Does the story end there? No; here Jesus has again shown us another category of people. In explaining this parable He says: 'The thorns are the cares of this world' . . . 'Success in my profession becomes the most important thing. The prosperity of my business comes first.' These are the people with whom the things of this life take pre-eminence, the people for whom the world (whatever that means) means more than the things of God. These are the people who mean business for anything except the things of God, and they do not mean business for God so much that they put Him first.

These are all very distinct types of people, but it does not matter to which class they belong, they are all responsible when once they have heard the Word of God.

I could go on to speak about the seed that fell on good ground—and even there there are differences in the people and in the result. Jesus said that some brought forth a hundredfold. These are the people who are utter for the Lord, one hundred per cent for the things of God, and are going all the way with Him, no matter what it costs. There *are* some people like that. Some brought forth sixtyfold. These are the people who go on with the Lord, but they just stop short somewhere. They do not go on in fullness. And some brought forth thirtyfold. Yes, they love the Lord, but they have some reservations. 'Don't let us be fanatical. Let us be quite balanced.' You know these people! 'Yes, we are the Lord's, but let us be careful!' They bring forth just thirtyfold.

Now why have we said all this? Just to show that, in one way or another, anything that comes from Jesus is positive. The Holy Spirit is positive, and not negative, and if the Holy Spirit is really Lord in our lives, our lives will count for something. There will be an influence from our lives which will be eternal. Thank God for the Holy Spirit! Let us be sure to ask the Lord that the anointing shall have a free way in our lives. The

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effect of the Holy Spirit may be to condemn some people, and it may be to redeem others, but He cannot be neutral, and if the anointing is upon you and upon me, the devil will take account of it. May the Lord help us to see that that may not be a bad thing! Do you want the devil to say: 'Oh, that man, that woman, does not matter. You need not bother about him, or her!' I had a friend once

who, whenever we were parting and going our different ways, took hold of my hand and said: 'Good-bye, old man. The Lord make you a nuisance to the devil!' Well, that is how it will be if the Holy Spirit is really upon us, for that is how it was with the Lord Jesus.

Do you see the meaning of the anointing of the Holy Spirit? May the Lord make this very real to us!

(To be continued)

POWER WITH GOD (I)

"RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS ACCORDING TO FAITH"

EXEMPLIFIED IN NOAH

"And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, when a land sinneth against me by committing a trespass, and I stretch out my hand upon it, and break the staff of the bread thereof, and send famine upon it, and cut off from it man and beast; though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord Jehovah. . . . Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my wrath upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast; though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, they should deliver neither son nor daughter; they should but deliver their own souls by their righteousness" (Ezekiel xiv. 12-14, 19-20). "Then said the Lord to me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind would not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth" (Jeremiah xv. 1).

GOD TAKES ACCOUNT OF THOSE WHO
HAVE POWER WITH HIM

IT is a remarkable thing that the Lord is doing when, in this way, He selects certain names and brings them to the fore over against such a very dark and hopeless situation, and says of them: 'Although these men were there, and although these men stood before Me, it would make no difference; they alone, by themselves, would be saved.' In doing this, He has selected from all the men who had ever prevailed with Him those who, more than any others, had power with God. If anything could be done, if God could be influenced,

persuaded to intervene, to change the situation which was so desperate, these men would do it, and would be the ones who would have power with God. The very first thing that strikes us is just that - God taking account of men who had power with Him. The Lord carries that a very long way. He says, in effect: 'I take that right to the very limit of possibility—where possibility ends these men go; if anything could be done, however desperate the situation, these are the men who will bring it about.' It is something to note that God takes account of men who have power with Him. God knows them; He knows what He has had to do, what He has been compelled to do because of such men.

GOD PUTS HIMSELF INTO THE HANDS OF MEN

By inference, this carries the truth that God puts Himself into the hands of men. God is not going to move unless there are those who prevail with Him, and the inference is: 'I am in your hands, if you will press the matter far enough, if you will learn how to prevail.' God will, or will not, move according to knowledge of how to prevail with Him in a situation or a matter. That is something to think about. If a situation *could* be altered God says: 'Such and such are the men through whom I would do it.' Of course, I am not dealing with the situations in the contexts of these two passages in Ezekiel and Jeremiah. That is not the point. I am not taking up the situation in Israel, which had become an impossible situation, and its handling and solution was one which could only be done

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through judgment, and the terrible judgment of the seventy years' captivity. God would deal with it in that way. But He had reached the point where no man could ask the Lord to deal with it on the spot, and it would happen. That is not our concern at the moment.

It is this: That there are situations which do go a very long way, as we shall see, which are still open to be dealt with by heaven, but which never will be dealt with unless there are those who know how to prevail with God. God offers Himself to be prevailed with, to yield Himself in all His sovereign power, in all His grace, in all His mercy, to men and people who know the secret of prevailing.

Now let us note at this very point, lest our hearts begin to lose assurance and hope, that the men here mentioned as being the most outstanding examples of prevailing with God were not taken account of for what they were in themselves. There were two things which made it possible for the Lord to take account of them.

A HEART RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD

One was their heart relationship to the Lord. Look at the men: Noah, Daniel, Job, Moses, Samuel. Well, there are some grand things about those men. The Lord has not covered up the other side. You are sometimes a little surprised at what the Lord does say about some of them. If you read the whole story, you do feel that there may be some ground of contradiction here in these men. You know the end of Noah—a very sad picture. You hear a New Testament Apostle saying: "Ye have heard of the patience of Job" (James v. 11), but when you read the book of Job, you sometimes feel that if ever there was a man without patience, it is Job. We know about Moses, and even Samuel seems to have passed out almost under a cloud. Well, I think it is clear that in their case, as in the case of so many of the others who are held up by God as examples of this or that, it was not because of what they were in themselves that God singled them out, but in every case you do see this: that in spite of their humanity, their weaknesses, their failures, their lapses, there was a heart relationship to the Lord which cannot be questioned, and when you look at the context of these very passages, that is the thing which first of all is impressed upon you—the heart of these people. God is troubled about the heart of this people. The prophetic word about Israel at this time was: 'The heart of this people is turned away from Me, and turned to idols.' "This people draw nigh unto me,

and with their mouth and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me" (Isaiah xxix. 13). It is a heart question, and it was that state of heart which at length brought about this impasse—that God could do nothing. Over against that, men are mentioned who, despite their human weaknesses, were men whose hearts were in a very utter place with the Lord.

But that is not all. That is a beginning point, but there is another reason why the Lord singled out these men. It was because of certain spiritual factors which were the great characteristics of their very life, factors which do count with God. When you look at each of these men, read their story and sum it all up, you have to say: That is the thing that marks that man's life, and that, and that. Each one of them is the embodiment of something, and it is that thing which counts with God and which was the basis of their having power with God. That is what we are after at this time—that which makes for power with God.

TWO WAYS OF ESTIMATING MEN

May I just stay here, after what I have just said, to add this. There are two ways in which we may estimate men, by which we may judge them and their history and arrive at a conclusion about them. There is the natural side, the way in which men naturally look at men. When the world reads the story of some of these men, such as David, and others, well, they sum it all up with a sneer and pass it all out as utterly unworthy. It is the natural way of judging men and appraising their value, and that was the point upon which the Lord came down with Job's friends. They judged Job naturally, by the sight of the eye, by what appeared on the surface, and summed him up as a bad lot. You can look on men of God like that, just taking account of the flaws, the weaknesses and all that human side, which is, after all, poor stuff in the best. Very few men, if any, have ever come out of the judgments of men completely free of that sort of thing. But there is another way, and that is as to their spiritual values, to judge spiritually. It is just here that the Lord says: "Touch not mine anointed ones, and do my prophets no harm" (I Chronicles xvi. 22). Why should they touch the Lord's anointed? Only because they have misjudged them and had come to wrong conclusions about them. The Lord will not let us touch any one of His, however much they may be at fault in our judgment. It is a very solemn thing to remember that: that our hand must not come down upon

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any of the Lord's own in judgment; that has to be left with the Lord. It may be that there is plenty from our point of view and to our judgment that would justify our taking such an antagonistic or opposed attitude, but the Lord will not have it. That comes out in the case of Job. Moses was a frail human vessel capable of making mistakes, but see what the Lord will do with those who assail Moses, and touch his acceptance with God, his standing before the Lord! I do feel it is necessary for us to remember that, because what belongs to the Lord is very precious and must not be touched. There are always two ways of looking at and judging men and people of God. There is this natural side which has plenty to criticize, but the Lord will disapprove if we do it. There is the spiritual way of judging, and it is necessary to look further and see how far these count for God, whether there is not something there that is of the Lord.

NOAH SINGLED OUT BY GOD

Having said that—and it is only introductory—we can come to the first of these men, Noah. This is not a study of the life of Noah, and certainly not of the deluge, but just this particular point—power with God. God singled Noah out from amongst a great host of men and said: 'If I could be prevailed upon, if I could be persuaded, Noah would do it; of all men, he could do it.' Noah is amongst the few. Perhaps you have not thought of Noah as being so important as that, and all that you know about him is that he made an ark. You always associate the ark and the deluge with Noah, and that is all it amounts to. But here the dispensation is closing, the whole existing order of things is passing, the antediluvians, patriarchs, the Mosaic economy, the whole monarchy, the prophetic ministry in the old dispensation are coming to a close. God looks over the whole and sees men who have prevailed with Him, and brings five out from amongst them. The first one He mentions is Noah—a man who stands over a great extent of time. God says: 'If I could be moved, Noah would move Me. I would have to yield to him.' Well, that surely forces us to look to see what it is in Noah's case that represents that which prevails with God.

I think the key is in Hebrews xi. 7: "*By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.*" That is the summary of it, but it wants breaking up.

NOAH STOOD ALONE FOR GOD

First of all, we go back to Noah's time. You read chapters vi and vii of Genesis and this whole situation concerning Noah is introduced. The statement is that God looked and saw, and what did He see? A whole race of men, in every imagination of their hearts corrupt, evil, a universal state of iniquity and departure from God, of godlessness and of positive iniquity so utter, so terrible, that God repented that He had made man on the earth, and He said: "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground; both man, and beast, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens; for it repenteth me that I have made them." God has said that, and then the next sentence is: 'But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord.' "But Noah . . ."—the exception. Then at the beginning of the seventh chapter you have the reason why: ". . . for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation".

Well, the first thing about Noah is this: that he stood true to God as one solitary, lonely man in a universe of iniquity, one man amongst all men, distinguished from them by righteousness over against utter unrighteousness. One man true to God when all others had departed. How easy it would have been for Noah to have been carried away, not only by the sin and the atmosphere and the general course of things, but by this: 'Well, everything has gone. God has not got anything, and what is the good of trying to stand true? What is the use of *my* trying to hold on when everything has gone?' So often the Lord's people have given up, not because there were no other people of the Lord on the earth, nor because there were no other righteous people, nor because there was not another Christian in all the world, but because things have gone so largely astray, have departed so extensively from the Lord's revealed mind, and have got into such an appalling condition that they say: 'Is it any use trying to stand for what is of God in any full sense? We may as well accept things as they are and capitulate, and make the best of a bad job:'—the kind of argument which is the result of the seemingly impossible situation, prospect, and outlook. Death and departure: what is the good of our trying to stand up to this? Probably you, as an individual Christian, placed in a setting of so much that is contrary to God, often ask your heart: Is it any use trying to hold on, to stand for God? You see, the question of power with God does immediately arise. It is a tremendous thing that God is saying: 'Here is one man in the whole human race, one man in the

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whole world, alone, who will not capitulate, and that is the basis of power with Me. If anything can be done, that is the kind of man who will bring it about.'

May we not be tested by the situation in which God places us, so difficult, so contrary, as to whether we are going to stand with God so that we come to a place where we do know the secret of prevailing with God and are able to say: 'I have been in very difficult situations where the whole thing seemed hopeless and impossible, but I have learned that it is possible to prevail, to triumph, to bring God in, and I have seen those hopeless, impossible situations touched by God and dealt with by Him. I have come to know the Lord over against a very dark and seemingly impossible background.' God needs men and women like that. Alone—yes, desperately alone!

NOAH HAD NO PRECEDENT

"Moved with godly fear, prepared an ark." He built an ark, as the context shows, without a precedent. That, I think, is the point here. "Things not seen as yet." First of all, it is fairly generally concluded that rain had never been seen up to this time. "There went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground" (Genesis ii. 6), but rain was an unknown thing up to Noah's time. They had never seen it, so he had not a precedent for this. Probably there are other things covered by that little statement: "Things not seen as yet." The point is that nothing in history up to this point gave any ground of justification for taking the course that he did. He could never say: 'You see, this happened at such and such a time; this happened there; we have examples of this.' We, today, have examples of almost anything and everything that may come, but Noah had no examples, no evidence, no precedent, nothing to give point. He was simply told by God that it was going to happen, and he could not in the realm of his whole knowledge say: 'Well, I know what that means!' There was nothing like that at all. It was going to be something altogether new, something that had never happened before.

Every individual life with God is something so much by itself. Ten thousand, or a million, may have gone that way before, but when it comes to us, we always feel that no one in all God's universe has ever had this experience before. We feel that we are the only one who has ever gone this way. People can say to us: 'I know all about it. I have been that way.' 'Yes,' we say, 'but you don't understand. You have never really been in my position.'

That is our immediate reaction. It is like that—the utter loneliness of a personal walk with God. Noah had no precedent, nothing to go upon. Faith is tested like that. Noah, "moved with godly fear"—and you know what that word means in the Scriptures: fear of the Lord, that is, just believing God and obeying Him because He is God; not because of any proofs or evidence, but because He is God—"prepared an ark".

A PROLONGED TEST OF FAITH

But then, remember the duration of it. He did not start this thing, get so far and say: 'Well, I have been at this for a good long time now. Month passes into month, the months are mounting up and it is getting into years now and nothing has happened. No one takes any notice, no one is influenced and I am making no impression at all. I think there must have been a mistake. Surely there ought by now to be something that indicates that I am on the right line and that I have not taken the wrong course!' One hundred and twenty years! Of course, that was not much out of his whole life of nine hundred and fifty, but a hundred and twenty is enough to test faith. Now the point is that for one hundred and twenty years he went on with it without anything coming in. He went the whole of that time of required, demanded activity with nothing whatever to prove that he was right or to support him in his way, with nothing that looked like some effect of his message (because one writer speaks of Noah as a "preacher of righteousness" (II Peter ii. 5)), with nothing happening through all his preaching, whether it was by word or act—but what was happening really? There was something happening, but it was one of those things that you and I do not ever feel happy about. It says that he condemned the world. By his faith and his works of faith, he put everybody else in the wrong and prepared them for judgment. In Paul's words, he was "a saviour unto death" (II Corinthians ii. 16). There is always that effect of faithfulness. It is not ineffective and neutral. It does have an effect, although it is a very disheartening kind; nevertheless it counts, is effective, is tremendous. His work of faith just prepared the world for judgment. God has to do that to be justified.

FOR A TIME TO COME

But over it all there is this element—and you see we are getting at the question of faith and analysing it—this element of the future aspect of ministry,

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of service to the Lord. It was for a time to come, and I think there is nothing so testing as that. If only we are going to live to see the result of our ministry! If only it is all going to come about in our lifetime! If only we are going to know here our vindication! If only something is coming to us before we pass from this scene to prove that we have been right, well, we can go on. But note: This, with all the rest, is summed up by the writer to the Hebrews in this: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises" (Hebrews xi. 13). Oh yes, Noah saw the flood, he went through it and came out on the other side, and made a sorry mess of things afterward. Is that all? No, not a little bit of it, really. There is something very much deeper and greater than that about this whole matter.

But I want to emphasize that it is this 'for a time to come' feature which is so testing to faith. We are told, and as frankly as Jeremiah was, that we give our lives, spend our strength and go through all the travail and sorrow and suffering and see very little. We go home to the Lord and do not see all that we hoped for. There is the ultimate test. How far do we come into the picture? What place do we have in it all? Can we eliminate ourselves altogether and go right on without any reservation, and give ourselves for that which we shall never see, for a time to come?

There is a lot of that in the Old Testament. You remember that Jeremiah gave his prophecy. We read in II Chronicles xxxvi. 22: "That the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished", but Jeremiah did not live to see it. His word was fulfilled, and people did go back from Babylon according to his word, but he did not live to see it. He worked for a time to come in which he had no place, so far as this earth is concerned, other than a spiritual place. The spiritual values of his life and work were there. It is a test of faith, because we do, humanly and naturally, crave so much to see something for it all before we pass hence, just to know that it has been worth while. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises." Noah was really living and working for a time to come.

Now let us get right to this thing. By this kind of faith which, to begin with, would not capitulate to what was practically universal departure from God, but, in effect, said: 'Although I may be the only one left standing for God, and for God's full rights, and God's full place, I have that faith in God that it is worth my standing alone for Him. God has something bound up with my aloneness for Him.' That is faith, tremendous faith, the faith

which would not surrender, to begin with, a faith which was not passive in standing in a world which was so contrary, a faith which was active, and went on, seeing nothing, with no precedent to work upon, went on building for one hundred and twenty years, and a faith which believed that, although he saw no converts or anyone coming over to the side of righteousness, something was happening. 'This is not all for nothing. Something is happening even now. These people are being brought under the effect of my stand and my ministry and my preaching, even if it is to take all ground from under their feet and leave them condemned, without an argument, without an excuse.' That is something which God must have before He can judge, and that is why He has sent us to preach. He is going to judge the world, but He cannot judge those who have never had an opportunity, those who have had no light and have had no witness. He must be justified. That was Noah's faith. It was not a happy side of faith, but again the faith which believed that this thing related to something very much more somewhere ahead in the future. That was the kind of faith that Noah had, and it says: "he . . . became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith".

'He became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.' Now we can link up with that Hebrews xi. 39-40: "And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect (the word is 'complete')." Here is the great, future, prospective factor in Noah's faith. He, with the rest of these men, was not made complete. Why? Because completeness belongs to our time, to this dispensation. It is the whole argument of the letter to the Hebrews: "nothing perfect" (Hebrews vii. 19). But now that which is perfect is come. This is the age of completeness, perfectness. Noah's faith looked on, and he had to die in faith, not receiving *because* this perfectness, this completeness, belongs to *our* dispensation, the day in which we live.

You come over to Hebrews xii. 23: "Ye are come . . . to the spirits of just men made perfect" (complete). Noah's spirit is amongst them. What has happened? The Lord Jesus has perfected the work of righteousness, the Son has fulfilled all righteousness. Noah's faith linked him with Christ, with this dispensation, with us, in perfect righteousness. Peter talks about Noah and the flood in chapter three of his first letter: "The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls,

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were saved through water: which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." John the Baptist would have refrained from baptizing the Lord Jesus, but Jesus said: "Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew iii. 15). The flood, the deluge, says Peter, is a figure of baptism in which all righteousness is fulfilled. But all righteousness stood *against* the men of Noah's day, but all righteousness stood *for* him through his faith. Baptism was not his doom, but his way into life, a new creation. "All righteousness"; "the spirits of just men made perfect". So Noah in faith came right into this age of perfect righteousness and inherited it. We are come to the spirits of these just men, Noah and all the rest, made complete.

Now what does it amount to in this particular connection? His life work, after all, was not just that incident of the flood. It ran right on to Christ, and on to the Church. "They"; "we"; these are the two words here. 'They without us.' "They", "us", brought together in the perfect work of Christ in fulfilling all righteousness.

RIGHTEOUSNESS ACCORDING TO FAITH

'Though Noah stood before me.' What is the first mighty ground of power with God? It is the ground of righteousness which is according to faith, and you can test it any day that you like, because power with God is not just a matter of somehow persuading God to do something you think ought to be done. Let us get this right over. Power with God is not cajoling God into moving, getting a God, who is reluctant to come in and help, to change His mind and to be kind and intervene. That is all wrong, completely wrong. We have a magnificent picture of this whole thing in Zechariah iii: "And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to be his adversary." Satan has established himself there in the place of power, which the right hand always represents. Christ is now at the right hand of the Majesty in the heaven (Colossians iii. 1), the place of power and honour, but here Satan is getting honour and has power because Joshua "was clothed with filthy garments". One who stood by said: "Take the filthy garments from off him . . . I will clothe thee with rich apparel . . . let them set a clean mitre upon his head." Now the scene has changed. Righteousnesses like filthy rags (Isaiah lxiv. 6) have been put away;

righteousness which is power has been placed upon him, and: "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; yea, the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee." Satan's rebuke, his dethronement, and his removal from the place of power and getting the honour is related to a change of condition from unrighteousness to righteousness. It is only this that can move God.

That is the background of those passages in Ezekiel and Jeremiah. Why did there come deadlock and impasse? God said it was because unrighteousness had become so universal and absolute that 'I cannot do anything. I just cannot. Even though these men stepped in, it is only righteousness that would save *them*. If there was righteousness here, they would be saved, but there are none righteous and I can do nothing. Remove unrighteousness and I am released. I can repent and come in. You who want to prevail with Me must provide Me with a ground of righteousness.'

That is very practical. We are paralysed so often and Satan is so often getting the glory, the honour and the power, because he gets us to move off this ground of the righteousness which is according to faith, bringing us under condemnation, bringing us back to that old ground outside of Christ, nullifying all this wonderful work of perfect righteousness fulfilled by Christ and our appropriation of it by faith. So often it just heads up to a situation like this. The enemy has got possession, he has fastened upon us and has made all kinds of suggestions and accusations. 'I do not know whether I am right or wrong, whether I have grieved the Lord, or not. I do not know whether the Lord is for me or against me. I do not know where I am.' Satan holds us there until we take positively a position of righteousness in Christ by faith, and put that to the enemy. 'I do not know in what I am'—and neither did Noah, nor Job, nor Daniel, nor Moses, nor any of them. Their faith was counted unto them for righteousness. 'I do not stand on the ground of what I am; I stand on the ground of Christ's perfect righteousness.' It is the only way to begin to have power with God, and we are nullified while we have a question on that matter. Oh, for a beginning, a foundation of a mighty settled faith in the righteousness of Christ as ours through faith in Him to put us in a place of power with God! Because it is not just persuading God, it is moral power with God. He must have a moral ground for all He does. If there is a question of unrighteousness, He cannot do it. That unrighteousness is dealt with in the Blood of the Lord Jesus: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John i. 7). Therein is

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our power with God. It is moral power. He is not a reluctant, unwilling God. He is a God who is only too ready, but He is bound by His own nature of righteousness. Have you that ground? Show Him on the ground of righteousness that He should do this, and on the ground of His Son why He should do it. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord" (Isaiah i. 18). How are you going to reason? Not like Job in the transition stage, reasoning about your own righteousness and why God should do it for *you*. No, let us reason together—on what ground? What is the issue? "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." How? On what ground are you reasoning? In what way are your sins made as white as snow? We know it is by the precious Blood. That is the reasoning ground with God. It speaks, it works with God. Oh, plead the Blood and you have the greatest argument with God and against Satan, the adversary and accuser. I know this is elementary. It is the beginning of things, but, dear friends, it is a

thing that follows us through to the end. What is the fear in your own heart that arises so often as to whether right at the end you will be able to hold out and get through triumphantly? Yes, it is the battle right through to the end. The enemy will never leave us alone, but are we just going to be under this condemnation of Satan, with the hand of God paralysed, because we have taken Satan's ground instead of God's? God's ground is righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. Satan's ground is unrighteousness through doubt, through unbelief.

Well, if Noah begins the great line of examples of power with God, it is that: righteousness which is according to faith, but what a faith!—tested, tried, proved, but faith. I feel that we are in the great test of faith in this day as much as ever the Lord's people were.

As we close this first chapter, let us be reminded that, for power with God, there must be conduct, behaviour, and "walk", which is the *expression* of righteousness. If there is practical unrighteousness in behaviour we shall be in weakness with God.

(To be continued)

"THE root of the word 'communion', or 'fellowship', is the word common. Jude speaks of a common salvation. Paul wrote to Titus—'my own son after a common faith'. At the Lord's Supper we share a common meal with a common loaf and a common cup. Paul describes it as a communion of the body of Christ and of the blood of Christ.

"What a fellowship it was! Matthew, a Jewish quisling, taking taxes for an alien nation; and Simon Zelotes, the intense nationalist! It is difficult to imagine how these two got on together. Simon Peter a rough fisherman and Luke, a cultured Greek doctor! Slaves and Patricians; Jews and

Greeks; Simeon, a coloured Christian, and Manaen, foster-brother to Herod; all together in one fellowship! Dan Crawford wrote that the Apostle Paul was converted by the truth of the Body of Christ. When Christ intercepted him He said, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' One old divine commented—'Saul was persecuting the Body of Christ on earth, and the Head complained from heaven.' When I touch my brother I touch Christ: 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these least—ye did it unto me'."

SELECTED.

JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1967

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THIS MINISTRY

THE OBJECT OF THE MINISTRY of this little paper, issued bi-monthly, is to contribute to the Divine end which is presented in the words of Ephesians iv. 13—" . . . till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge (literally *full knowledge*) of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we be no longer children . . . "

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This ministry is maintained by the Lord through the stewardship of those who value it. There is no 'subscription', but gifts can be sent to the Editor, 'A Witness and A Testimony', 30, Dunoon Road, Forest Hill, London, S.E.23, England. All cheques should be made payable to 'Witness and Testimony A/c'. The paper is sent only to those who personally desire it, and we count on friends to advise us if this is no longer the case, or if they change their address.

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MARCH-APRIL, 1967

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POWER WITH GOD (II)

EXEMPLIFIED IN DANIEL

"And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, when a land sinneth against me by committing a trespass, and I stretch out mine hand upon it, and break the staff of the bread thereof, and send famine upon it, and cut off from it man and beast; though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God. . . . Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast: though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness" (Ezekiel xiv. 12-14, 19-20).

"Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people; cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth" (Jeremiah xv. 1).

THE situation in relation to which these Scriptures occur is indeed a desperate one; it is one of hopeless extremity. God is represented as stating that He Himself has come to the end of His human resources so far as the salvation of His people is concerned. He says that there is not a man who could avert the judgment which must come upon Israel. In such a state He says that if that averting were possible there were certain five men who could do it; and in mentioning the five by name—"Moses, Samuel" (Jeremiah xv. 1), "Noah, Daniel, Job" (Ezekiel xiv. 12-14), He pinpoints that which those men signify which would prevail with Him, if anything could do so.

We are therefore seeking to put our finger upon that particular feature and factor which God Himself indicates as having power with Him up to the last degree. We have considered Noah; now we move to the second in the order in Ezekiel—Daniel.

Incidentally, it is impressive that, with the ac-

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ceptance of Ezekiel by Hebrew authorities for inclusion in the Old Testament Canon, they should have made such heavy weather over including Daniel. Only after much debate and controversy was Daniel admitted to a place in the Bible by those higher critics. The reasons for this attitude are full of interest, but not to be considered here. The point is that, as always, prejudice results in contradiction and inconsistency. Admit Ezekiel, yes, but overlook the fact that in Ezekiel God sets the very highest importance upon one whom you will not admit without a battle—Daniel.

FROM NOAH TO DANIEL

It is a very far cry from Noah to Daniel. Noah stands in the book of beginnings—Genesis; Daniel stands so near the end of the Old Testament era. Are we straining the truth when we say that that fact really brings us to the very significance of Daniel as an ultimate factor in power with God? We must remember that when God speaks there are very deep and eternal thoughts beneath His words; they are *spiritual* thoughts. We have seen that with Noah the vast eternal and fundamental spiritual truth of the righteousness which is by faith was the power by which believers were delivered from universal judgment and secured a new, regenerate world. How far-reaching that truth is in the light of the New Testament 'Genesis'—the Letter to the Romans! If that is foundational and at the beginning, what is it that is ultimate as indicated by Daniel?

The book which bears his name may be regarded as a book of history and apocalypse; of prophecy, and history written in advance; but that is surely not the point made by God when he singled out Daniel as a man of pre-eminence in power with Him. No, we must think again.

We have to begin by reminding ourselves of why Daniel was in Babylon at all; that is, why the people of Israel were there. That brings us to the point that Daniel was physically and temporally—though not spiritually—involved in Israel's situation and condition. Was it not because Israel had forsaken their high and distinct position as God's 'Peculiar People'? All distinctiveness of life and testimony as "not reckoned among the nations" had been wholly violated and forsaken. They had become like Babylon before they were in Babylon. They were not only *in* the world, they had become *of* it. To this position and condition Daniel reacted with deliberation, positiveness, and faithfulness. His decision regarding the king's meat; his refusal to bow to the king's image; his persistence in reject-

ing the king's edict about praying to any other god; and his acceptance of the penalties of all this—in fellowship with his other three friends—was all related to one principle. From the lips of the king himself were forced words which precisely and concisely embodied that principle: "The heavens do rule". The inclusive truth of Daniel, in himself and in the effect of his life with God in secret (remembering that it is in the age of "the times of the Gentiles", that is, the era when the "kingdoms of this world" are in *world* power), is that after all "the heavens do rule", and that any power with God over "the world rulers of this darkness" demands a heavenly position on the part of any vehicle of that power.

This means, as in the case of Daniel,

ABSOLUTE SPIRITUAL DISTINCTIVENESS

of life and testimony, *at whatever cost.*

It may involve the lion's den, and there are many kinds of lions' dens. It may mean the fiery furnace, and there are many kinds of fiery furnace. It may be the fire of jealousy and spite on the part of men, as with David. In His great and spiritually instructive prayer (John: xvii) Jesus had *very* much to say about the world as *the* enemy of His Church. How He prayed for the Church to be saved from the world; to abide in its "out of the world" position, and *so* be kept from the evil one. This kind of praying was based upon His immediately preceding words: "I have overcome the world", and this because (as seen throughout that Gospel) He Himself maintained His heavenly position.

It is therefore so impressive and significant that the Letter which speaks so forcefully about the Church's warfare with "world rulers" is the Letter which is based wholly upon the heavenly position of the Church. The measure of powerlessness in the Church, in preaching, in the prayer-life, in the testimony, within and without, will be determined by the measure of the "world" in the methods, means, behaviour, habits, accommodation, compromise, etc., in its members and corporate life.

This is an age of imitation of the world by the Church, and the power of the Church is pathetically small. If the Church were what it is really meant to be there would be neither need nor thought for imitating the world. We have to recover "the rule of the heavens" by recovering our heavenly position spiritually.

Daniel is a kind of summary of the Old Testament and a prophetic voice to the New. The one battleground of all the Old Testament is that of the heavenly distinctiveness of the people of God. That

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battle was lost in Israel, and the hopelessness of their position *as a whole nation* (apart from the Remnant) at the end, with the desolating judgment of God, was on this one issue—compromise with the world! The Lord has thus thundered in history and through all the Prophets to warn His Church of the calamity of this lost distinctiveness through compromise with the world. The whole Gospel of John, his Letters, and the Letters of Paul make unmistakably clear three things:

One: there *is* a “Prince of this world”; a “Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience”; that “the whole world lieth in the wicked one”, etc.

Two: that there is a spiritual realm where Christ is Lord, and not Satan, and where “the prince of this world (has been) cast out”. Into that realm, by birth “*from above*”, believers have been related and spiritually, inwardly, located, so that, as Jesus said: “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

Three: there is a fierce and relentless warfare between the two realms and their two Lords. But the point is this: Satan, for any success at all, must have his own ground. Therefore, to rob Christians and the Church of prevailing power, he *must* get

Christians and the Church in some way, on some point or points, on to his own ground—this world.

Why did Daniel “determine” not to touch the provision from the king’s table? Why did he and his friends refuse to have anything to do with the king’s image? Why did he keep his prayer window open three times a day? It was all to avoid compromise with the world and its god, and to maintain his link with heaven. He knew that such was the secret of spiritual power, and he is the very personification of the law of power with God.

If we were *desperately* concerned about power with God in life and testimony, we should be stretched out to know by the Holy Spirit where “Achan” (Joshua vii. 1) links, contacts and ground are in our lives, sabotaging our spiritual strength. The Holy Spirit would very faithfully say: “There, here, this, that!”

Power is a matter of position.

Have you noticed how dominant in Daniel is the phrase “The End” (xi. 27, 31; xii. 4, 13)? This spiritual position to prevail is peculiarly characteristic of the end, and who shall say that it is not *the* issue in our time? The Church is feverishly trying to recover power, but is it by *spiritual position*?

(To be continued)

THE VOICES OF THE PROPHETS (XII)

“They knew not . . . the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath” (Acts xiii. 27).

THE VOICE OF EZEKIEL (continued)

IF the prophecies of Ezekiel were read in the Synagogues, as no doubt they were, the hearers would hear a phrase three times repeated—“I have set thee for a sign”; “Say ye, I am *your sign*”; “Thou shalt be a sign unto them” (Ezekiel xiii. 6, 11; xxiv. 27). This designation as applied to the Prophet embodies and signifies the greatest of all of God’s methods with man. It is therefore something of which to be taken very careful and serious notice by all who are called to represent God in this world; and what Christian is *not* so called? Indeed, that *is* the vocation of the Christian and of the Church! This supreme method of God is that He incarnates the truth in His messengers: that means that He does not just give a message in words, but He makes the messenger the message. It is not just that something has been said, but that there has been a *person* in the place. It means that

the spiritual history of the representative is the ground of the message. That is why the factor and element of life is so very prominent in Ezekiel’s prophecies. God is not working mechanically—machine-wise, but by “Living creatures”. It is the life which is the essence of the testimony.

How strongly this law is applied to Ezekiel! This Prophet is not saying: ‘I have an address, a teaching, a discourse, to pass on to you.’ He is saying: ‘I **AM** your sign.’

So the Lord makes him painfully set forth the message in his own body, and causes things to happen in his life, even his domestic life—the death of his wife—to make very personal and ocular God’s message. This is very challenging and searching; but it is also very enlightening as to why God deals with His servants as He does. We can see the close identity of the persons and ministry of Paul, Peter,

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

John and others. They had to go *through* the ministry before it could go through them. We could enlarge upon this at many points, but it would involve us in such an extensive necessity. We must keep close to the law of God's ways. It will now be seen how and why our basic Scripture—Acts xiii. 27—is related to Christ by Paul. The argument of the Apostles was always that there had been a Man amongst men, and that that Man was Himself God's message, not only His messenger. Jesus enunciated this law and Divine method every time He said: "I *am*!" He *was* God's representation! To see Him, He said, was to see God. Not so to see Him was the very nature and judgment of spiritual blindness. Read John's Gospel again in this light. So 'the voice of the prophet' has become a living person.

When it came to the incarnation of the Son of God, that incarnation came to be shown as something vastly more than God taking flesh and blood. When John wrote: "The Word was God . . . and the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us" (John i. 1, 14), that was just the introduction or preface to his Gospel. He then went on to elaborate and extend that, and to show what the incarnation meant. This—in his Gospel and the light given him from heaven—resolved itself into two contrasted things. On the one line John brings out into clear definition that everything relating to God had, by the Jews, been resolved into a crystallized system; a fixed tradition, as such; an institution; a creed; a ritual; a form; a binding legality; and, although they might not use the word, an organization.

Along the other line, John shows throughout that Jesus was persistently, unbendingly, and with a constantly reiterated "Verily, verily"—"Most truly, most truly"—bringing everything to the Person, making it all personal. He was the Law. He was the Temple. He was the Lamb. He was the High Priest. He was the inclusive Shepherd and the Vine, both of which were Old Testament symbols of Israel as the Lord's flock and the Lord's

planting respectively. Jesus would not allow the people of His time to get away from Himself. Everything in the incarnation had become a Person, and that Person was—when the Holy Spirit came—to be not only the personal Christ (that would remain) but corporately manifested.

All those things mentioned above, which Judaism had become, had been displaced by the Person. This was the Sign. This is what the inspired Simeon meant when, taking the infant Jesus in his arms, he said: "This child is set for the rise and fall of many in Israel, and a sign that is spoken against" (Luke ii. 34). This is the *significance* of Christ.

True Christianity is therefore not an organization, an institution, a tradition, a form, a creed, a ritual, etc.; it is the presence and expression of a Person, the Living Son of God! The living Son of God and an organization are complete antitheses. Organization is mechanism, committee, congress, directorates, arrangements, schemes, and so forth without end. It is man's hand of control, and man's mind of ideas as to the work of God. Christ repudiated all this, and the Spirit of Christ just brushed it all aside and took independent control, and the comparison is obvious. Have we travelled a long way from Ezekiel? Not in spiritual truth or principle!

Because the Jews failed through their fixed position, prejudice, pride, and bondage to the system, to hear *this* voice of the Prophet, they missed the significance of *the* Sign as tragically as they did in Ezekiel's time, with such baneful consequences. The Sign is a test, a stumblingblock for the rise and fall of many. This will be the effect of every ministry which is a personal embodiment of the truth, as differing from a secondhand retailing of studied material.

May it be ours to be so concerned for reality as to hear the 'voice' as more than words, and, above all, may we be the embodiment and not the imitation of the truth and testimony!

(To be continued)

THE WORD OF LIFE

"That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life" (I John i. 1).

How important is this matter of life! We are apt to pass rather lightly over John's letters, and some of us perhaps are prone to neglect them. They are very simple in their terms, and appear to have much

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repetition in them, but, while they are stated in simple language, we must never make the mistake of thinking that this is elementary. In a sense it is. It is the foundation, for you do not begin until you have life. But equally truly it is the culmination, and I think we have to take note, not only of the letter itself, but of the setting and the author. John wrote this, not at the beginning, but at the end of the preparation of the Divine word. He wrote it, not in ignorance of the rest, not apart from the revelation given to the Apostle Paul, but as coming upon it to govern it, and, in a sense, to conclude it, for, however great was the revelation given to the Apostle Paul of the eternal purpose of God—and it was very great—the Lord evidently found it necessary to confirm, to safeguard, to press home, that revelation by this further announcement to us of the all-importance of Divine life.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ETERNAL LIFE

It was from the beginning. When you begin to consider this life, you are in the realms of the eternities. You are not describing the eternal purpose in its terms, but you are dealing with the very vitality of the eternal purpose in its essence. This is the eternal life for the eternal purpose, and the Spirit of God had to remind the people of God at the end of the apostolic age—and, I think, needs to remind us again and again—that the all-important thing is not the mental conception of the truth, not even the sincere belief of it, but the vital experience. Life is all-important. There are many of God's children who feel that the important thing for us, for the Church, is Pentecost. If we could get back to Pentecost, all would be well. The Apostle John was at Pentecost all right. I suppose he knew as much as anybody all that was involved in that great and glorious experience, but he is now telling us the inner secret of Pentecost, the hidden but mighty explanation of Pentecost, and he describes it in this way—as eternal life. Our great need, and the need of the people of God in our day, is not fresh signs from heaven, but a fresh liberation of this which is God's means of achieving His end.

"That which was from the beginning." He did not mean that it began at the beginning; it was already in the beginning.

The importance, then, of life.

THE MANIFESTATION OF ETERNAL LIFE

"And the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."

The life is all-important, and the life must be manifested. Now, many of us have vague and dreamy ideas associated with spiritual life. We think in terms of something which has little relationship with our ordinary life, or we think of some inward emotion which we call life. The Apostle wants us to know that life, eternal life, is manifested in terms of human existence. It began—at least, it never did begin, but it had its sphere long before human life commenced, for it was with the Father. But what John says is this: We were not only taught about life; it was not merely that we had life explained to us; it was not that we prayed for life; we *saw* life. It was manifested to us. How? In the Person of the blessed Lord Jesus. He Himself is called "the Word of Life".

Eternal life, then, in terms of human beings. This is the wonder of God's dealings with us in sending His Son!

Now the Apostle goes on to say that this life permeated and governed every part of the being of the Lord Jesus as He walked here on this earth. He tells us the story of the three or so years of public ministry of the Lord Jesus in different terms from those in which it is usually described. He puts it to us as an experience which he had in common with certain others when they had the opportunity of observing and testing the Lord Jesus in every phase and aspect of His being. So he says: "We have seen, we heard, we beheld (which means 'we looked more closely'), our hands handled." What he means in simple terms is this: Their acquaintance with the Lord Jesus was no merely superficial one, such as most of us have with one another. We hear one another and we see one another, but theirs was a far closer relationship which we are given to share with some others of living together, in which you not only see the other person in the more superficial side of their life, but you perceive the more inward, spontaneous expressions of their being, and if it is possible to come so close to another human being as to speak of the relationship in terms of 'hands handling', then, he says, 'we came as near to Him as that. In every part of His life, day and night, on His guard, off His guard, in His ministry, apart from His ministry, at home, abroad, here, there, everywhere, at every time, we had the most intimate touch with Him, and our verdict is that in everything the reaction which we had was eternal life, the manifestation of the nature of God.' What a verdict! What a Man!

You and I claim to have eternal life, do we not? Can this be said about us? We know it cannot! But it is said of Him. So here in the case of the Lord Jesus we have set before us the glorious reality of

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an absolute harmony, not of form merely, but of life, a perfect blending of God and man, subjected to any and every test, however exacting that test may be, and at every point the answer is: There is no kind of disharmony, no discord at all. 'We heard, we saw, we beheld, we handled, and our verdict is that through and through this Man is pure gold. This is the very life of God manifest in a human being.'

That is a message that John is bringing, but it reminds us that we are not gathering, and do not gather, merely to admire the Lord Jesus, though thank God we can do that, but to claim that we share the same life through His grace. We have eternal life. Then the inference is that if we have eternal life it must be manifested. If it is *eternal* life, it *will* be manifested. It will not merely be that we can go away and say: 'We had a good meeting, and there was life in it'—though thank God for that! It will not merely be that at some period, or during some experience as we are serving the Lord, we feel: 'Well, the Lord gave me life for that service', though thank God for that! But it will be to be those whose being is a living, and a living, not in terms of corrupt and human life which is so disappointing even at its best, but of the Divine life which is so satisfying.

"The life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness." 'That which we have seen and heard, declare we also unto you.' There is a life, an eternal life, which is declared, nay, which is possessed by us,

THE NATURE OF ETERNAL LIFE

You see the nature of it in its very description: eternal life. We are reminded of how different it is from our life. When we think about eternal life, our thoughts are projected into the future. We think: 'Thank God, I am saved. I shall never die. Thank God, there is no end for I have eternal life.' But this particular reference refers us not to the future, but to the past: "Which was with the Father." 'Eternal' life does not just mean life that goes on for ever and has no end. It means life that had no beginning. His life, that which was with the Father. Strip a man of all that belongs to time and you will soon find if he has eternal life. So much that we have and that seems to be spiritual really only belongs to time: our abilities, our opportunities, our acquirements, our advantages. There is a whole realm built up around us of that which seems to be spiritual, which we know we can do and which we have, but which is really proceeding from the earth, from what is natural and from what is of time.

Strip a man of everything, of all his advantages, all his abilities, all his acquirements, and if he has eternal life you have stripped him of nothing. That is what is going to happen to us one day. When we are in eternity the things of time will vanish. That is what happened to the Lord Jesus when they did it to Him. He did not have many of the advantages that we have in an earthly way. He was indeed "a root out of a dry ground" (Isaiah liii. 2). He owed nothing to the circumstances around Him: He had it all in Himself. All He seemed to have of achievement, of ability, of success, was stripped from Him when they led Him to the Cross, but He lost nothing. That was His greatest hour, because the life which was essentially the true man was eternal life, and while earth and time could give nothing to Him, they could take nothing from Him. Praise the Lord that we are given eternal life! Let us treasure it.

THE CHARACTERISTIC OF ETERNAL LIFE

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us; yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

Here we are coming to the crux of the whole matter. What is the characteristic of this life? It is a fellowship life. It is shared. I doubt whether the Apostle Paul himself could have found a more satisfying description of all that represented the goal of his ministry among men than these words: 'fellowship with one another and with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.' That is ultimate. The Lord Jesus, in the life which He lived, this eternal life, this life which the Apostle saw, was altogether dependent upon the Father. He shared this life with the Father. We may be rather in confusion, because we think of eternal life as a gift, which, indeed, it is. We think of it more as a deposit given to us than a relationship freely given to us. Life is a relationship, and the Lord Jesus did not bring down from heaven a life which belonged to eternity and possessed it as a man here independently of the Father. He lived as a man in perfect living relationship with the Father, and so His dependence on the Father was not an artificial thing, as it so often is with us. We want guidance, or we feel weakness because of some sort of need, so we turn back to the Lord in dependence, but the Lord Jesus had a deeper basis of life with God than that. It was that by His very nature, in His love, and in His wholehearted devotion to the Father, He lived in dependence. He could not bear even to think in terms of separateness. His fellowship was with the Father, and that is the explanation of His life. Our fellow-

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ship is with the Father and with the Lord Jesus, and that is the nature of our life—not merely to depend upon the Lord here and there because we are in trouble, or in need, or in difficulty, and to turn to Him because we want guidance or some other gift, but to realize that our very vitality, our spiritual vitality, consists in maintaining the closest relationship with Himself. That is the nature of the life. Bring a shadow in that relationship, and life ebbs away. Let anything weaken that connection, and life is weakened.

But since we share our life with Him, equally we share it with one another.

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us.” What an objective for ministry, what an objective for your life and mine, not only when we are writing letters, but at all times, in all ways, the objective of maintaining vital relationships with others in Christ. Our fellowship is not a matter merely of that which is seemly, or that which should be in order not to offend the world. Our fellowship, even the outward forms of it, is a matter of the expression of Divine vitality in the human race, and that is why the Apostle goes on to the next part of this chapter urging the saints to walk in the light.

‘Oh, walk in the light! This is the message of life, the message brought to us by the person of the Lord Jesus, the message of this One of whom I have been speaking, whom we knew so well.’ This is the message: how important it is to walk in the

light! It is important for me. There is no blessing for me in the darkness, and there is no blessing for me if I get out of the light, but it is far more important than that. It is important for others. There is no blessing for them if I am not in the light—at least, there is a hindering of blessing that might be. But, far more important than that, this goes right back to the beginning, to the eternal purpose of God, to a conception in the heart of God made possible through the coming of His dear Son and the Blood which was shed, whereby God desired that His life should be expressed, not merely in One who came from Him to the earth to be here for a short while, but in a people who should for ever live in vital fellowship with Him. The eternal purposes of God do not depend upon you and me knowing all the details of them nearly so much as they depend upon our truly walking in the light, truly pressing on in the experience of this heavenly life which it is God’s greatest desire to manifest and to minister. The light will bring to the surface that which hinders communion, and what hinders communion hinders life.

Shall we, then, heed anew the message of a Man who walked here on earth in the fullness of the power of heavenly life, and the message, by His grace and by His Cross, is that we have fellowship with Him, and we, too, sharing the life, are to walk in the light that it may find its full manifestation, and that which was from the beginning shall be realized in the redeemed.

H. F.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

NAPETIT

SOMEWHERE in the Turkana district of Kenya there is a happy Christian called Napetit. He lives in the desert with his family and herd of goats, glad to have Christ as his living Saviour, and doing his best to tell others of God’s wonderful love. And it all began when Tom Collins’s Jeep got stuck in the sand.

One would think that Jeeps should never get stuck, and as Tom lurched along slowly over the flinty sandy waste in that part of East Africa, he little thought that for once it was going to let him down. It was a wild, deserted region; apart from a few rocks here and there and some scattered thorn trees, there was nothing to be seen. Also it was

terribly hot. Tom, however, was not travelling for pleasure, but in the service of Christ his Lord, so he forgot about the harshness of the surroundings and chugged on with a song in his heart.

Suddenly, though, he found himself in this patch of soft sand. The Jeep made frantic efforts to keep moving, but after slithering and sliding it came to rest with its wheels bogged down up to the axles in the treacherous sand.

Tom was all alone, so it was he who had to get down, bring out his tools, and start to dig around the wheels. For a time he worked away in the intense heat, digging and digging, and then trying to get a grip for the tyres by means of sacks. Finally,

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hoping for the best, he got back into the Jeep, started up the engine and made a great effort to move on. It was no use! The wheels spun round and round and only seemed to get deeper down into the sand.

As we have said, Tom was alone. But was he? An unseen watcher saw him move away into the little shade given by a small tree not far away and kneel down. He closed his eyes and spoke. Then he got up again and went back to his Jeep to try again.

After some more digging and arranging he started up again, and after going forwards and sideways he finally backed up out on to firmer ground. With an exclamation of thanks to his Lord he gathered up his tools and prepared to finish his journey. It was then that the hidden watcher came up to his side. It was a tall Turkana tribesman.

The African greeted Tom, and then asked him what he had been doing. Tom, who would have been grateful for a visible helper instead of an invisible spectator, answered rather shortly that the man had been able to see for himself. He had been stuck in the sand and had had a job to dig himself out again.

"No, not that," answered the Turkana. "I saw that. What I want to know is what you were doing under that tree when you knelt down." So Tom delayed his journey a little longer to explain to the man, whose name was Napetit, that if we have our sins forgiven by Christ the Saviour, we may then know God as our Father in heaven and may pray to Him at all times. Napetit asked some intelligent questions, and to Tom's delight took a gospel in Swahili. When the conversation was over Napetit rose to his feet from his squatting position, and stalked off to where he had left his goats grazing on the tough foliage.

Tom never saw him again. Some years later, though, Dr. Dick Anderson and Paul, a young Christian Turkana, paid a visit to South Turkana. At their camp they treated some who were sick, and then spoke about God's salvation in Christ to the tribesmen who were gathered round about on the ground. As they spoke, one of the men sat up with a jerk. "I've heard all that before!" he exclaimed. "A man called Collins spoke to me about it and he also gave me a little book. Here it is! I have been looking ever since then for someone to help me believe in Christ."

So Dr. Anderson and Paul were able to help Napetit to commit his life to Christ. Tom Collins never saw him again, for he had left this earth and gone to be with Christ in heaven.

These missionaries belonged to the Africa Inland Mission, who work in Kenya. But what is true in Kenya is also true at home, and we don't have to be missionaries to prove the wonderful truth which the story of Napetit shows. Why did the Jeep have to get stuck in the sand on that hot and weary day? Why do we get stuck when we are so anxious to get on? Why do things go wrong for us when we are truly trying to serve the Lord? We shall keep on asking "Why?" and never get the answer until we learn the great lesson of John 15. 2: "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

Tom Collins's trouble brought blessing and life to someone else. It is God's plan that ours should do the same. Like him, let us "Take it to the Lord in prayer", and, like him, we can find that God will not only help us out of our difficulties, but will use them to bring help and life to others.

H. F.

THE LAMP OF TESTIMONY

Old readers of this printed ministry may have become so familiar with the cover as to have lost its significance, and later readers may have failed to be impressed by it. But it is in that illustration or representation that the inclusive meaning of this ministry is to be found.

For several years the cover had a variety of illustrations by which something to do with the contents was signified. But the time came when it was felt that, not aspects, but the whole purpose and nature of the Witness and Testimony should be symbolically signified. This was given in a message on the

fourth chapter of the prophecies of Zechariah, and our brother in the printing room was asked to make the drawing which has ever since been on the cover. There it has been for these many years, and in reading the message again we have been strongly impressed with how truly it sets forth what God would really have for His satisfaction and glory, and how very up to date it is. As the message referred to is long out of print, we feel constrained to bring it forward for our readers in this issue. Is not the very mind of God truly represented as to the Church as a whole, and in localities by

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THE CANDLESTICK ALL OF GOLD

ZECHARIAH IV

FEATURES OF THE END-TIME

THE chapter which is now before us features in a remarkable way conditions and Divine aims in the "End-times". There are striking similarities in it to certain things mentioned in the first chapters of the Revelation. These we shall see as we go on. The chief value is in its reduction of all that is essential to a concentrated essence, and when you have this you have everything vital.

Let us take the chapter bit by bit. What first comes into view is

AN ANGEL TALKING

"And the Angel that talked with me" (verse 1). "The Angel that talked with me" (verse 4). The parallel of this in the Revelation is the phrase seven times repeated (note: seven = spiritual perfection, completeness): "What the Spirit saith to the churches."

The Lord has something to say at the End. The book of the Revelation is full of voices. It begins with: "I turned to see the voice." A strange way of putting things. Did ever anyone see a voice? There is, however, no mistake made. A vital reality is in this seeming error, as we shall see. We have known much to be made of this "voice" factor in the Bible. True as it is that God can make Himself vocal and audible, taking up men and articulating His thoughts through them, as He has ever done, yet we beg to stress that in this case it is not the voice of man in view, and it is not primarily the voice at all, but it is that there is something God has to say, and that a very important something. The most pertinent question that can possibly be asked at this time is

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TODAY?

A striking feature of our time is that so few of the voices have a distinctive message. There is a painful lack of a clear word of authority for the times. While there are many good preachers of the Gospel, and while we are not without champions of the vital verities of the Faith, we are sadly in need of the Prophet with his "Thus saith the Lord" which he has received in a commission born of a peculiarly chastened fellowship with God.

Why is it so? May it not be that so many who might have this ministry have become so much a part of a system? A system which puts preachers so much upon a professional basis, the effect of which is to make preaching a matter of demand and supply; of providing for the established religious order and programme? Not only in the matter of preaching, but in the whole organization and activity of "Christianity" as we have it in the systematized form today. There is not the freedom and detachment for speaking ONLY when "the burden of the word of the Lord" is upon the prophet, or when he could say: "The hand of the Lord was upon me." The present order requires a man to speak every so often; hence he *must* get something, and this necessity means either that God must be offered our programme and asked to meet it (which He will not do) or the preacher must *make* something for the constantly recurring occasion. This is a pernicious system and it opens the door to any number of dangerous and baneful intrusions of what is of man and not of God. The most serious aspect of this way of things is that it results in voices, voices, voices, a *confusion* of voices, but not the specific voice with the specific utterance of God for the time. Too often it has the effect of causing men to hear and read just with a view to getting preaching matter, subjects for sermons, and the value of things is judged by their suggestiveness of themes. The man may be a godly man and the message may be the truth, but there is something more than this—is it *the* message which relates to the immediate time-appointed purpose of God? There are many good men who are giving out what they know and believe of the truth, but at the same time there are many of the Lord's children who are hungry and not being fed.

The food question amongst the Lord's people today is a very acute one, and a more or less good ministry is not going to meet the need. There is a growing concern to know, as distinct from the generalizations of truth and service, what is the Lord's word for now, where we are, and what in the Divine purpose belongs to this present hour.

This brings us back to the first thing in our chapter; God has something to say; but it also leads us to the next thing: "The Angel that talked with me

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came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep." Here we have the necessity for

what comes into view when God's instrument is awakened, and is able to answer the heavenly interrogation: "What seest thou?"

AN AWAKENING TO WHAT GOD HAS TO SAY

In the Revelation this is: "He that hath an ear, let him hear", and in the case of Laodicea—which represents the end—it is: "I counsel thee to buy of me eyesalve that thou mayest see." "And I turned to see the voice that spake with me," said John. God is speaking, He has something to say, but there must be "a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your heart being enlightened".

Spiritual discernment, perception, understanding and intelligence are all too rare. The causes are many. The engrossment with the work and its multifarious concerns; the rush and hurry of life; the restless spirit of the age; these, with an exhaustive provision of external religious facilities, all tend to render the inner place of Divine speaking inoperative or impossible of functioning. Perhaps we have forgotten that the Bible is not only a revelation but also contains a revelation, and that that deeper spiritual content is only possible of recognition and realization by such as have had their eyes and ears opened; in other words, who have been awakened. Some of the Lord's most faithful servants are still only occupied with the letter of the Word, the contents of books, topics, themes, subjects, outlines, analyses, etc., and in the deepest sense are not in "revelation". (This is not meant as a criticism.) The difference too often is that of a ministry to the mind or head, and one to the heart or spirit.

The former will sooner or later tire and weary both the minister and those ministered to. The latter is a ministry of life to both, and is inexhaustible in freshness.

Whether it comes at the beginning or later, it is the greatest day in our history of which we can say: "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me." "I received it, not from men, but by revelation." That is the beginning of an inwardness of things which may have many crisis issues. One of these is the one of which we are particularly thinking now, namely, the awakening to see what is the thought and desire of God at given and specific times. Such a revelation—through the Scriptures—is nothing less than revolutionary, though usually costly.

Would to God that there was an adequate number at this time who, like the men of Issachar, "had knowledge of the times"! We now proceed to see

"BEHOLD, A CANDLESTICK ALL OF GOLD"

Every ministry in the Scriptures appointed by God was constituted upon something having been seen. The test of a Divine commission may be found in this question: "What seest thou?", and the credentials may well be the answer upon the basis of God having shown something very concrete. It is not a matter of winning the sermon or winning the audience, but declaring the truth for the time as it has been made a fire in the bones. It would be rather pertinent than impertinent to challenge the servants of God with this question, relative to the time in which they live, and relative to the immediate concern of God: "What seest thou?"

There is no doubt that what God has seen at all times as His objective is: "A Candlestick all of Gold", but from time to time there has been a special necessity for Him to bring it into the view of the people, and especially His prophets. It is for this that He reacts, and the end-time must see a renewal of His reaction.

Now, ignoring that there is a difference between the seven-branched candlestick or lampstand of the Old Testament, and the seven lampstands of the Apocalypse, there is a relationship of both in a common principle. That common principle is that they both represent

THE INSTRUMENT OF THE TESTIMONY IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

While that innermost light of the Most Holy Place—the light of Christ in the presence of God—remains undimmed and inviolate, there is that which is midway between heaven and earth—the Holy Place—where the testimony has to be kept clear both Godward and manward. Concerning this—as differing from the other—God has given very careful and explicit instructions and injunctions for its perpetual maintenance. He is peculiarly jealous over this testimony. So we find that it is here in the sphere of this that the prayer-life (Altar of incense) and the feeding-fellowship (Table of shewbread) of the Lord's people has its true value and vitality. The instructions for the making of the Candlestick in Exodus xxv and xxxvii are full of the richest significance. First in these is the material—"pure gold".

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If it is to have a sevenfold fullness, intensity, and expression, which refers to spiritual completeness, then it must be pre-eminently suitable to the Divine purpose. The meaning of the "all of gold" then, is that it is

ABSOLUTELY ACCORDING TO GOD

Be sure to get the force of this; an instrument of the testimony wholly according to God!

There is only One who is thus wholly according to God's mind and heart, and He—the Lord Jesus; and if the whole Tabernacle in every part came firstly from God and then was Christ in type throughout, then this lampstand speaks of a vessel of the testimony of God in which the Lord Jesus is absolute and complete. God would have everything according to Christ. This fact governs the whole revelation in the Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation. It is typified and prophesied in the Old Testament. It is presented in the Gospels, demonstrated in the "Acts"; defined in the Epistles; and consummated in the Revelation. But, alas, what a tragic and heart-breaking history is associated with this fact, and how difficult has it ever been to get anything wholly according to Christ! In an earlier chapter we saw God's reactions to this in Bible times, and suggested that He has again and again so reacted since.

What next comes before us in this vision which is more than Jewish, but has that invariable double application of Old Testament revelation, is

THE TWO OLIVE TREES AND THE TWO ANOINTED ONES

The symbolism here is familiar. Two is the number of testimony or witness. Trees are very often symbolic of man or men as witness or witnesses. The olive, as is apparent in this chapter, especially relates to the oil. The position of these two trees is on either side of the Candlestick. From verse 14 we learn that "these are the two anointed ones which stand before the Lord of the whole earth".

There is no doubt that the two olive trees bring into view, firstly and historically, Joshua the High Priest and Zerubbabel the Governor. Chapter iii deals with the one and Chapter iv with the other. The first speech was concerning the High Priesthood and its ministry, and the second speech of iv. 1 is concerning the Government or sovereignty. This interpreted prophetically relates to the Lord Jesus. His High Priestly work and position first come into view and are established in glory. Then

He is established by God as Lord and Sovereign-Head. On these two sides of His one Person He ever gives the meaning of the candlestick; that is, He defines the nature of its vocation, and supplies the unfailing resource for that testimony. It is, as we have said, constituted according to Christ, and maintained by Him in all the fullness of His anointing. The Divine explanation of this is: "This is the word of Jehovah unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." Here we reach the central meaning of the vision as to the executing of the purpose of God. It speaks for itself. Its clear affirmation is that this instrument and this testimony must be utterly in the hands of the Holy Spirit. Not might, nor power of brain, will, emotion, organization, machinery, committee, influence, reputation, numbers, name, personality, outfit, enthusiasm, etc., but solely the Holy Spirit! The accounting for this will never be *in truth*—whatever superficial observers may say—attributable to any human force or resource, but all who have any spiritual intelligence will have to recognize that its energy and power is Divine. This will also be proved by its endurance and persistence through the intense fires of opposition and antagonism. Here the Holy Spirit is allowed to govern and dictate, to direct and choose or reject, just as in the "Acts" at the beginning. To have such an instrument and such a testimony there will need to be a very revolutionary re-shaping of ideas. It will be necessary to realize that all those things upon which men have come to count as most important factors in the Lord's work are really not necessarily factors at all. It will have to be recognized that education, business ability, worldly wisdom, personal ability, money, etc., *as such* have nothing to do with the work of the Holy Spirit or with Christianity. The Lord may use these, call them in, and if they are kept in their right place they may serve Him greatly, but they are secondary, and He can easily dispense with them. It is of infinitely greater importance and value that men should be filled with the Holy Spirit, and if a choice is to be made, the very first consideration should ever be as to whether this is the case. There is a wisdom, judgment, discernment, knowledge, understanding by the Holy Spirit which is the only kind which is equal to that which is to be wholly according to God. Thus the Lord Jesus as the Great Mediator and Sovereign Head would maintain His testimony wholly in accordance with His own nature and mind in the fullness of the Spirit of His own anointing.

When things are thus there is no need to be unduly oppressed by

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THE GREAT MOUNTAIN

“Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain” (verse 7).

The mountain is a figure of the accumulation of difficulties. The completing of the House of God will be no less fraught with difficulty and obstruction than the commencement, but, as then, so at the end, where the Holy Spirit is absolute Lord, these difficulties will be proved rather complementary than otherwise. The “many adversaries” will only be sovereignly used to further rather than arrest the consummation of “the eternal purpose”. “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands also shall finish it.”

The Greater Zerubbabel laid those foundations at Pentecost. The finishing will be by His hands alone. The same glorious Lord Jesus will bring forth the topstone with shoutings of “Grace, grace unto it.”

Then there is presented for our contemplation, by way of an interrogation, a matter which is indeed very challenging: “Who hath despised

THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS?”

There is an unhealthy lust for big things amongst the Lord’s people in these days. Something to attract attention, to impress; a demonstration to capture, an appearance to impress. Big names, big places, big titles, big sounds, big movements, big sweeps! If the dimensions are big according to men’s standards, the success is judged accordingly.

God has ever found it necessary to reduce in order to get and maintain what will preserve the recognition of wholly Divine factors. End-times are always days of small things. See the testimony in

the Revelation; it is only represented by the few who “overcome”. Bigness is material or temporal. Greatness is spiritual and eternal. Too often men—even Christians—despise that in which God delights. The significance of things according to God is so often seen in an “upper room” over against the whole city, but the city succumbs to the upper room. When dealing with the “world rulers of this darkness” the Lord has frequently made an upper room His Throne-room. “These seven eyes of Jehovah shall rejoice when they see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel.” What is that? Well, the seven eyes symbolize the perfection of spiritual vision, taking in everything as it is. The plummet is that by which crookedness is brought to light and made manifest. When Jehovah sees the Lord Jesus with that instrument in His hand which so represents His own standard and mind that by it He can correct what is not so, and show the all-unsuspected leanings, angles, bulgings, and dangers of that which is related to His House; when He has that instrument by which He can make manifest how His House should be built according to Christ, then His perfect spiritual vision will rejoice and be satisfied. This is what He needs. O that we might be such to Him! It will cost! It will not be a popular ministry, but it will be precious to the Lord.

As we close it will be no little gain to note the names of the Lord in this chapter. The thing as in view is related to Jehovah—the Almighty. Eternally Self-Sufficient (verses 6, 10). The executing and sufficiency of the purpose is related to Jehovah-Sabaoth—the Lord of Hosts (verse 6). The place of the testimony is related to Adon—Master, or Lord (verse 14); that is, He who owns and has the rights of proprietorship.

THAT EXTRA MILE

“And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain” (Matthew v. 41).

THE idea in this exhortation had itself taken a long journey. It originated among the Persians, was taken over by the Romans, and then applied by the Romans to the Jews during their (the Romans’) occupation of Palestine. In the beginning it was the prerogative of a Persian envoy to call upon any man to assist in carrying the envoy’s burden; and he could ‘compel’ such a man to help him for a mile. The said man had no option. The Romans thought this to be a good idea, and so they applied

it to the Jews. Jesus was familiar with this practice and took it over for His teaching, but added a second mile to the first. No doubt Jesus was broadening the meaning from the literal to the spiritual, and had much more in mind. Indeed, this exhortation contains the very essence of Christianity.

The second mile represents a very vital transition.

The first mile is the rule of law, of obligation, of “Thou shalt”, of “You must”, of duty. The second

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mile is what is voluntary, spontaneous, free, gracious.

The first is: "*Must I?*" The second is: "*May I?*"

The first is: "Am I obliged, compelled?" The second is: "Can I not do more?"

Look at the two travellers! The legal one says: 'Pick up that load and carry it for me for this next mile.' Not even 'Please!' The commanded one obeys and they walk silently, sullenly, and begrudgingly. At the end of the mile—which has been measured carefully by the second man—the load is dropped and he turns back abruptly and without a word.

But Jesus is thinking of another second man. He receives the same order; he is under the same obligation; his is the same duty. But he tackles it in a different spirit. He goes at it with a different disposition. He is gracious in his manner and spontaneous in his undertaking. When he has reached the limit of duty and necessity, he says: 'Let me help you further.' The first man is taken aback. He has not met people like that. Something gives way and they talk freely for the second mile. Something has happened which, at least, makes number one think; maybe he asks some questions. A door fast closed on the first mile is now wide open. What has happened? The answer is: Grace has triumphed over Law!

So in its first and broadest meaning the word of Jesus as to the extra mile means the great transition from Law to Grace. It may be only a step from the end of mile number one to the beginning of mile number two, but it marks the frontiers of two worlds, two dispensations, and two dispositions.

What immensities meet and part at that point; and what a change in the atmosphere!

Then, how many other areas of life are affected by this transition across this bridge! This change would bring about an industrial revolution. The Christian is involved in this. Industry, business, work are very largely characterized by the first mile of obligation. 'How much *must* I do?' 'How soon can I leave off?' An eye on the clock. As little work and as much remuneration as possible. The second mile man, who stays a bit longer and does a bit more, is suspect, disliked, and persecuted.

But in the discourse from which our verse is taken, Jesus was not saying that those who did what He said would have all the good time and be universally popular. What He did say was that these would be the people who would inherit the Kingdom of Heaven, and that they are "the salt of the earth"; which means—among other things—that they would offset the corruption to which we have just referred. The coming Kingdom will be-

long to the people of the second mile in this respect. Others who ask to be of the Kingdom of Heaven will have been drawn to Christ by those who have paid the price of the extra mile of grace. So, business is a sphere, and a very practical sphere, for the law of the second mile.

Another area which often challenges to this law of grace is that of family life, or home life. It is so easy in the home and family life to keep just to duty, if even that. Just how much is obligation and compulsory: the least that can be done, and how much can be got out of. The sharing may be so unequal, the burden so unbalanced. If, for decency's sake, the first mile is taken, it is with no good spirit, no cheerful disposition, no spontaneous voluntariness. It is a *must*, not a pleasure. Perhaps there is no place where a true Christian testimony means more than in the home. Homes are an object of satanic dislike and disruptive activity more than anywhere else. So it is here that the testimony of Divine grace matters so much, and therefore the home is a place where second mile people are so much needed.

Along this line may we mention one more connection in which the extra mile is of such importance. It is the area of Christian fellowship. In the relation of Christians to one another there can be just the first mile of the common recognition, ordinary courtesy, a nod of acknowledgment, the glance of acquaintanceship. There may be the coming and going of congregational 'Public Worship'. It is possible to attend the same meeting-place for years and not to be known. Within the limits of the first mile the degree of community and relatedness may differ in its real meaning, and many a heart which "knows its own sorrow" has to carry that sorrow in loneliness, even in a crowd. There is large room for the extra mile people in the area of Christian fellowship. It may make demands, but it pays large dividends. Not that what may accrue in dividends should be the motive. One of the laws of life is, however, the ministering of life to others. A sure way to spiritual death is to keep to ourselves and not go out to others. True moral and spiritual character is to be measured by the law of the extra mile.

Jesus had very much greater and deeper thoughts and meanings in what He said than just platitudes and axioms.

This apparently simple word about going beyond compulsion had in it a whole realm and wealth of potential and actual values. If duty, necessity, obligation, contract, covenant, demand so much, do not—says Jesus—stop at that; put at least as much again upon it. This is grace with God.

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THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF THE
LORD JESUS CHRIST (IX)

9. THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS

"For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, how that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them; and the rock was Christ. Howbeit with most of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness" (I Corinthians x. 1-5).

IN our consideration of the greatness and glory of Jesus Christ as represented by the ark of the covenant in Israel, we have reached that point where the ark led the way through Jordan into the promised land. That was one of the greatest crises in the history of Israel. It was a great forward movement, for at that point the people were entering into that which had always been in the mind of God for them. We have seen that God spoke to Abraham hundreds of years earlier about this very day and had told him that his posterity would be in the land of Egypt for four hundred years, what would be happening during those four hundred years, and that at the end of that period the people would come into this land. So at this time, marked by the first chapters of the Book of Joshua, that promise is being fulfilled and that purpose is actually beginning to be realized. God said it was to be, and even though He has to wait four hundred years, or four thousand years, what He says will come to pass. We know the terrible story of how Pharaoh tried to prevent it. Well, let Pharaoh do all that he can do—so much the worse for Pharaoh! God had intended it, and be there a thousand Pharaohs, it is going to happen.

Then we know the long story of the difficulties in the wilderness; those forty years during which Israel wandered in the wilderness. The difficulties then were not with Pharaoh and Egypt: they were with the people themselves. Well, whether it be difficulties in the world, or difficulties in the people of God, God's purpose will be realized.

These first five chapters of the Book of Joshua see the movement into the thing which God had purposed for so long. If we look at the ark of the covenant as the illustration, we see it is an ark which is always seeking to move further on. It has

been constantly moving during the earlier years, but when it came to Kadesh-barnea its progress was arrested and it had to wait. But that was not God's idea. As soon as He can get the conditions that He needs, He will start going forward again.

We look from the ark to what the ark represents, for we are quite sure now about this matter—that the ark is a type of Jesus Christ, and what John calls the testimony of Jesus. When we come to our own time the same truth holds good concerning the Lord Jesus as was true of the ark: the Lord Jesus in the midst of His own people is always wanting to go further on. He does not desire nor intend that there shall be any delay in the spiritual progress of His people. If there is any delay, it is not His will nor His fault—it is the fault of His people. The true Christian life, in fellowship with the Lord Jesus, should always be progressive. The Lord does not believe in spiritual standing still or stagnation.

Now we have seen that the ark meant three things. In the first place, it meant spiritual government, and in our case that means the absolute government and lordship of Jesus Christ. The Lord desires that every aspect of our lives should be governed by the Lord Jesus.

Here is something very important and very helpful: If you look at the ark of the testimony you will see that—in its normal course—it was always just where it was because the Lord wanted it there, and where the ark was the people had to be. Therein is a very important lesson for our lives. If we are truly under the government of the Lord Jesus we cannot say where we would like to live. To put that in another way: We cannot just go and live where we would like to live. I expect all of you know quite well where you would like to live. I certainly know where I would like to live—but that is not the point. Where does the testimony of Jesus require that I should live? My place of living, my place of working, under the government of the Lord Jesus, must be decided by Him, and if we are living somewhere where we choose to live and not the Lord, we shall have missed the way. It is the ark that always chooses the place where we are to be. There is a definite statement about this: "The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting place for them" (Numbers x. 33). Our lives, in every respect,

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are to be governed by the interests of the Lord Jesus, and we must be quite sure that we are where we are serving the highest interests of the Lord Jesus. The ark, then, as a type of the Lord Jesus governs everything, and by prayer, and humility, and obedience we must always keep our eye on the Lord Jesus. On the one side that is the surrendered life, and on the other side it is the fruitful, or victorious, life.

The second thing that we have seen about the ark is that it governs the matter of intelligence. Every movement of the ark meant that the people came to some fresh knowledge; that is, the ark was not only moving from place to place, but it was bringing the people into a deepening knowledge of the Lord. Every movement of the ark became a new experience for the people of God.

Now you understand that I am not just talking about geography. It may, of course, apply to the town in which we live, or even to the country where we live. It may even mean the very street and house in which we live. That may come under the government of the Lord, but I am speaking also about spiritual geography. What I mean is this: You may have lived in the same house for fifty years and yet have moved hundreds of miles. I must try to explain this very clearly.

How long have you been living in the house where you are now? Perhaps some of you have been there ten, twenty, thirty or forty years. Are you in just the same spiritual position today as you were when you first went into that house? Well, that would be a miserable existence! You ought to be moving with the Lord continually, and moving with the Lord means coming into an ever-growing experience of the Lord, and growing in knowledge of the Lord. That place where the Lord puts you ought to be the place of experiences which bring you into an ever-growing knowledge of the Lord.

We have said that experience is the only true way of education, and it is possible for us to say: 'Now in this place where I have been living so long I have had many deep experiences. There have been sorrows and there have been joys. There have been many trials and many conflicts, but all these have brought me into a fuller knowledge of the Lord. Because the Lord has governed my life, it has been a way of a growing knowledge of Himself.'

That is how it was with Israel in relation to the ark. This week the ark will be here and the people will be learning something, but perhaps next week the ark will have moved on and the people will be learning something else. And that goes on until the ark comes to Jordan—and what a tremendous discovery of the Lord the Jordan was!

Before we come to that, let us mark the third thing about the ark. We have said that the ark was always the occasion of conflict. It seemed that the very movement of the ark involved the people of God in difficulties. As that ark went forward the enemies noted it and came out against the Lord's people. We can say that the ark led the Lord's people into battle. Indeed, the time came when the people would not go into battle without the ark.

This may not be a very comforting idea, but our relationship to the Lord Jesus always means that we are going to be involved in conflict. However, it was by way of conflict that the people came nearer and nearer to the fullness of God's purpose. The purpose of God is a full inheritance for His people, but we can see with the ark that it was through conflict that they came into the inheritance. All those of us who know anything about spiritual life know quite well that if we have anything of the Lord we have got it through battle. It has come into our possession by way of adversity. That is very true, is it not? We are not going to get to the Lord's end by a joy-ride and a picnic. We are only going to get there by terrible conflict, and we are going to discover that every step nearer to God's purpose is going to be challenged by the enemy. That is undoubtedly why we always have trouble in these conferences—because the Lord has a purpose in them. I want, therefore, to say to everyone here, and especially to the young Christians, that God wants us to be always moving on in our spiritual life.

What was the greatest enemy that Israel had against their getting into the land? Was it the enemies on the outside? Amalek came against them, but he was disposed of. Did other nations come against them? Well, again, so much the worse for the other nations! It reminds me of the first steam engine that was made in England. It could go at such a terrible pace that it travelled at four miles an hour! All the people were terribly frightened of this thing, and some good ladies said to Stephenson, the maker: 'Supposing a cow gets in the way?' Stephenson simply looked at them and said: 'So much the worse for the cow!'

Well, let it be Amalek or anyone else, while the people's hearts were in the right direction it did not matter about the enemies on the outside, but there came a time when their progress was arrested and they were turned back into the wilderness, where they had this great experience about which we have read in I Corinthians x, where it says: "Howbeit with most of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness." No outward enemy did that. What was it that brought that terrible tragedy into the life of this people? Of

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course, it says here that it was unbelief, but what did that mean in their case? It means that they did not have a heart to go on. You will remember that when they *did* go over into the land it was because Joshua and Caleb, who had a heart for the Lord, led them there. That generation which perished in the wilderness only had a heart for itself. Self-interest was their greatest enemy, and it manifested itself even in relation to the things of God. But the generation that went on and went *in* had the Lord alone as its interest. Joshua and Caleb had said: "If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land" (Numbers xiv. 8). It was all a matter of the Lord's delight.

It is a matter of the spirit in us, that is, our spiritual disposition. What a rich and full inheritance the Apostle Paul has left for the people of God! Why was his life so full, so rich and so fruitful? It was because of the disposition in him. Hear what he says in one of the last Letters that he ever wrote, at the time when he could say that his journey was just finishing: "*Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press*

on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have apprehended: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians iii. 12-14).

The second generation came into the land because they had a spirit like that—and we need to have a spirit like that. We need to be wholly and utterly committed to the Lord and His interests. If that is true of us He will bring us into the fullness to which He has called us, and we shall come to know more and more of the greatness and the glory of the Lord Jesus.

We will leave it there for the time being. May all the young men and young women have a heart like this for the Lord, and may none of us older people ever settle down to think that we have already attained! The testimony of Jesus is always wanting to move forward and bring us more and more into that fullness for which we have been chosen.

(To be continued)

"THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM"

3. COMING TO THE CITY

UP till now we have been making our way toward the city. Now we arrive, so I want you to open your Bibles at the twenty-first chapter of the Book of the Revelation:

"And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband" (verse 2).

"And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and shewed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God; her light was like unto a stone most precious . . . clear as crystal" (verses 10, 11).

As we have contemplated this city of God we have been breaking our way through the symbolism to the spiritual reality, and I hope that now we have succeeded in realizing that we are not considering some *thing*, or some *place*, but that this is only a symbolic representation of Jesus Christ and His Church. In this presentation at the end of the Bible we see what God is working toward: bring-

ing the fullness of His Son into His Church for final manifestation. That is the explanation of the Christian life, and there is no other explanation. It begins with Christ, it goes on with the increase of Christ, and it ends with the fullness of Christ.

Now I trust that we are quite clear about that. We need to have our minds converted, and that conversion has to be from the imagination to the reality, from the symbolism to the spiritual meaning. You know, in this western world where everything is so practical, *that* conversion is a very big thing! So we are not thinking about some time, some place, some thing, called the New Jerusalem, but about the Lord Jesus Christ becoming more and more full in the Church, until that day of fullness and glory comes when what has been done is manifested in the whole universe.

So we come now right to the city. That is, let me repeat, to Jesus Christ and His Church represented here in the terms of the new Jerusalem.

Now there are four words that we have just read upon which we want to put our finger:

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"He carried me away in the Spirit" . . . First, then: "*In the Spirit*".

"The new Jerusalem" . . . and the word is "*new*".

"*Out of heaven*" is the third.

And the fourth: "*Having the glory of God*".

I trust you have those four things. I shall begin with the last.

HAVING THE GLORY OF GOD

What is the glory of God? We know quite well from John's other writings that the glory of God was in His Son, Jesus Christ, and we also know, especially from the Apostle Paul, that the Church is to be the vessel of that glory: "Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the ages for ever and ever" (Ephesians iii. 21). But those are statements of truth. They do not define or explain anything, or tell us what the glory of God is, and it is important for us to understand what it is.

Let us remind ourselves that it is that word 'glory' which governs everything where God is concerned. The one thing that God had in view from the creation, and right through the Old Testament, was His own glory. When we open our New Testament and find God's Son present in this world, we hear the Apostle saying: "And we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father" (John i. 14). Again we ask: What is the glory of God?

The glory of God is the absolute satisfaction of the Divine nature, when God is able to say, really from His very nature and all that He is, 'I am well pleased with that. That perfectly satisfies My very nature.' If you and I were in the presence of that Divine satisfaction we should feel a tremendous joy, and would just exclaim: 'Oh, this is glory!'

Let us consider this in the opposite way. What is it that robs our lives and our hearts of glory? What is it that makes us sing about the great day when "that will be glory for me"? What is it that makes us long for the glory? I can tell you quite simply. The glory in our hearts and in our lives is limited because of our consciousness of how unlike the Lord we are. Oh, how different our natures are from God's! That worries us every day and hides the glory in our hearts. We live so little in God's satisfaction and so much in our own dissatisfaction. We have not yet come to really grasp the great truth of our justification in Christ Jesus, nor have we come to understand that what God is doing with us is to change us from what we are into what He is.

I am going to be very simple for a minute or two. When you first come to the Lord Jesus you have a wonderful sense of glory. You do not understand all the teaching about coming to the Lord Jesus, but you just come and give yourself to Him, and take Him to be your Lord, and something happens almost immediately. A great burden rolls away from your heart. A great cloud is removed from your life and you have to say: 'Oh, this is wonderful! This is glory!' Why is that? Because there is One who knows a great deal more of what it means than you do. The Holy Spirit has come to lead every one of us to that final glory, and this is the beginning. He says: 'I have got him—or her—on the road to glory,' and so He registers glory in our hearts. All the meaning of justification by faith—that is, being made righteous in Christ—is in that first step, and so God the Holy Spirit says at the beginning: 'I am well-pleased.' The heart and the nature of God are satisfied, and, without a great deal of teaching, you just know it.

Glory is just that wonderful sense, or sensation, of God being well-pleased. The pathway of the child of God is intended to be the pathway of glory. The Holy Spirit has taken possession.

IN THE SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit has taken charge. Now, after you have taken the first step and tasted something of the glory, you will come into a situation, or a temptation, where the whole question of the glory is involved. There is something in your life upon which the Holy Spirit puts His finger and says, in effect: 'That belongs to the world you have left behind, so you must leave it behind. Now, what about it? What are you going to do about it? Are you going to hold on to it, or are you going to let it go?' The continuation of the glory depends upon your decision. If you hold on, and do not let go, that glory of the Divine satisfaction will be clouded. A cloud will come over your heart, and people who saw you when you first came to the Lord will say: 'Something has happened. The light has gone out of his—or her—face.' And then you have a big battle, and if you get through it and let the Lord have His way fully, some of the old glory will come back and you will feel: 'Oh, the burden has rolled away.'

Those of us who have gone on with the Lord through the years have had many battles. We have had to come to new positions as to the will of God, and as long as the issue was not settled it seemed as though the glory was lifted up and waiting for something, but when we have fought that issue

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through and got clear with the Lord, the glory has come back. Perhaps the biggest battles will come at the end—this book of the Revelation says so—but then, through the last and greatest of all battles, we come right through into the eternal glory; that is, we come to the place where God's nature is fully satisfied with His work in us.

Do you understand the meaning of glory now? Glory is a wonderful influence of God in our lives. We shall see that all the way through our meditations, "Having the glory of God". What an influence it is when the glory of God is in our hearts!

You see a little child who is absolutely satisfied and delighted with everything, and don't you like to be where that little child is? That has a wonderful influence upon you! Put it the other way—a little child who is discontented with everything. What a miserable effect that has upon you! I heard of such a little child. It was bed-time and mother said: 'Darling, it is time for bed. Put your dolls away.' The little child said: 'I don't want to put my dolls away.' The mother saw that she was going to do nothing with the child, so she said: 'Well, would you like to play with your dolls for a little longer?' 'I don't want to play with my dolls any longer!' Poor mother did not know what to say next! So she said: 'Well, darling, you just do what you want to do.' And the little child said: 'I don't want to do what I want to do!' Poor mother! What a miserable time for her! There is no glory in that! But when God's nature is fully satisfied and we come into harmony with that nature, there is glory in our hearts. Do you see that the Holy Spirit is trying to produce in us that which satisfies the heart of God?

It is perhaps a hard school. It means much discipline, and much testing of our love for the Lord. It constantly raises the question as to whether we really want the Lord to be well-pleased with us, but this life is the school of those who are to be the sons of God dwelling in His glory.

So you see how two things are joined together: "In the Spirit . . . having the glory of God." Be out of the Spirit and you are out of the glory, because, as you know, one of the names of the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of glory. That means that the whole purpose and work of the Holy Spirit is to bring us to glory, to the satisfaction of God.

NEW

Now we have two other words left. "In the Spirit . . . I saw the *new* Jerusalem." That is only a symbolic way of saying that you have to be under the government of the Holy Spirit if you are going to see God's new things. One of the characteristic

words of the New Testament is this word 'New': 'In Christ Jesus there is a *new* creation . . . In Christ Jesus there is a *new* man . . . In Christ Jesus there is a *new* life . . . In Christ Jesus there is a *new* way of life', and so you lift that word out from your New Testament until you come to the end, and it says: "A *new* heaven and a *new* earth" (Revelation xxi. 1), and then "the *new* Jerusalem". The word 'new' has no meaning unless there is something old. It is a comparison and a contrast. There was an old Jerusalem, but it has gone. It has been put away under judgment, and when the old is put away, the new is introduced. We have yet to see the meaning of the city of Jerusalem, but for the moment it is just this word 'new' with which we are concerned. It is something completely fresh, and there is something about it that has never been true of anything before.

When you consider the history of the old Jerusalem, what a sad and tragic story it is! And it is a tragic story because of its sin. It had its days of glory, but they were very few. The glory soon departed and the tragedy is written through the Old Testament. The last words for that Jerusalem were pronounced by the Lord Jesus: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens, under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matthew xxiii. 37, 38), and two thousand years have told the story of that desolation.

This *new* people that God is bringing into being is just the opposite of the old Jerusalem. This is something which is called "unto his *eternal* glory" (I Peter v. 10). This is something which is not called unto tragedy at the end, but glory; something over which all the powers of evil are not going to prevail, as they did over the old Jerusalem. This is a *new* Jerusalem.

Now I must just very briefly touch on the other thing, upon which we shall enlarge later in the week.

OUT OF HEAVEN

Of course, if you just use your imagination, you do not know what that means. You begin to think of some great object called a city descending out of heaven. Dear friends, we shall not have gone much further before we shall see that that is absolutely impossible. You hold that for a little while I try to explain this, but I shall remind you more than once of what I have just said about the impossibility of it being a literal city.

If this is going to come down out of heaven, it must be there before it can come down. What does

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this mean? The Apostle Paul tells us that the Church is seated together with Christ in the heavenlies *now* (Ephesians ii. 6), but we might answer: 'We are not in heaven; we are very much on this earth. Everything down here is much more real than things in heaven.' Are you quite sure that you are right? Is that really true? What is the very first thing that comes into your consciousness when you are born again? It is: 'I do not belong to this world any more. Something has happened to me which has separated me from it. Things in this world are different now, and the things that were once my life are no longer my life. The things which I once sought after I now no longer want. The people who were once my true friends are no longer my true friends. My true friends are now the people of God, and my true family is the family of God. What has happened to me? They say that I am "born again", but when they say that they do not put it right. What the Bible says is "born from above".'

You know, if you have been born, and have spent your childhood, in a certain place, there is a strange link between you and that place in your life. Now, I spent much of my childhood and my schooldays in a certain place, and somehow, through all the years, I have wanted to go back to that place again and again, so, from time to time, I have gone back. But, oh! how everything has

changed! All the old friends have gone, all the old scenes have changed, and I do not think they have changed for the better. Sometimes when I have left that place I have said: 'I will never go back again!', but wait a year or two, and I am back again. I cannot keep away. There is some pull inside. Do you see what I mean? If we really have been born from above there will always be a pull away from below. We may have some bad times, and we may be tempted to give it all up, but somehow or other we just do go on.

"I was in the Spirit . . . and I saw the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven." The most powerful work of the Holy Spirit in a life is to make that life know that it belongs to heaven and not to this world.

I expect most of us know what is meant by this. Paul says: "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians iii. 20), and the Psalmist says: "This one was born *there*" (Psalm lxxxvii. 4). We do not belong to this world, and we ought to know it. If we can settle down and be satisfied with this world, then we know nothing about the work of the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit sent down from heaven to link us with heaven.

Well, that is what it means to come to the new Jerusalem. It is not just an abstract idea, nor a symbolic imagination, but a powerful reality in the life. We are not going to the city: *we are* the city.

(To be continued)

"IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH"

John iv. 23

IT is no exaggeration to say that the briefest phrase from the lips of Jesus Christ contains a depth, wealth and cruciality of significance that is inexhaustible. The above clause is an example of this. In the first place it—with its context—was used to mark the change in a long and powerful tradition. A system and tradition so strong and deep-rooted as, in any questioning of it, to rouse the most vehement and deadly wrath and antagonism of a whole nation, dispersed throughout the whole world. The book of the Bible in which this phrase occurs is just full of this so terrible antagonism. The words not only indicate the transition from one long dispensation to another, altogether different, but they go right to the very heart of the

situation which is stirring and troubling Christendom today as it has never before done. Christendom, which means everything bearing the name of Christianity, is moved in our time in every one of its many and varied circles by an enforced necessity—to save its very life—to find a way of unity. Never before in the Christian era has the word 'Church' been so much, so often, and so seriously upon the lips of those included in the word 'Christianity'. From the biggest to the smallest communities within its compass this word 'Church' and its unity is the subject of convocations, conferences, councils, committees and conclaves. All this betrays a deep and serious concern, and when that is true of anything it implies that things are not right.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

What is called 'Christianity', and what has come to be called 'the Church', has become a tradition, an institution, and a system quite as fixed, rooted and established as ever Judaism was, and it will be no less costly to *fundamentally* change it than was the case with Judaism. Superficial adjustments may be made, and *are* being made, but a very heavy price is attached to the change which is necessary to really solve the great problem. It may very well be, as in the time of the Lord, that the essential light will not be given to very many because God knows that they would never pay the price. It may only be a "Remnant"—as of old—who will be led into God's answer because they will meet the demands at all costs. Therefore we cannot be too hopeful in regard to all that is going on in this connection. It may be that this so widespread stirring is in the sovereignty of God intended for "the sifting of the hearts of men".

The sifting may very well be in the direction of a winnowing of the variety of conceptions of what the Church is.

Somehow, in the course of time, the word 'Church' has become associated with a kind of building or architecture, for that is now the common word for such places. Or again, it is used of congregations and assemblies of people, physical bodies. Sometimes it is employed to define a worldwide body of people comprehensively called 'Christians'. Within that widest circle there are all the many denominational 'churches', too numerous to tabulate. The sifting may mean that we have to recognize that the true Church is not the aggregate of human physical bodies. It is not a society tied together by either a title or a creed, i.e. a set of beliefs. It is not constituted by a certain procedure called 'New Testament Order' or practice. All these externalities, physical, temporal, material, etc., will go, as they have done in numerous places in history, and are doing under the stresses of persecution in wide areas of the world.

But with the passing of the material, the places, the physical, the *true* Church is unaffected and it is *one*; not divided and not many. It is here that, in the words of John iv. 23 (and context), Jesus has made more than a statement, He has defined the Church for this whole dispensation. He has peremptorily dismissed Jerusalem and its Temple and Gerizim in Samaria, and with them everything of the same type and order, and has enunciated the principle which defines and designates the alone true Church. If we are to take Jesus seriously, as we hear Him in this Gospel by John, then buildings however ornate and magnificent, and congregations of religious people however great, and ancient tra-

ditions and systems however they may have been *sovereignly* used by God, are *not the* true Church! There are *many* things within this compass which are thought to go to make up and belong to the Church, but really do not do so. It is significant how, when a man or people walk with God, the road leads from the outward to the inward, and how so much of that which was before thought to be so important, just falls off, and spiritual reality dispenses with so much ecclesiastical paraphernalia and trapping. What, then, was that essential and ultimate to which Christ reduced and sifted everything on the basis and essence of the Church? In finding that we shall find the answer to all divisions, and the secret of true and eternal unity.

When Jesus reduced everything—as in John iv. 23—to "In spirit and in truth" (and note—it was the whole matter of "worship", related to places and ancient systems, that was being dealt with), what really did He mean? If we use a term which sounds difficult, what follows will explain it, we trust, quite amply. The Church is the unity of spiritual personalities.

This, purely, is just what Jesus had been saying with such emphasis and imperativeness to Nicodemus. "Verily, verily"—"Most truly"—"I say." Remembering who Nicodemus was, and what he represented, Jesus emphatically told him that not only was he outside of the Kingdom of Heaven, but that, as he was, with all his religion, tradition, and sincerity, there was a positive embargo upon his entering; the door was fast closed to his kind. The demand and requirement, Jesus categorically stated, was that something should happen which would be a starting of life all over again, and that as a born member of a new and altogether different race, sphere, and nation. In elucidating Nicodemus's perplexity, Jesus made it clear that this is not a physical-body matter, for, as stated elsewhere, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven." So, basically, the Kingdom or the Church is not so many religious physical bodies. What, then, is this "you" that has to be "born from above", "born of the Spirit", in contrast to "that which is born of the flesh"? What is it that—in God's and Heaven's realm—has no existence or place until it is reborn? What is it that, as to union with God, has no life until life is given as by a new birth? The answer of Jesus, and of the New Testament as a whole (which only is Christianity), is that the spirit of man, the "inner man of the heart", "our inward man" *as an entity*, has to have this rebirth. When the spirit of man is referred to, it is not just what is meant when we say of a person: 'He—or she—has a nice, a pleasant spirit', or 'is nice-

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spirited'. That is abstract. The spirit in man is the essential personality of that order which belongs to the Kingdom of Heaven: it is a different order from all others. It is, as Jesus said, the alone and direct result of the action of the Spirit of God, and it is essentially different from every other religious order.

The Church, we repeat, is the organic unity of such spiritual personalities, and such alone. The Church will never be anything or anywhere more in existence, greater or smaller, than the spiritual personalities and spiritual measure of such as have come into being—*with God*—by this definite operation of the Holy Spirit; not by means of sacraments, or any other *outward* means, but by a Divine fiat, an *act* of God. Sacraments are not spiritual, they are temporal and symbolic. The context of our governing words is: "God is Spirit". That is *nature*, not firstly disposition. It is a kind of being, the essential order of being. Then Jesus went on to emphasize that relationship, intercourse, oneness with God, is only possible when man becomes—by Divine act—basically and essentially a spiritually reborn creation; what Paul termed: "He that is spiritual". The Church will never be—locally or universally—more perfect than are the spiritual personalities which comprise it. The buildings and the old human bodies will go. The "spirits of just men made perfect" will be clothed upon with a body "not made with hands", but, like the newborn spirit, "a body which is from above". (See Hebrews xii. 24 and I Corinthians xv.)

Hence, the focus of God's training and "chastening" is as by "the Father of *our spirits*" (Hebrews xii. 9).

The Church begins with spiritual birth. It grows by (a) the multiplication of spiritual births, and (b) the growth of the spiritual personalities.

The only *seen* Church is the character of Christ in persons. Bodies are an essential media. We are not thinking of unembodied or disembodied spirits. We are not in the realm of mysticism. Spiritual life is essentially practical; because we are spiritually developed by all the practical experiences of bodily life. While our bodies are but the 'vessels' of ourselves, they *are* the vessels, and 'in these we do groan'. We do not accept the 'Christian Science' tenet that "matter is an illusion, and at most evil".

We *must* take time to be very clear on this side of this great matter, because it will be so easy for us to be misunderstood; and it would be so likely that it would be said that we are just spiritualizing away the Church. The human, physical bodies of Christians are as essential to the Church as they are

to man himself as the vehicle of self-expression and presence in this world for practical purposes. This should not need saying, for it would be so absurd to think of the Church as so many spirits without bodies. The same is true of locations. The Church is not an omnipresent spirit, even if governed by the Holy Spirit who is omnipresent. What we are saying—as we believe the New Testament teaches—is that *within* and behind the needed physical and bodily 'temples' the Church is constituted by the regenerated spirits of men and women, in whose spirits the Divine gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus dwells by new birth. This is the *eternal* Church. Physical bodies may pass away and give place to the bodies "like unto his glorious body". Localizations may cease, as they have done from New Testament times onwards. Temporal housings of the Church may—and will—go, sooner or later; but that true Church of "the spirits of just men" is eternal. To see and understand this true nature of the Church is to have several vital effects. It will show the fallacy of much of the common and prevailing phraseology in relation to the Church—such as 'joining the Church', whether by invitation, constraint, attractions, or any other outward means. The fallacy in our Church mentality and talk is largely responsible for the fallacy that the historic 'church' is in the eyes and minds of so many people today. It is something very misleading. The Church is *not* a composite thing which can be 'joined', any more than is a true family. It is a *spiritual* entity into which we have to be *born* by a begetting of the Father God and born by the Holy Spirit.

Another effect of knowing what the Church truly is will be to solve the whole problem of unity. Unity, according to the New Testament, is not firstly and basically intellectual; neither is it emotional. It is unity of spirit—"One Spirit". The mind may not grasp all the truth as stated, but the spirit can know with assurance that it *is* the truth. The mind may not be capable of defining error, but the spirit—indwelt by the Holy Spirit—can register that there is something false in the statement. This is how the true Church is safeguarded and preserved.

Then, in what we are pointing to, there is the explanation of an otherwise very puzzling thing. Both Peter, John and Paul lived to see a great decline setting in where the churches were concerned. All in Asia turned from Paul. Peter saw much that made him write strong and faithful words. John saw all those elements of declension about which he wrote in the Revelation. All of these men also knew that their death at the hands of the enemies of Christ was imminent. The outlook was grim and

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

deeply disappointing from every natural standpoint. Apparently the Church was being devastated, and their life work was being desolated. Apparently, we say. Yet all of these men were in spiritual triumph and ascendancy to the end. Why? Just because they knew that the Church and the work, and the deepest truth about believers, was not the outward, but the spiritual and inward, and therefore indestructible. What is truly definable as "Spirit and truth" cannot be prevailed against by the gates (councils) of hades. Deeper than nationalities, temperaments, traditions, 'birth', training, intellect, is God's work in the renewed and indwelt spirit of man, and the bond of spiritual unity can stand heavy strains and stresses.

May the Spirit of Truth use what has been written here to open our eyes to the so much more that the New Testament has to say as to spirit and truth. Call it 'mystical' if you like; or describe it as 'spiritualizing', if you choose; but still the truth is that Christianity has become a religion, a concept, a form, a system, a name. What the one and only authority for the name "Christian" solidly lays down and teaches is that it is a Person; a Person in abiding individual reality, but expanded and reproduced by His own Spirit through new birth to an "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father". The Church and unity are no more and no less or other than the spiritual presence and measure of Christ. One of the very onerous and exacting obligations thrust upon us by the developments of 'Christianity' is to look *through* its accretions and adoptions, such as adornments, vestments, clericalisms, forms, etc., or the absence of these,

and seek for Christ. It may be hard work; it may require the very strong handling of our own likes or dislikes; but it has got to be done, for the Church and unity are not *any one* of these complexions, neither can we *make* the perfect church by *composing* a complexion. It is that that the Apostle Paul meant when he wrote what is in II Corinthians v, particularly: ". . . if one died for all, then all died (in Him) . . . I therefore, from henceforth, view no man carnally . . ." (Conybeare). Although not here in actual words, but in other places, the Apostle contrasts 'carnal' with 'spiritual', and we should take it that that is what he meant here. He says that he no longer views or knows Christ carnally, i.e. after the flesh, and implies that Christ has now to be known spiritually, so also with Christian men. God help us to keep our carnal selves hidden behind Christ! Also, God help us to—at least—seek to find Christ in others, however little. You will agree that the very effort demanded for this makes the *spiritual* life intensely practical.

This, then, is the Church, and this alone true unity. No wonder that it is a case of "giving diligence (*striving* to maintain) the unity of the Spirit". It demands "striving". If we project ourselves, our natural selves, or carnal selves, in front of Christ we—at least—injure the unity and the Body of Christ.

Here we must stop for the present. But surely we have begun to verify and prove our statement at the beginning: 'Any brief phrase from the lips of the Lord Jesus contains an inexhaustible fullness.' So it is with "In spirit and in truth".

CONFERENCE IN SWITZERLAND,
SEPTEMBER 1967

Many of our friends who have been blessed by meeting the Lord in fellowship with others at the conferences at Aeschi in the Bernese Oberland in past years will no doubt be wondering if there is to be an "Aeschi 1967"; indeed some have already made enquiry. To all such we would reply that this is in the Lord's hands. However, feeling that we cannot be responsible for bringing to an end these conferences which have been so signally initiated and blessed by the Lord, we are proceeding in faith with arrangements for a further time at Aeschi this year. Please take special note of the dates: *9th to 18th September*. We are hoping that our brother,

Mr. DeVern Fromke, of U.S.A. will be with us to share the ministry. Further details and forms of application for accommodation can be obtained from:

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

Applications will only be considered if made *personally* on the appropriate form, which will be available in French and in German as well as in English.

MARCH—APRIL, 1967

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CONFERENCE IN U.S.A. JULY 1967

We have just heard that the second Convocation July 24th-30th. Mr. Sparks has been invited to at Wabanna, Mayo, Maryland, U.S.A., is to be held share the ministry again.

Friends wishing to attend should write early to:

Mr. E. L. Chase,
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**A WITNESS
AND
A TESTIMONY**

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May-June, 1967.

THIS MINISTRY

THE OBJECT OF THE MINISTRY of this little paper, issued bi-monthly, is to contribute to the Divine end which is presented in the words of Ephesians iv. 13—" . . . till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge (literally—*full knowledge*) of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we be no longer children . . . "

It is not connected with any 'Movement', 'Organization', 'Mission' or separate body of Christians, but is just a ministry to "all saints". Its going forth is with the prayer and hope that it will so result in a fuller measure of Christ, a richer and higher level of spiritual life, that, while bringing the Church of God into a growing approximation to His revealed will as to its 'attainment', it may be better qualified to be used of Him in testimony in the nations, and to the completing of its own number by the salvation of those yet to be added by the Lord.

This ministry is maintained by the Lord through the stewardship of those who value it. There is no 'subscription', but gifts can be sent to the Editor, 'A Witness and A Testimony', 30, Dunoon Road, Forest Hill, London, S.E.23, England. All cheques should be made payable to 'Witness and Testimony A/c'. The paper is sent only to those who personally desire it, and we count on friends to advise us if this is no longer the case, or if they change their address.

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Mr. T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.



MAY-JUNE, 1967

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THE INCREASE OF SPIRITUAL CAPACITY

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit . . ." (John xvi. 12).

"I could not speak unto you as spiritual . . . I fed you with milk, not with meat . . . not even now are ye able" (I Corinthians iii. 1-2).

"Ye are straitened in your own affections . . . Be ye enlarged" (II Corinthians vi. 12-13).

". . . we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing . . . Ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you the rudiments" (Hebrews v. 11, 12).

IN the light of a wide and long knowledge, from far East to far West, of Christians and Christian work, were I asked what I most strongly feel to be

the greatest—or one of the greatest—needs of our time, I should not hesitate to say: An increase of spiritual capacity. Note—I say *spiritual*. Not intellectual. The desire, pursuit of, and provision for education and knowledge outbounds all that has ever been. The range of the intellectual and scientific was never so great. Nor is there lacking anything in the realm of the emotional. This is an excessively emotional and passionate age, both in quest and provision. The world is living on its emotions and passions, and in Christianity everything is done and provided to gratify the emotional senses.

Further, there is no straitness and limitation in the area of activity, of doing. The programme of Christian works, movements, enterprises, occupations, is so full as to leave no time for quiet thought and meditation. All of these three realms make up the soul, the ego—mind, emotion, will—and this is an age of the immense and intense

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assertion of the ego, the soul of man; Christians not excepted.

But in all this, and what an *all* it is, we repeat our conviction that a paramount need is of the increase of spiritual capacity. The shallowness and superficiality of spiritual capacity is nothing less than tragic and pathetic. The cheap, the easy, the quick, the glamorous, the popular; these are the features of our time which characterize so much of Christianity. It is the way of the world, and it has invaded the Church and organized Christianity. Depth and stamina, painstaking endurance, are a lost dimension. The passages of Scripture with which we introduce this consideration indicate that this lack of spiritual capacity has been a problem from the time when Jesus was on earth. He was handicapped and limited by it. It was necessary for Him to keep in reserve "many things" that He had, and wanted to say. The lack of spiritual capacity imposed a "cannot" upon His ministry. At another time He expressed this sense of frustration in a spontaneous ejaculation: "And, oh, how am I straitened!" (Luke xii. 50). The Scriptures mentioned also show that the same problem distressed the Apostles. Said Paul: "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual", implying that he longed for a break-through into the realm of the "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man . . . but God hath revealed unto us . . ." What great and potent things were withheld because of lack of capacity! Whoever wrote the Letter to the Hebrews was deeply troubled because of that arrested or retarded development which made him say with a touch of bitterness: "We have many things to say, but . . .", and then explained that he could not go beyond the "rudiments". The fact that this was a malady even in apostolic times surely does not condone or excuse it in our days. The most that such a reflection can do is to relieve us of some of the surprise. But we shall feel the same limitation and frustration if we know that the Lord has given us something which has no free way because of limited capacity on the part of God's people. It makes the going so hard and wearing! It will not do, however, to sit down with the fact, whether it be then or now. We have to uncover

THE CAUSES OF LIMITED CAPACITY

Of course, when children *are* children, and rightly so, we have no greater requirement than to speak to them as such, and not to expect more of

them than is right and proper. But our Scriptures relate to an un-normal, sub-normal, or even abnormal state. Behind them is an expectation that creates an element of shame, reproach, and even scandal. There *ought* to be capacity, and there is not. The greater fullnesses are available, but the channel is blocked, or the vessel is not empty or open. Do our Scriptures throw any light on the causes of this limitation, which is spiritual tragedy? In both our Lord's case and in the Letter to the Hebrews the cause is similar. It is

(1) THE BLOCKAGE OF A FIXED TRADITION

In both cases it was the impassable barrier of Judaism. But let us at once understand that Judaism is not exclusively Judaistic; it is an incorrigible propensity, tendency, disposition, or habit. There is as much Judaism in principle in Christianity as ever there was in Israel. God has never done a new thing but in time men have crystallized it into a set form of teaching and practice. Sooner or later a label, a tag, a name is taken or given to it, and that is that! It becomes a tradition, and the tradition reigns supreme, until God exposes it. That tradition makes its victims incapable of accepting and adjusting to any new light, any Holy Spirit innovations. The real nature and cause of such a situation is a misapprehension of God's ways. It was true that God chose Israel to be His "Peculiar people", and separated them from all the nations. But Israel misunderstood this sovereign act of God. They reasoned that, in so doing, God had chosen them *alone* unto salvation, and thus had for ever closed the door firmly against all other people. The truth was that God's act was with the intention of showing to all men what is His way, basis, and provision for salvation. Israel should have been a missionary nation, *bringing God to the ungodly!* How God laboured, through His servants, to make Israel know that *they were no better* than other peoples, but rather needed as much mercy as any on earth. This was not only said to them, but demonstrated in their own history. Theirs should have been the servant spirit marked by deep humility and indebtedness. But it became just the opposite in extreme. They lost everything! Now, the disciples of Christ inherited that superior nature and set the fixed bounds of God's grace. "The Kingdom to Israel" was the 'be all and end all' of their traditional horizon. They just *could not* accept a larger purpose.

If there is one thing being emphasized by God in our time it is that He must be given an open

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way to lead beyond even that which *may* have been of Himself in a provisional way, to say nothing of the necessity to let go our finalities as to the means and methods which He employs.

The New Testament makes plain that the warfare for the *full* inheritance takes on its most intense and fierce form in relation to deliverance from bondage to tradition.

(2) THE EMBARGO ON "FLESH AND BLOOD"

This may sound a strange heading, but it is not strange in the New Testament. It occurs more than once in that form, but it has a considerable contextual enlargement. It is a phrase which relates to and embraces all that man is apart from regeneration and the new creation. A classic example is Nicodemus in John chapter iii. It is still more fully explained and defined in the First Letter to the Corinthians, and, in particular, chapters ii and iii. It is man in the old creation, sometimes referred to as "Natural" (Greek: soulical); sometimes as carnal, i.e. 'fleshly'. Its first occurrence is in Matthew xvi. 17. Wherever the actual words are used, or their meaning enlarged upon, there is always the embargo which says "cannot". So Paul said: "The natural man cannot . . ." He might just as well have said: "Flesh and blood cannot", because he did actually use the phrase in I Corinthians xv. 15: "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."

Jesus drew the line of demarcation and distinction, as well as incapacity, when He said to Peter: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew xvi. 17).

Now the fact and the force of this embargo is seen so fully in the case of the Corinthians. They—or a large number of them—were living on that side of their human nature which was not regenerated; their "old man"; the other-than-Christ side. On that side their judgments, their behaviour, their disposition, were those of this world and its ways. Hence their spiritual immaturity, arrested growth, sub-normal capacity. It all speaks for itself and needs very little enlarging upon.

From all this failure and tragedy in the case of both Israel and Corinth, the truth is clearly and strongly written that such painful history is the result of an unnecessary limitation of spiritual capacity.

But when we have said all that, we must go deeper and find what the record shows to be causes and the remedy.

THE SECRET OF ENLARGED CAPACITY

The turning-point upon which the Lord laid the release from the disability was in a single word: "Howbeit" . . . "Many things to say, but ye cannot bear it now. Howbeit . . ." "Howbeit, when the Spirit of truth is come." Incapacity gives way to capacity by the advent of the Holy Spirit. That, of course, is a statement which we all believe as a doctrine, and as evidenced in the life of the disciples. There is no mistaking it where they were concerned. But that is not all of the truth. The Holy Spirit *had* come in the time of the Corinthians, and they had received Him. But still their spiritual capacity was limited. The explanation is found in the ground demanded by the Holy Spirit for His work of enlargement. In the case of the disciples the Cross meant a devastating work *in them*. That crisis gave the Holy Spirit the way to that tremendously enlarged capacity which we see in them on, and after, the Day of Pentecost. But the principle of the Cross had to apply even after that. They were Jews, and the Jewish tradition was not thrown off easily. Peter had a battle over the Gentile Cornelius, but the Spirit won on the basis of the Cross. The Corinthians were Gentiles and had their own battle-ground. They had had a crisis, but had understood the Cross in only a limited way. This is implied by Paul when he said: "When I came unto you . . . I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Corinthians ii. 1, 2).

The issue, then, is that increase of spiritual capacity can only come by way of suffering. That is—the Cross. The suffering may be disillusionment as to our *own* ability, as with Peter. It may be parting from some very strong religious ideas, associations and sentiments. It may be the breaking of our own natural selves, the strong self-life. Be what and how it may, in no realm of creation is there enlargement and increase without suffering. This is most true in the Christian life. It is only those who have suffered who have most to give, and who have capacity for more.

This, then, surely explains God's sovereignty in allowing us suffering. Suffering is not meant by God to be loss and deprivation. Satan says that it is. God means suffering to result in increased spiritual capacity, and spiritual capacity is the basis of added responsibility, trust, and fruitful ministry.

The branch of the Vine may bleed from the drastic pruning and feel stripped of much glory; but more and better fruit is the Divine Vine-dresser's vindication.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

"THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE"

(Ephesians i. 7)

(A message given at the Eastern States, U.S.A., Convocation in 1966)

IN his Letters the Apostle Paul uses the word 'riches' some thirteen times. Each occasion has a context which is deeply valuable. From these we take this one: "The riches of His grace", and we are going to let David and Solomon be our example of this superlative grace. I would just like that you look at one or two fragments in the first book of the Chronicles, chapter xxviii, verses 1-6:

"And David assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that served the king by course, and the captains of thousands, and the captains of hundreds, and the rulers over all the substance and possessions of the king, and of his sons, with the officers and the mighty men, even all the mighty men of valour, unto Jerusalem. Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: as for me, it was in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God; and I had made ready for the building. But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou art a man of war, and hast shed blood. Howbeit the Lord, the God of Israel, chose me out of all the house of my father to be king over Israel for ever: for he hath chosen Judah to be prince; and in the house of Judah, the house of my father: and among the sons of my father he took pleasure in me to make me king over all Israel: and of all my sons, (for the Lord hath given me many sons,) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel. And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father."

"Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord" (II Chronicles iii. 1).

"And Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and the Lord his God was with him, and magnified him exceedingly" (II Chronicles i. 1).

We have said that the summit of Old Testament fullness was reached in Solomon, and we shall find that Solomon will lead us to Christ, and then Solomon will be eclipsed, as out of view, when the Greater than Solomon is here. Solomon's wealth and wisdom and glory and heritage are

proverbial and fabulous, renowned, and far famed. He does represent the summit of kingship and glory in the Old Testament. Jesus Himself acknowledged the greatness of Solomon on two occasions, you remember. He pointed to the flowers in the field and said: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Solomon in all his glory was proverbial, even in those days; Jesus Himself acknowledged it. On another occasion He said: "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon," acknowledging the great place that Solomon had in the world of wisdom. But then Jesus added, after that "Solomon in all his glory", and "Solomon in all his wisdom", that "a greater than Solomon is here". Solomon fades when Jesus arrives. The unsearchable riches of Christ! We have, then, to consider how in various respects Jesus is greater than Solomon.

One thing that we have been saying, and that is in our hearts in this time together, is our great need for a new apprehension of the Lord Jesus to adjust everything for us. But there are two preliminary considerations before we can proceed with this matter. Why did God magnify Solomon? For it says that "the Lord magnified Solomon above all that have been before him". The Lord endowed Solomon with this fabulous, proverbial greatness of wealth, dominion and wisdom. Why did He do it? God from eternity has only one person in view, and that person was not Solomon, nor any other one but His Son, and if the Lord so magnified Solomon, it was to bring His Son, the still greater, into view. Through the greatest thing He could do here on this earth to lead on to the much greater of the heavenly. God had His Son in view, the other One, the Greater than Solomon, and that is why He did it. I wish Solomon had known that! It would have saved him a great deal of historic tragedy. If we really saw that, and this One, this only One, were ever filling our vision, all these tragedies, mistakes and blunders that we make—or that Solomon did later—would be obviated. Oh, the wonderful things that God said

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seemingly about Solomon could never possibly have been fulfilled in Solomon himself. They were quite beyond him! God was reaching beyond this man in the things that He seemingly said about him, and to him, and you have to pick up your New Testament in order to discover to whom they really applied. Well, we may come on that as we go on, but the point is that we must not see Solomon as just the end in himself. We must look through him to Another and see that God in His sovereignty magnified and glorified this Solomon only with another One in view, and in the long run we shall see the Greater than Solomon, the Greater than the greatest that God has ever done on this earth.

Another thing we must remember in this preliminary consideration is that Solomon was not really himself. I mean this: Solomon was his father, David. Solomon was the fullness of his father, David, and you can never see Solomon without seeing David. That is, it was not so much the person as the significance of the person that is present in contemplating Solomon. When you turn to the New Testament, Solomon is only referred to, at most a half a dozen times, almost in a casual way, but David is referred to in a very positive way, over thirty times. That is a statement you must dwell upon, of course, to verify. When you open your New Testament at the first book, the Gospel by Matthew, you find that you have read but a few words and you are on David. He comes there, in that place of priority, right at the beginning of the New Testament. You go through the New Testament and, as I have said, you will find yourself with David more than thirty times. Right on the last page, in the twenty-second chapter of the book of the Revelation, David creeps up again. This man is something very wonderful, very full, and he has a very large place. There is one clause in Isaiah lv, and repeated in the New Testament, which defines this as "the sure mercies of David". Oh, to be able to plumb the depth of that! This morning we shall see a little of it—"the sure mercies of David".

All that pertained to Solomon was "the sure mercies of David", and that brings us to the first of the greatesses, the first of the "unsearchable riches of Christ", the first in Ephesians, and everywhere and always: The riches of His grace. Have you seen the riches of His grace as conveyed to us by Solomon? Having seen the great eminence of glory, of wealth, of wisdom to which God brought this man Solomon, we have to look to see where it all began. Where did all that begin?

There is a very dark background indeed to

Solomon's birth and life. We have said that he was the fullness of his father, David. Solomon was the son of David's old age. He was not the only son—we read: "God hath given me many sons". We know some of them, and one in particular—Absalom. But Solomon was the son of David's old age, and it was an old age full of shadows: the shadows of tragedies, of sorrows, and of great mistakes. Solomon was related to the darkest clouds in David's life. We know the story of David's great sin with Bath-sheba and her husband, Uriah. David, relaxing wrongly at the time when kings go out to battle, went up to the housetop. (There are relaxations which are very dangerous!) And from the housetop he espied that beautiful woman, Bath-sheba, and coveted her. His passions rose and he said: 'I must have her.' Passion is a very, very fertile thing in evil, and so he schemed to get her. You know the rest of the story—how he planned, plotted, to get her husband, Uriah, in the forefront of the battle, and then told the other fighters to retire and leave him alone to the enemy, which they did. Uriah was left and slain according to David's precalculated plan, and they came back to David and told him: 'It has succeeded. Uriah is dead.' Then David sent to fetch Bath-sheba, and he took her. The child born of that iniquitous union was smitten by God. He languished for days and then he died. Nathan, the prophet, went to David with a message from God and wrapped it up in a parable about something that happened in the city, and he painted it in such lurid pictures that David rose in anger, in wrath, and said: 'The man who has done such a thing shall die.' Nathan pointed at him and said: "Thou art the man!" Nathan brought home the accusation in a smashing, crushing blow, and then added: "Thou shalt not die." We will see the point of that in a moment.

The depth and greatness of David's sin is seen in those terrible confessions, heart-brokenness and sorrows. We have to look at the Psalms, for they are touched here and there with this. In Psalm xxxii: "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord." Psalm xxxviii, verse 18: "For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin." And then a whole Psalm—Psalm li—one of the most terrible bits of literature in existence. Look at the heading of this Psalm: "A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba." . . . "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my trans-

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gressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done that which is evil in thy sight." So the whole Psalm, which we will not read, but one more fragment: "Deliver me, O God, from bloodguiltiness." Here we are; broken-hearted, penitent, standing at God's tribunal, pleading for mercy, full of self-condemnation, a conscience stained with iniquity, and God's face turned away, a desolation of heart. He cries: "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, have mercy upon me."

David had sinned the sin which put him beyond the pale of the virtue of all the Levitical sacrifices. If you read the sacrifices and the conditions, you will find that they do not cover this sin, they have no provision for this. Even the cities of refuge which provided for the man-slayer would not take in David, because the man-slayer who found refuge there was the man who had caused someone to die *inadvertently*, without premeditation, by accident. So there was no provision for him, a man who had premeditated, planned, schemed, and brought about a death; the city of refuge had no place for him. No sacrifice is provided for him, therefore. In this Psalm li, David says: "Sacrifice and offering and burnt offering thou desirest not" — "It is no good. I have not any." He was out of the pale of all their sacrifices and their virtue by premeditation. Oh, how far this man had gone! No wonder his conscience made him cry out like this! Uriah's death—murder—lies at David's door, and the little innocent babe's death lies at his door. What are you going to do with a man like that? What are you going to do with a sin like that? It is outside the pale of all God's Mosaic prescribing. What answer have we got to this? How can this man escape? How can glory be the end of that? There is only one answer, and there *is* an answer: Grace! Grace goes beyond all Old Testament limits.

David is the greatest Old Testament example of pardon through grace. Remember that! That is why he is brought into view so much. That is the meaning of "the sure mercies of David". Why of David? Unsearchable riches of His grace! The son gathers into himself all that meaning of Divine grace, what grace can do in relation to a situation like that. How glorious! Glory can follow grace. "The glory of His grace" is a phrase in Ephesians. My, how deep!

You ask: Can there be anything greater, a greater demonstration of grace than that toward David represented in a temporal way in Solomon?

(Underline that word 'temporal'.) Can there be anything greater than that? Is there greater grace than that represented by Solomon? Oh, yes: "A greater than Solomon is here!" As Son of man, God's Son came into the inky darkness and blackness of the sin of the whole *race*, not of one man. He bore the judgment of that sin upon the whole race and brought God's infinite grace to the world—to the *world*!

Look again at that cross on Calvary's hill! Take another look, and listen. Listen to that bitter, heartbroken cry: "Eli, Eli, lama sabach-thani? . . . "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The word embracing all time and eternity: "forsaken . . . forsaken". David may have tasted something of that. Dear friends, when you look at that cross and hear that cry, you touch the deepest, deepest depth of human tragedy, that is, that the race, but for the grace of God, is God-forsaken eternally. If you have ever tasted a deep, deep sorrow within the compass of human capacity, you know that that hour of darkness is like an eternity. It is not momentary; it is like an eternity. It seems that an end of things for ever has been touched. In that moment when Jesus cried "forsaken, forsaken", He touched the eternity of man's destiny outside of God. That cry with that word "forsaken" is the measure of human depravity. We have yet to feel the tremendous impact of the cross in this sense—that if Jesus had not gone there for us, we would be eternally forsaken of God. The face of God is turned away. The blackness and darkness of eternal doom rests upon the race—but for the cross of Jesus Christ and what He has done there as forsaken. Have you ever tasted the slightest drop of death? Oh, yes, it is possible, even in our Christian, spiritual life. I confess that there have been times when I wondered if the Lord had gone out of my universe, if He was really still alive and if He had not forgotten me. I cried: "Has the Lord forgotten to be gracious?" It was as though the Lord had gone. I could not find Him. I would pray, but I could not touch Him. A *little* experience like that is not God forsaking us, thank God! It never is, for He said: "I will never forsake you", but a little consciousness of the remoteness of the Lord from us is the worst experience of tragedy in our life. Oh, it is the most awful thing to have to go for a little while without the realization of the Lord, to be groping for the Lord and not finding Him, like Job, a righteous man: "I go on the right hand, he is not there; on the left, he is not there; I go forward, he is not there. Oh, that I knew where I might find him!" Have you had any experience at all like that? I do not want

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you to have it if you have not. Do not covet it. But some of you might just know a day, or a few days or more, of: 'Oh, where is the Lord? Where is the Lord?' It may be that the Lord lets us know something about that to bring us into that fellowship of His suffering and to make us understand how great a thing He has done for us, for He does not believe in theories and doctrines. The Lord is very practical. Experience is His school, and He will teach us in that heavy school of experience.

Yes, a greater than Solomon or David is here. He came, and He touched the deepest depth of human depravity which is found in that word "forsaken". Anybody who does not believe in the depravity of human nature, and a total depravity, has not yet seen the cross of the Lord Jesus, and seen us there, forsaken of God, on the one side. Yes, grace reaches the deepest point of human tragedy, and that is man's forsakenness, but for Christ. Grace! What a word this is! If Solomon, in all his glory, was brought out of that terrible iniquity, judgment, outside of the pale of Levitical provision; if all his glory comes out of that, what can you say about it? What word is there to explain it? Only this one: Grace! We will go around that word for all time and all eternity.

Dr. J. H. Jowett, who was one of the greatest preachers of the last century, said this: "There is a word I have wrestled with so much. There is no word with which I have wrestled more than this one: Grace! It is like expressing a great American forest in a word. No phrase can express the meaning of grace. Grace is more than mercy, it is more than tender mercy, it is more than a multitude of tender mercies. Grace is more than love, it is more than innocent love. Grace is holy love, but it is holy love instantaneously going out in eager quest toward the unholy and the unlovely. It is the ministry of a great sacrifice, to redeem the unholy and unlovely into the beauty of God. The grace of

God is holy love on the move to thee and to me and the like of me and thee. It is God's unmerited, undeserved going out toward the children of man that He might bring them into the glory and brightness of His own likeness." Well, that is an attempt to define this word.

Was not Paul right in speaking of the unsearchable riches of His grace? And Paul knew what he was talking about. There was a background to this man's life. 'I am not worthy,' said he, 'to be called an apostle. I persecuted the church.' He was on his knees before the Lord, and the Lord was showing him His grace and His mercy. He said: 'But, Lord, when Your servant Stephen was martyred, I was there, giving my consent. What ground have I for apostleship? What ground have I to be anything at all? My hands are stained with blood-guiltiness, all premeditated, designed and enacted with terrific force. How dare I look up into Thy face and be a disciple, a child of God, to say nothing about being an apostle!' "But unto me, who am less than the least of all the saints, was this grace given to preach among the nations the unsearchable riches of Christ."

If you cannot comprehend me, may the Lord register the impression upon us!

Prayer:

How easily, with facile speech, we repeat: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ!" Oh, Lord, challenge us with that word, lift us with that word, save us with that word. Can we dare to say, glorify us with that word? Oh, if all the words are forgotten, and our human efforts to convey it fail entirely, leave the impression! The grace of God is indeed the greatest thing in this universe for humans such as we are. We commit it to Thee; oh, give us to glory in Thy grace, for Thy Name's sake. Amen.

POWER WITH GOD (III)

EXEMPLIFIED IN JOB

THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS

Reading: Job i. 6-11; ii. 9, 10; xlii. 7, 8, 10

JOB'S SPIRITUAL HISTORY

JOB is introduced to us as a man in great fullness: fullness of possessions and of wealth, fullness of good works and of personal righteous-

ness, and standing before God in acceptance. Then there begins a course in his experience, the meaning and the secret occasion of which is altogether hidden from him. He knows not the why nor the wherefore, but he finds himself suddenly in the

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course of being stripped of everything. One thing after another is stripped from him—all his possessions, all his relations, all his friends and all his righteousness which is of works—and with it all come the investing, the encompassing, the on-rushing of those hostile forces with their suggestions of accusation, condemnation, judgment. There is an encompassing of spiritual antagonism and of a spirit of death, with God hidden, withdrawn behind the clouds, and Job is left stark, bare, apparently alone, a stripped and afflicted man, oppressed in spirit, bewildered in soul and in anguish of body. The circle of all his relationships narrows to the closest, the nearest—his own wife—who bids him renounce God and, in so doing, surrender his life, for that is what is meant. The man has come right down from a great height and a great fullness to a very deep depth of utter emptiness, weakness, helplessness, and is as good as dead.

In the course of that history a transition takes place. You can hardly perceive it, but it does take place. It is a transition from a righteousness which is of works to the righteousness which is of faith. Whereas earlier he pleads his own cause on the basis of his own righteousness and his own works, you find him being stripped of all that and at the end of it all he is saying, "Wherefore I abhor myself" (Job xlii. 6). And yet he is still holding on to God, but this is a righteousness which has no foundation in his own goodness and works now. It is a righteousness which is by faith in the mercy of God. With that transition, that change from one basis to another, something else has happened. Satan has gradually been edged out of court. At the beginning Satan is there in full power—or almost so—with a great deal of liberty, doing pretty much as he likes. Then there is an almost imperceptible point at which Satan has stepped out of the scene and Job is left alone with God. Satan has had all his ground taken away, he has had to withdraw and give up the fight, he is completely worsted. Then comes resurrection from the dead into a place of new spiritual power, opening the door for God to come in in a new way, investing Job with a new fullness which is not now the fullness of his own works, but the fullness of Divine grace; not the fruit of his own labours, but the gift of God; not what he himself has brought about, but what God has given him. That is Job's spiritual history in a few words.

CHRIST'S HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION

In saying that, we are able to look further and

discern Another, a greater than Job, standing in His own fullness and in all His own rights, accepted with God, of whom God could say 'There is not another—not only in the earth, but in the universe—like Him'. And then, because there is something in the universe that is evil, something that has to be undone, to be robbed of its power and put out of court, that One in all His fullness is steadily stripped and laid bare in the vortex of this terrific controversy. Picturesque words are used to describe these forces of evil: "They compassed me about like bees" (Psalm cxviii. 12). The whole scene is set in a spiritual realm where the forces of evil are rampant, accusing, condemning, judging, appraising. It is an atmosphere of terrible antagonism and terrible spiritual death. He is brought right down, "crucified through weakness" (II Cor. xiii. 4), stripped stark naked, emptied, with God's face hidden behind the cloud. 'Thou hast forsaken Me!' You can almost hear that in Job from time to time, 'Thou hast forsaken me!' How much more real was that in the case of this greater One. "Having put off from himself the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Colossians ii. 15). They are ruled out of court, the great spiritual opposition has been brought low. And up from the grave He arose, back to a place of new power, opening the door for God to come in in a new way and make Him a minister to His own brethren with a new significance, investing Him with all the heavenly fullness. It is *in principle* the same as Job's experience.

PAUL'S STRIPPING AND FILLING

The principle is repeated in limited, much more limited, ways. Read that little Letter to the Philipians and hear the Apostle speaking about the fullness which was his, the righteousness of works. He could speak about being full, about the time when he had all things, things which were gain to him. And then this man was stripped of it all. There is no man in the New Testament who speaks more of his own unrighteousness and unworthiness and of the worthlessness of the righteousness by works than does Paul. He was stripped of it all, everything in this life, everything natural, his own ability to accomplish anything, to achieve anything. And yet, with all the suffering and all the terrific assaults of evil powers upon that man, we see him living in the power of a resurrection, of an ascension union with Christ which says, "I have all" (Phil. iv. 18); "All things are yours"

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(I Cor. iii. 21). All things are ours. You see, this is the same principle.

THROUGH SUFFERING TO GLORY

In saying that, you have got to the heart of this whole matter of what is power with God, what is the ground upon which God comes in. It is just contained in that phrase, through suffering to glory. Job suffered for the rights of God, that is the point. He did not know it, but that is what it meant.

What was all this about in heaven? Satan had come to God and God had indicated His servant Job. "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" "Oh, yes, I have considered him all right, I know all about Job!"—You can see the sneer, the leer—"Yes, I know Job. There is not another like him in all the earth! H'm! *Does* Job serve God for nought? I have so spoiled all your work, God, that even the best among men have an ulterior motive. Even the best of men, as you would call them, on the earth are time-servers. You think that Job serves you because he is devoted to you? He is only serving you for what he gets out of you! You have not a man after all, even Job, who is so disinterested and selfless as to trust you and serve you without the idea of reward. I have spoiled the whole lot for you and your best are like that!" This is what is implied, this is the sneer of the devil, that he has spoiled God's work to the very last man, even to the best. 'All right,' says God, 'you claim to have wrecked and ruined all My creation, you claim that there is nothing whatever in the whole creation that will satisfy Me, that will provide Me with ground for My pleasure? I accept your challenge. I take away the hedge that you talk about. You go and touch him. Touch all that he has first of all.' You know the story. One thing rushes upon another. Read that first chapter again and see the repetition, "While he was yet speaking, there came also another . . ." Someone else came with another terrible tale of woe, one thing on another. Before one thing is through, there is another. All that he has is taken—sons, daughters, cattle, camels, sheep, everything—yet, in all this, Job sinned not with his lips.

Satan has to come back again. 'Well, what about it?' says the Lord. 'What about Job?' 'Oh, yes, but you put forth your hand and touch his body!' 'Very well, go and touch his body, but touch not his life.' Yes, it is becoming very deep and terrible. You know what happens—the terrible physical affliction and then his wife saying, "Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity? renounce God, and

die", 'Put an end to it all'. Oh, Satan is behind all this so subtly. Satan has been forbidden to touch Job's life, but he has come round in such a way as to try to get him to take his own life. It is the same thing. Satan cannot take it, but he thinks he can get Job to take it. Satan is after his life, but he does not get it, and Job goes through this terrible experience, this devastating time. We do not know how long it lasted, but it must have been a long time and been very drastic, but in the end Satan has not proved his case. Through the very work of Satan, through the very discipline, God has only changed the ground from one which could not ultimately stand up to Him—that of righteousness which is of works—to a ground which does stand up to God. It is a marvellous thing to see that the very ground that makes it possible for God to be glorified and justified and vindicated—the ground of righteousness which is according to faith—was the ground on to which Satan forced Job. There is the sovereign hand of God. The Lord is—may I use the word?—very clever. Satan thinks he is clever; the Lord can outwit him.

What we must get at is this point. We see the spiritual history in the transition from the objective to the subjective, from the outward to the inward, from the hearing of the ear to the seeing of the eye—"I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee"—from the righteousness which is of works, to the righteousness which is according to faith. We see that transition as an essential thing to give God His ground.

GOD SERVED THROUGH SUFFERING

Now the point is that there is a service to God which lies in an altogether different realm from the realm of things earthly and temporal. "My servant Job." He is God's servant, but the real service of Job's life was fulfilled in a spiritual realm, out of sight. It was fulfilled through temporal things, it is true, but there is a background to all this. These were not just happenings in his life, the ordinary misfortunes which could overtake any man. Something is happening in the unseen, in another realm where, through all this, God is being served in a peculiar way. What is the object? What is the end in view? It is just this: God *must* eventually be vindicated in creation by having glorified humanity. When God undertook to create man, He undertook all the responsibility and all the liability of creating man, and it was a tremendous liability. You get down into the depths

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with Job and sometimes you will ask ultimate questions. 'You created me, I am your responsibility, I lay the responsibility at your door.' God says, 'I accept that, and when I undertook responsibility for creating man, I did so with the unalterable determination to have man glorified at the last; a glorified humanity is the only thing that will vindicate Me.' Satan has done everything in his power to defeat God in that intention of a glorified humanity. The whole battle in the unseen has to do with that, and the very work of Satan is being sovereignly used by God toward that end. Job's last state is only, of course, a figure, a suggestion, of man raised from the dead and exalted to a very high position and filled with Divine fullness—all through grace, all through the mercy of God acting sovereignly. That is the end in view.

Now, in the unseen something is going on in relation to that, and God is being served through the sufferings of His own people in this way, that He is being vindicated. What do we mean? We are the Lord's people and we have not only been saved in order to be saved, but, in that old, very hackneyed phrase, we have been "saved to serve". God knows that means a great deal more than most people think when they talk about serving the Lord. Read the Book of Job and see what serving the Lord is. The very highest service that could be rendered to God was God's own vindication, the rights of God in man, God's vindication in creation. This was not a matter of running about, taking so many meetings, preaching all over the place and doing many things which are called service. Sometimes it means being stripped of everything and being put through a deep and terrible experience in which God can do something in us that makes possible the glorifying of humanity, investing man with glory so that, at the last, with a glorified humanity, God can say, 'I am vindicated, I am justified in having created man. Does this not justify Me?'

While we, at the moment, cannot grasp all the eternal significance of it, we know this thing in principle. It is working out in principle in minute forms and ways with us. The Lord allows us to come into very deep and dark affliction and suffering where we are deprived and stripped of so much. We go down into the depths and Satan seems to be having it all his own way, just riding over us. The Lord seems to be so far away and so hidden and yet, in His faithfulness, He is doing something in us. We do not know what it means. Our constant cry is, Why? Why this? We go through it and then we come out of it. It is a phase and we come out with treasure, with spiritual wealth,

with a new knowledge of the Lord; we come out with our souls purified into a new place with the Lord and as we look back on it we say, 'Well, it was pretty bad, but it was worth it; it was terrible, but I have something which justifies it; I know today as I could not have known by any other way and really I justify God; I go down before the Lord, saying that He is right, He has effected something that would not have been effected in any other way and it is worth having. What is more, I am now in a position, like Job, to stand before God on behalf of others.' There are others in desperate need and they are not going to get through. Job's friends could not get through with God and they would not have got through but for Job. He stood before God for them in a place of power and of influence. God was right, after all, because of the outcome of that experience, the values that have come from it, the knowledge of the Lord, the spiritual strength, the ability to help others—that justifies God in His ways.

That is true of many of the Lord's people in fragmentary ways, but it is also the whole history of Christ in union with His Church and of His Church in union with Him in a true spiritual position. It is the history of the Church—the Lord's people going through a terrible gruelling time at the hands of the devil, under the sovereignty of God, out of which the Church becomes "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Eph. v. 27); "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 the Lord having all the glory out of all the suffering. Is that your experience in a small way? I think you can see something that touches you, but do you recognize the upshot of it? God is saying that this is what He requires in order to be able to move in. Job represents the ground that He needs. Job represents that which is power and influence with Him. What is that? It means being prepared to suffer with Him, prepared to suffer for God's rights.

We have a great deal more light about this than Job had. Job did not know about that interview in heaven, he knew nothing about Satan appearing with the sons of God and all that took place there, the challenge and the permission given. All he knew was that these things were happening. His cry is the cry of a man in the dark without any explanation and that is very helpful to me. There is a difference drawn here between the bewildered, perplexed, confounded arguments, statements and words of a man under terrible pressure, and sin. Job says some pretty hard things, even to the

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Lord, and you wonder how God can support that, stand alongside of that. Yes, when we are down under the pressure, the enemy lying to us and God seeming to have hidden Himself and left us, we are bewildered, perplexed and confounded and the whole thing is so terrible that we begin to cry out and challenge God as to His faithfulness, as to His love, we begin to question God. Take heart, God does not call that sin. I do not mean that we can take liberties with God, but we may get to the place where, because of the intense difficulty of the way, the deep suffering and affliction, because God seems to be outside of His universe and Satan seems to be doing all he wants and we are involved and everything that is ours is involved, we cry out even against God and question His faithfulness. These are the cries, the groans—almost the screams—of a bewildered, perplexed, baffled soul passing through an experience which has a spiritual meaning beyond the understanding or knowledge or apprehension of that soul, and God does not call that sin. He understands our frame, our humanity. It would have been sin if Job had done what his wife told him to do, to renounce God. That is sin and Satan would try to drive a soul there. But God is sovereign here and that is not

Satan's right. We may go a long way towards that point, but God has the matter in His hands; He has not allowed it to come to pass. I think it is a wonderful thing, when you read all that Job has to say, to hear God saying that in all this Job sinned not with his lips. God is standing by Job.

This is, after all, a marvellous triumph of faith in God because, although Job does go down and does say some very hard things, it is not long before he is up again and saying other good things. His faith is having a terrible time, but he is constantly coming up again and his faith triumphs through it all! "And after my skin hath been thus destroyed, yet from my flesh shall I see God" (Job xix. 26). That is faith in resurrection.

What is it that prevails with God? Power with God does necessitate our standing for God's rights and serving Him in that intensely spiritual sense. There are all kinds of things here on this earth which may serve the Lord, but there is a service to the Lord which is deeper than things, deeper than our activities here. The greatest service we can render to God is His own vindication and that can only come by Him redeeming, transforming and glorifying humanity. That is what He is doing with us and He is doing it through suffering.

(To be continued)

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

CURE FOR DISCONTENT

TIMOTHY was a printer and had the important work of helping to produce Christian books. He was himself a Christian, but he was a discontented one. He was not discontented with the Lord, at least, he did not mean to be. He was not discontented with his church; in fact, he was very happy there. But he found his work as a printer boring. He read about other men doing exciting things for God, both at home and abroad, and he wished that he could be like them.

At last his discontent was so great that he decided to give up his employment. He did not know what he would do after that, but in a vague sort of way he felt sure that something more exciting would turn up. He knew that he ought to ask for advice. He could have done this at his church, but he had a shrewd idea that they might not agree with him there, so he thought of his sister, Prudence. If he could talk to her before her husband came home he felt sure that he could persuade her

to agree with him, and then he would resign the next day.

So that evening he hurried round to her house as early as possible, and was hardly in her house before he began to ask Prudence if she did not think it would be good for him to have a change. She hardly seemed to be listening, but she was very glad to see him. "Yon have just come in time to read little Mark his bedtime story," she exclaimed. "It is too early for his father, and I am so busy today. Do run up and read to him, will yon, dear?"

A book was thrust into Timothy's hand, and before he had time to protest he found himself in Mark's bedroom, eagerly greeted by his little nephew, who was thrilled to have Uncle to read to him. Not only was the book provided, but even the story, for Mark soon pointed out which was his favourite fairy story. Timothy was far from pleased, but he sat down and began to read.

Being a fairy story, of course it began with

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"Once upon a time". Then he began to read the tale of a stone-breaker who was toiling with his hammer by the roadside when he saw a lord riding grandly by. Straightway the stone-breaker wished that he were himself a lord, and a fairy instantly gave him his desire. But he had not long been a lord when he saw a king riding in great state, and wished he were a king. Again his request was granted. But one day, as his majesty was contemplating the immense force controlled by the sun, he caught himself wishing that he were himself the sun, with great planets at his mercy. Again the fairy transformed him. But one day, as he was shining in his strength, a cloud intervened between himself and the spot on which he wished to focus his burning ray. 'I wish,' he cried, 'that I were a cloud, able to defy the sun!' A cloud he at once became. But as, in his new capacity, he was one day flooding the earth and laughing over its swollen torrents, he saw one huge rock which proudly defied the swirling waters. 'I wish,' he exclaimed, 'I had a hammer and could smash that rock in pieces!' And in a moment he found himself again sitting beside the heap of granite by the roadside with a hammer in his hand.

Mark enjoyed every word of the familiar story, but by the time it was finished he was already dropping off to sleep. His eyes were closing, but Timothy's were opening very wide. What he had been reading was only a fairy story but it had

shown him the uselessness of wanting to be someone else or somewhere else. He went thoughtfully downstairs, and, finding that his brother-in-law had now arrived home, he said nothing more about the question which he had wanted Prudence to answer. In fact, he was rather relieved that she seemed to have forgotten all about it.

Later on, after he had returned home, he faced quite honestly the question as to whether he should in fact give up his work. In his heart of hearts he knew now that God had spoken to him, but it seemed so stupid to get his guidance from a fairy tale. He picked up his Bible, and with a little unspoken prayer he asked the Lord to give him a living message from His Word.

The prayer was wonderfully answered. He had opened at I Corinthians chapter vii, and at first it seemed most unsuitable. As he read on, however, a verse seemed to light itself up to him. It said: "Brethren, let each man, wherein he was called, therein abide with God" (I Corinthians vii. 24). He remembered another verse which says: "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (I Timothy vi. 6).

Here is the cure for discontent. To know that God is with us in our work, and to "abide therein with God." He will always be with us if we humbly do our duty instead of idly dreaming of being somewhere else.

H. F.

SPIRITUAL RICHES

"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and lived again: I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (Revelation, ii. 8-11).

WE need to remember that not only were these letters directed to the individual churches named, but that they formed part of a book which was to be sent to them all, so that each read or heard,

not only what the Lord had to say to them and about them, but what He had to say about others and to others. So this message from the Lord must have brought surprises, and even shocks, to the people of God, for the letters gave the risen Lord's opinion, His appraising of the true state of affairs. It is as though there had been a period in the history of the churches when the prophetic ministry had largely been in abeyance, and that the people of God, taught perhaps, and certainly active and zealous, were nevertheless forming their opinions and appraising their values as men saw them. So this represents a new voice to them all, to show them, not what they feel about this, nor what other people feel about that, but what they really are; and it is a singularly apt time for them to know that, because the coming of the Lord is in view, and in such a solemn connection we all need to be delivered from any false ideas about things,

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and to be presented with the truth as the Lord sees it.

Now the church of Smyrna had a surprise of the pleasant kind. It is as though the Lord just put it in as an afterthought (though that could not be the case, but it is found in parenthetical form here) to people whose consciousness was of their own littleness and inadequacy as it must have seemed to them, especially when they compared themselves with Ephesus and Laodicea. They must have felt that they were a poor lot, and the Lord, as it were just in passing, sheds a flood of light upon the truth and says: "But thou art rich."

I want, as the Lord shall help me, to speak a little about spiritual riches. We have often been impressed with the importance to the Lord, in view of His world purpose, of the state of the churches. Chapters two and three of the book of the Revelation are not just a little interesting introduction, but an essential explanation of everything. The state of God's people is that which determines His working in the whole earth, and while there may be many differences of opinion with regard to these seven letters, I think everyone seems to agree that of the seven churches, Smyrna was one of the most approved of the Lord, and probably the most value to Him. So if it is true that the state of all the Lord's people is of vital concern to Him in His world affairs, it becomes true that the best state to be in for the Lord is that which is expressed by the Church in Smyrna. Ephesus is looking down on them—such a busy, humming beehive of activity. Laodicea—rich and increased with goods, and having need of nothing. With what a pitying smile, or, perhaps, even a sneer, did they regard poor Smyrna! And Smyrna is apt, as we all are apt, to be governed by men's opinions, and to accept ourselves at the current valuation of the other people of God.

Outwardly it was true. "I know . . . thy poverty", but spiritually it was the reverse: "But thou art rich." And the Lord, above all else, surely seeks spiritual wealth in the churches. Whatever it looks like or feels like to those concerned, or to those who look on, is a very small matter with the Lord. What matters to Him is the reality. He says to Smyrna: "I have no complaints, no faults to find. Go on in the way you are going. You are the people who mean much to Me. You are the rich."

Now, of course, Christ Himself is the true riches of God: "In him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden . . . It was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell" (Colossians ii. 3, i. 19). There is no

wealth apart from Christ. Christ is spiritual wealth. That means that we are spiritually rich in the measure in which Christ is appreciated, Christ is appropriated, Christ is revealed and expressed to God, and Christ is ministered and imparted to others. The people who have a lot of Christ are the rich people; and, quite clearly, that is precisely what Smyrna had, and what we would all desire to have.

If we ask in practical terms: "What does it mean to be spiritually rich?", surely the first and foremost matter that comes into view is the matter of faith. Rich in faith! How strange are the Lord's dealings with these people! If you compare the seven letters you find that He wrote the shortest letter to Smyrna. He said hardly anything to them, and you will find that He gave almost the least commendation to them. If, for instance, you compare the letter to Ephesus, a church which was in a condition which meant that, but for swift changes, the Lord would have to remove their candlestick, you find that the Lord goes out of His way to say to these Ephesian Christians: "I know your works." It is very nice to hear the Lord saying these things to you, but He comes to Smyrna and does not say anything about them. In the Revised Version He does not even mention their works. The Lord has very strange ways, and they are based upon the essential attitude of faith which He requires in His people. If we have little faith, He has to come along and help us, and give us a cheer, an encouragement, a proof, but if He is drawing us out and seeking to find in us riches of faith, He will do with us what He did to Smyrna: say four words in brackets: "But thou art rich." The Lord knows what He is doing.

And how rich these people were! They knew the Lord and had such vital faith in Him that they did not need to be told that He was approving them. They went on in faith without getting offended—and that is faith indeed! It is just exactly the kind of faith that the Lord, all through the ages and right up to date, seeks to find in those who really matter to Him. He can pass them by, as though they did not matter, and still they keep faithful. He can expose them to such conditions, and Himself appear to try them in such a way that they feel: "What is the good? We do not count. Nobody approves us!"—"But thou art rich." It is faith indeed to stand for the Lord under such circumstances!

And that is not the end of the story, for you will perceive that the Lord goes on to say that things are about to happen which are even worse, and they are about to enter into a more severe

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experience of testings. What about that? They had had a bad time, with no encouragement, or very little. They have been seeking to stand for the Lord, and now the Lord comes to speak to them, but He does not give them a lot of sympathy. He just lets them know that He is with them, and then He does not say: 'That is the end of it now!', but: 'There is worse to come; there is more tribulation.' 'Well,' they say, 'there is something wrong with us!' and yet they were the church above all others with whom there was nothing wrong. The Lord was really saying to them: 'Go on, be faithful; you have had a lot of faith; be full of faith.' 'But, Lord, everything is going so differently from what we expected, and from what happens to other Christians. They are prospering and have so much to boast about, but, Lord, we are persecuted, we are poor, we are tried.' The Lord says: 'Go on. You are rich in faith.' Every other church, except Philadelphia, was commanded to repent. In other words, the Lord said to them: 'Go back.' They were making great strides in their own eyes, but the Lord had to say: 'Go back. Repent!' To Smyrna He was able to say: 'You go on.'

Now, dear friends, when we are found in a position represented by the sufferings which came upon Smyrna, we feel we have to go back, and the devil will say: 'You go back. You have made a mistake.' But the Lord says: 'You are not people who need to go back. You go on! You are rich in faith.' Oh, it is not the powerful expression of mighty work which produces the Lord's verdict: rich in faith. It is the people who will trust Him in the fires. After all, those tribulations, that imprisonment, those things that awaited them were not unexpected to the Lord. He said: "I know." He knows what we are going through, and that is a great comfort when we are in Smyrna. He knows how long it is going to last—"ten days". Even though Satan is doing the work, He knows. If we will only go straight on in the way, He knows the fruit of it—the crown of life. 'You are rich in faith. Go on!'

And, of course, these people were rich in other ways which we will not stop to enumerate now, except to say how rich in love they must have been. There is nothing that specifically states it, but I think you will find that, unlike all the other churches, except perhaps Philadelphia, there is a sense of solidarity about the Smyrna folk, so that the promise is not really given to the overcomer as an individual, but to the whole church. It is an overcomer church. He says to them all, in an inclusive singular: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." Some of

them are going into prison, but they are all going to be faithful unto death. And that is important, for it shows the spirit, the unity, and the love; they are together in the love of God, and that which the Lord says to the overcomer is almost just something which is added. The whole church is treated as a church that is going on together to receive the crown of life. 'Some of you are to go into prison.' How they will need the grace of God! Others are not to go into prison—and how they will need the grace of God! Prison or no prison, devil or no devil, they are together. It is a rich experience. It represents a full measure of Christ when under such conditions of strain people stand together. I know that even the world stands together in self-defence, but when the devil gets among the saints of God to try them, it is not the easiest time to stand together. Indeed, it is the hardest, and only Divine love can triumph. But when it does triumph the Lord says: "You are rich."

Then the Lord gives us an indication of that which makes for spiritual riches. How can we be rich? The letter speaks of three factors which have produced the wealth of these people in Smyrna: tribulation, poverty, reviling.

First, tribulation; and the word here means 'pressure', which is an unusual word. These people are being squeezed. The pressure may come in their circumstances of life, or in their family; or it may come in more spiritual ways. But it is pressure; it is squeezing them just because they are true to the Lord. And when that happens to us, how we long that the Lord would just let up the pressure a little! But the Lord says that is how we are to get rich. How marvellous the Lord is in setting the devil to work to make His people rich!

And so, with a sober rejoicing, we ought to thank God for pressure.

The second factor is poverty. Here is the extraordinary contrast: "I know . . . thy poverty (but thou art rich)." How were they poor? Well, I think, in this respect: that they were conscious of the humiliating insufficiency of their own resources. You know what you are like when you are spiritually rich in your own eyes—you feel you can face it. But when you are poor, you just have not the resources. In yourself you are just not able to face another day, and if those people came triumphantly through their pressure, if they went off to prison rejoicing in the Lord, it was not because they were people who could do that naturally. They were poor. They had not got in themselves the strength that is to triumph. But oh! how rich

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they were as they found Christ's sufficiency! How dependent poverty makes you! That is why, naturally speaking, men long to be rich, for they want to be independent, and poverty makes you dependent. Well, to be dependent is the way to spiritual riches, to know that we cannot do it unless the Lord is our sufficiency. Woe to the men of Laodicea who say: 'We are increased in goods; we are rich; and we have got it!' The Lord says to them: "Thou knowest not that thou art poor!" But blessed be the men in Smyrna who say, in the face of a vast world situation, and, indeed, in the face of the immediate local challenges upon them: 'We are poor', and yet do not sink down under their poverty, but lay hold of the Lord and get Divine strength to go through. That is the way to having the riches!

This word 'blasphemy' is apt to confuse us, for we think in terms of having to be among men who are always using bad language. Here, however, it means that they reviled. They were directing their bitterness to the Lord's people in Smyrna. And who were 'they'? They were the religious people. Notice that the Lord goes out of His way to say that! "They say they are Jews." Well, we have no doubt that they were Jews in the flesh, but not in spirit. The Lord says they are "a synagogue of Satan". They were not the pagans nor the worldly people of Smyrna, but the religious world, in the circle of those who say they are Jews, who claim to worship God and who have His Word. Within that realm the reviling can be a very painful experience, but it is a very common one. What reviling there is of the true people of God who are standing in faith! And the Lord says: "I know." 'I know it because I have been through it. I know tribulation. I know poverty. And I know reviling. But it is all right; you are rich. This is the very

way that is pressing you on. Oh, do not give up! Oh, do not turn back! Oh, do not be led astray by what you see abroad in the other churches. Go on with Me!

"Be thou faithful unto death." That is the Lord's Word to us, and that is the only safe way. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." That is a statement of fact, and the promise is the crown of life. The statement of fact is that if you are going on to the crown of life, you need not worry about the devil. "Be thou faithful unto death." That is the only safe way to pressing right on with Him. It is the Christlike way. That is the outstanding feature of Smyrna. You will notice that each of these letters to the churches begins with a description of the Lord, and in the letter to the church at Smyrna His description of Himself tallies with the description of the people. They are going to be faithful unto death, even as He became dead. That is life for evermore, for it is triumph by the cross. They who are rich in faith shall have the crown of life and triumph with Him.

This is all very comforting and very encouraging to us in our own personal walk with the Lord, but I have sought to set it in a wider sense. It is a spiritual fulcrum upon which the great lever of Divine purpose is resting for the deliverance of this world, for the coming of the Lord, and for the fulfilling of all things. Ephesus cannot stand the test, nor can most of the others, but Smyrna can. The Lord looks for those who are to be His means for bringing in the Kingdom. "I know thy tribulation; I know thy poverty; I know the reviling. I know; but you are rich. You just go on, and I will be with you."

H. F.

THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

10. THE SENDING OUT OF SPIES

WE are continuing in the first five chapters of the Book of Joshua, but I want to read two verses from the New Testament:

"By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were swallowed up. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about for seven days" (Hebrews xi. 29-30).

Now there is something here that does not

appear on the surface, and it is that thing to which I have already referred as 'something quite remarkable'. If we had been writing the exact history of this story of the people of Israel, we would have put in a verse between Hebrews xi. 29 and 30 and said: 'By faith they passed through the Jordan', but there is no such verse here. Evidently the Holy Spirit made a mistake! He forgot something, and jumped right from the Red Sea to

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Jericho. Do you believe that? Or do you believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures? Do you believe that the Holy Spirit governed the writing of the Bible? Do you believe that He deliberately left out this particular verse concerning Jordan?

In raising that question we touch something very vital—the question of whether the Holy Spirit dictated the Scriptures, and whether He really knew what He was doing in leaving out the reference to Jordan.

Now, one of the lessons that we Christians have to learn is that the Holy Spirit knows better than we do. That is a lesson that we shall be learning all through our lives. There is something more in the Scriptures than we recognize, but the Holy Spirit knows all about that, and He wrote the Scriptures with His own knowledge.

Why is the passage of Jordan not mentioned in Hebrews xi? Why is there this tremendous jump from the Red Sea to Jericho? The answer to that question is full of instruction, and is just this:

The Red Sea and the Jordan were not two distinct things, but the Jordan was the completion of the meaning of the Red Sea. In the mind of God the Jordan was in the Red Sea. The Red Sea is one part and the Jordan is the other part, and the two parts make one thing. There are some differences, but there are also some similarities. We will look at the similarities first.

In both the Red Sea and the Jordan death was destroyed, *in principle*. The Red Sea was only the carrying out of the death of the first-born in Egypt. In other words, the Red Sea was the triumph of life over death for the Lord's people. In Egypt the people of God were in death, but now they were in life. The Red Sea was the great evidence that death reigned in Egypt, but life reigned amongst the Lord's people. In the Red Sea the Lord's people went out from the realm of death into the realm of life, and the people who belonged to death were drowned. The same was true in the Jordan. We shall see that it was the great testimony of triumph over death. When the Jordan overflowed all its banks the Lord delivered His people from death. That was a similarity between the two things.

Then in both events there was a testimony to the virtue of the blood. The sprinkled blood of the Passover lamb was the signal for the Lord's people to be delivered from the realm of death. When the ark was moved into the Jordan the blood had been sprinkled upon the mercy-seat, and that blood was the testimony to victory over sin and death, a testimony to the virtue of the blood.

Then in both instances there was present

authority over the world of darkness. You will remember that Moses lifted up his rod over the Red Sea, and that rod was always the symbol of Divine authority. By that authority the people were delivered from the power of darkness. Darkness reigned in Egypt, but with Israel there was the light of the pillar of fire. There were the two authorities, the authority of darkness and the authority of light. When the Captain of the Lord's host met Joshua on the other side of the Jordan he represented the Divine authority by which these people were to be transferred from one kingdom to another. It was a matter of Divine authority in both the Red Sea and the Jordan.

There was one other thing that marked the two events, and that was the transfer from one kingdom to another—from the kingdom of Pharaoh and Egypt, representing the world, to the kingdom of God and His Christ in the land.

Those were the similarities. Now what about the differences?

We have said that Joshua and the Jordan were the completion of something that was begun at the Red Sea. Everyone can see the difference between Israel's life in the wilderness and their life in the promised land, and the movement of the ark of the testimony through the Jordan made complete what had begun in the Red Sea.

The second thing about the Jordan was that it represented the recovery of a lost testimony. The testimony of the Red Sea had been lost in the wilderness. The people who came through the Red Sea died in the wilderness, and that testimony was lost with them in the wilderness. When they were turned back from Kadesh-barnea to wander for forty years in the wilderness, there followed a story of failure and a lost testimony, but the Lord never gives up His purpose and He completed in a new generation what had been begun in the first. The Jordan makes good what has been lost in the wilderness.

You must be very patient while I lay the foundation for the real message! The crossing of the Jordan makes real what God really intended for His people. Now, you see, we have double movements. There were two seas crossed, and the second repaired the damage of the first. The second made victory where the first had only resulted in defeat. Now try to hold on to that for a little while.

There were two other things that happened. On the surface they looked the same, but they were fundamentally different, and that is the two occasions on which spies were sent out. This is very important and instructive for our spiritual life. The first sending out of the spies was a movement

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by man. Moses refers to this in Deuteronomy i. 22: *"And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, Let us send men before us, that they may search the land for us, and bring us word again of the way by which we must go up."* In my Bible I have put a red circle round a very little big word, and I think that little big word is the key to the whole thing: "And ye . . . every one of you . . . said, Let us . . .". 'Ye—you—us.' The people decided on this and Moses acceded to their wish. Sometimes, you know, the Lord does have to say: 'All right! Go ahead!' because He knows quite well that we will not accept anything else. When the people of Israel said to Samuel "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (I Samuel viii. 5), Samuel warned them: "This does not come from the Lord, but from yourselves. You had better be careful what you are doing!" But they said: "Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations." Samuel said: 'All right, then. I will accede to your wish and do as you say'—but it was the worst day's work that Israel ever did! We know the terrible disaster and tragedy of Saul.

So the people came and said: 'Send out men.' Moses accepted, and the Lord permitted. There was a big question behind this act of the people, and that question was whether the Lord was as good as His word. The Lord had said that He would bring them into the land. He had said it to Abraham four hundred years before, and He had said it to this people. 'Let us send men before us . . .'—in other words: 'Let us see whether it can be done. Let us see whether the Lord is as good as His word.' That was experimenting with God, and putting Him to the test.

Do you see that this was the whole basis of this long book of Deuteronomy? In this long book everything in this people's history was being gone over again, and Moses was saying again and again: 'That was wrong . . . that was wrong . . . that was wrong. Now you must put it all right.' What is the lesson of this first sending out of the spies? It is the tragedy which results from man taking God's things into his own hands. It was the people who took the direction in this matter. It was an act of self-determination and did not, in the first place, come from God.

We are preparing the way for the second sending out of the spies. When the first generation had died in the wilderness and the new generation was ready to go over into the land, Joshua sent out spies. Is the thing wrong again? Is Joshua just doing what they did on the first occasion? The first was of man. The second is of the Lord, but

there is a big difference. When the Lord directed Joshua to send spies over into the land, it was not because He did not know what was over the other side of Jordan. He knew all about the nations in the land, and all about Jericho and the other built-up cities. He did not send these spies because He wanted to know Himself. Note this very great fundamental difference between the two occasions:

In the first place, the Lord was dealing with a very different kind of people. This was a people of faith and not of unbelief, and it was perfectly safe for Him to bring a truly consecrated people into fellowship with Him in His power. You see, if the first had succeeded the people would have said: 'We have done it', and would have drawn all the glory to themselves. But *this* people was a very deeply disciplined people. All the self-life had been knocked out of them and the Lord could bring them into fellowship with His supreme power. This second generation could have said at this time: 'Well, we did that once before and remember the tragedy! We are not going to do it again'; but through experience they had learned a very deep lesson—that of ourselves we can do nothing, but if the Lord says it, then we can go forward. All that is gathered up in the ark, and the ark in the midst of the Jordan speaks of the end of the self-life and the beginning of the Christ-life.

Before I go on with that, let me point out something else. It is possible to do a right thing in a wrong way, and disaster follow. Sometimes the Lord calls upon us to do something on a right basis which would be disastrous on any other basis. This is one of the lessons that we Christians have to learn. The natural man can take the right things into his own hands, and only tragedy results. We meant it to be right. We had the good intention and did not mean to do wrong, but *we* did it. We chose the time for doing it, decided on the way to do it, and took it into our own hands. The result was that a right thing, done by the natural man, turned out wrong. You see, in the end it proved that it was not a wrong thing to send out spies, but it was a matter of whether man took it into his own hands, or whether it really came from the Lord. Very often, like Israel, when we have done something from ourselves which we think is for the Lord, we have to wait a very long time before it turns out well.

If you do not understand that, do not worry about it. If you are going on with the Lord you will learn it sooner or later. There will be things in your life about which you will say: 'If only I had waited for the Lord! If only I had been patient! If only I had got it from the Lord all this

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time would not have been lost!' Remember, that is one of the important lessons that has to be learned before you can go out of the wilderness into the land.

We will read from Joshua iv. verses 1-7:

"And it came to pass, when all the nation were clean passed over Jordan" (I like that phrase! Get your hand tightly on it—"clean over Jordan!") "that the Lord spake unto Joshua, saying, Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man, and command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and carry them over with you, and lay them down in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night. Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man: and Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of Jordan, and take you up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel: that this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? Then ye shall say unto them, Because the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever."

You will notice that Joshua also took twelve stones from the land and put them into the bed of the Jordan. These two sets of twelve stones represent the cost of going right on with the Lord into His full purpose. The twelve stones representing the Lord's people in the bed of the Jordan said that this people had died for ever with Christ. To use a New Testament phrase, they said: "Ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians iii. 3).

You can almost hear those stones talking! They are saying: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I." The self-life has been buried. The twelve stones on the land say: "Nevertheless I live, but it is no longer I, but Christ." Paul said: "We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him by the likeness of his death, we shall be also by the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans vi. 4, 5); and: "We thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him" (II Corinthians v. 14, 15).

You see, the cost, the inclusive cost, is that we are, in the death of Christ, separated from the old self-life. That self-life, which has been our undoing in the wilderness, is now left behind. It is buried where the ark stood, and henceforth it is not the self-life; it is everything for Christ.

The cost, then, is the cost of ourselves. Sometimes we sing: 'Here, Lord, I give myself away'—but are we quite sure that we really have given ourselves away? That is God's mind and attitude toward us. It is absolute, so far as He is concerned, but as far as we are concerned it has to be a crisis, something of one day, when we say: 'This very day I accept fully the end of my self-life.' But perhaps you say: 'Well, I did that, but this self is always coming up again. I have something that I love very much, and the Lord puts His finger on it and says, 'I want that'. Do you think this is a new crisis of Jordan? No, this is not a new Jordan. The Lord simply says: 'That was included in Jordan. Did you really mean what you said at Jordan?' and we have to say: 'Yes, Lord, when I was baptized I said good-bye to the self-life. You can have that.' Jordan was an inclusive crisis.

But the Jordan is also a continuous experience, a progress as well as a crisis.

You notice what the Lord said about those stones on the land? "When your children ask in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones?" what is the answer? Let us put the answer in modern terms. The children say: 'Why do you live this separated life? Why don't you do things that other people do, and why do you do things that other people do not do?' You know that those are questions asked by children. 'You are so different from other people. You don't do what they do. You do not go to the things that they go to. You do this and that, which other people do not do. What do you mean by these stones?' What is the answer? 'The Lord has done a very great thing in my life. He has changed my entire world of interests. He has given me another world.' The children ought to see it in the parents, not in stones. Peter says: "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house."

And the last word is: "And they are there, unto this day." Those words are often used in the life of Israel, and it is only a way of saying: 'And that stands for ever.' Our union with Christ in death and resurrection must be something that goes right on to the end of our history.

May we all have a testimony that makes other people say: 'What do you mean by this?'

(To be continued)

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THE VOICES OF THE PROPHETS (XIII)

"They knew not . . . the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath" (Acts xiii. 27).

THE VOICE OF JONAH

ALL that the majority of Christians, and others, know about the Prophet Jonah is the quite general substance of the little book that goes by his name. It is that he was commanded to go to Nineveh and deliver a solemn warning as to imminent judgment: that he refused to go and ran away, taking a ship to Tarshish: that a heavy storm arose on the sea so that the ship and crew were in jeopardy of their lives: that the superstitious sailors decided that there was a man of evil omen on board and they cast lots as to who it was: that the lot fell on Jonah; he confessed and told them to throw him overboard: that he was swallowed by a great fish and three days later was vomited on to dry land: and so forth.

Very little more and other is commonly known about Jonah, and the mention of his name usually brings little other than: 'Oh, yes, Jonah was swallowed by a whale!'

The fact is that Jonah was a great Prophet in Israel, contemporary with the close of Elisha's ministry (II Kings xiv. 25). It will perhaps surprise our readers to know that in the middle of the nineteenth century a saintly and scholarly servant of God in Scotland wrote a book on the ministry of Jonah which runs into no fewer than 359 pages.

We shall see later that the Lord Jesus Himself concentrated His testimony to Israel with two references to Jonah. In this series of messages, as you have recognized, we are not dealing with the life and times of each Prophet in question, but only seeking to put our finger upon what we believe to be the particular 'Voice' of each; it is a matter of what is resultant from the passing on of the Prophet. The Prophet passes by, but his 'Voice' remains! The voice of Jonah is very challenging, and Jesus hung the destiny of Israel as a nation upon that voice. What then does *this* voice say at all times, and to our time essentially?

I. Firstly we must take note of a certain uniqueness about Jonah and his mission.

It was not something new in the eternal thought of God, but in the days of Jonah the specific call and commission of that Prophet was something new. So new and unusual was it that it startled both Jonah and Israel. In a way it was unheard of; certainly it was foreign to the ideas of the nation. It was a break-in, an innovation, a strange

thing, a departure from tradition. While God did not plan or purpose the disobedience and breakdown of Jonah, in His foreknowledge and sovereignty He ordered that it should form the very setting and basis of a miracle which would give the message and a commission a thousand times more significance than it otherwise would have held. So deep and far-seeing are the ways of God! God just rode roughshod over all the set and fixed ideas of His own people; over all their notions and settled ways. It was a new thing in Israel, and that was a part—only a part, but a strong part—of Jonah's dilemma and difficulty.

Therein is the first note in his 'Voice'. The whole battle with Judaism in New Testament times, and, as indicated by our basic phrase (Acts xiii. 27), very largely, if not entirely, raged around this very fact. Stephen was murdered very largely because of this question. It is

THE SERIOUS PERIL OF PREJUDICE

Prejudice in Israel, as in Christianity, and everywhere, just means and says: 'God *must not* do that.' It shuts the door to man and to God.

If the writer may give his own testimony, for what it is worth, on this point, he has to say that a very big turning-point in his life and ministry, from limitation to great enlargement, was reached at a certain time. One Lord's Day morning I preached on prejudice. Didn't I slaughter prejudice! I called it by all the evil names that I could lay my tongue to. I called it 'the closed, slammed and barred door against God and man'. Very well! During the following week I received an invitation to a certain conference with all expenses paid. I had said long before that I would *never* have anything to do with what that conference stood for; indeed, I would never touch it at a distance. Well, this very kind and generous invitation came, and all my prejudice at once looked for a reason to refuse. I was a very busy man and my diary was very full of engagements for months ahead. So that was the first resort, and I did not think that my diary would let me down for a good excuse. But to my consternation the only week without appointments for a long time was the week of that con-

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ference! Was there *any* other honest excuse for refusing. I could not find one anywhere or anyhow.

As I sat there with my problem, it was as though a voice said: 'Now, what about your sermon on prejudice? You have only two courses open to you: either to say that you *will not* go, or to go; and if you say that you will *not*, it will be because of your prejudice!' It was a battle, but the Lord, and a bit of honesty, won. I went, and although full of reservations and questions, as I have said, it was a life-crisis which resulted in a new release of the Lord. Forgive the personal reference, but it may serve to give point to the message.

Prejudice can be a thief and a robber. It can be absolutely disastrous, as in the case of Israel. Said Nathanael: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" That was the most critical point in his whole life, and had he not been an honest man, 'an Israelite indeed in whom was no guile' (Jacob), all that was subsequently said of him would have been lost (John xxi. 2 and, if, as is believed, he was identical with Bartholomew, Acts i. 4, 12, 13). How it becomes us to analyse our prejudices, to see if they *are* prejudices or true. Remember, Jesus Himself was involved in common prejudices, strongly supported and 'documented' by the best authorities, *people would say*; but history gives the answer.

II. Prejudice, as in the case of Jonah, meant an unwillingness to break with the set ways of Israel. God's dealings with Jonah, and Jonah's voice among the Prophets is the

DIVINE THUNDER AGAINST EXCLUSIVISM

In Israel, and Jonah, prejudice was based upon a wrong and false interpretation of election. Election with them, while being perfectly true, was interpreted as being a matter of salvation, whereas, in truth, it was a matter of *vocation*. They were *it*, for time and eternity. They were the first and the last. All others were hopeless exclusions. "Except ye be circumcised, you *cannot* be saved" (Acts xv. 1, 25). The tragedy, nay, the crime of Israel was twofold; it misinterpreted their calling and election,

and in so doing made God far, far smaller than He is. Israel—to them—was a box or cage into which they forced God and sought to keep Him there. If there is one thing that the book and history of Jonah says above everything else, it is that God will shake sea and land to show that prejudice and exclusivism are a violation of His nature as "the God of all grace". The history of all ultra-exclusive movements, related to God's name, is one of endless divisions, disorders, and reproach. It is immensely impressive that Jesus—the full and final expression of God's grace—took up Jonah after Jonah's death, burial and resurrection, typically. Israel was indeed chosen, elect, selected, but it was in order that, *by holiness and Godliness of life, of character, as God's representation*, they might be God's messenger of grace to the nations; that, in the Seed of Abraham *all* nations of the earth should be blessed. This is *the* vocation of the Church; but its effective fulfilment waits and depends upon it being a *true representation of God!* Jonah defaulted in the first place. Israel failed finally. The 'Voice' of the Prophet Jonah is a warning.

III. So we come at last to that full and *final* voice of Jonah:

" A GREATER THAN JONAH IS HERE
(Matthew xii. 41)

We have said "Final", and by that we mean when the battle is over and Jonah—*on resurrection ground*—truly represents God. The context of Matthew xii. 41 is in verse 40. There, on the one side, is "a wicked and adulterous generation", the Israel which has lost its place because it has failed in its vocation (note that!). In the middle is Jonah as a parable and sign. On the other side, Jesus; going down into death—on *that* side representing that which does not and cannot live before God, and then, by resurrection, representing that which is alive unto God for ever. This is the '*Sign*' to Israel, whether historic or spiritual.

This is the voice of the Prophet Jonah, but it needs more than 359 pages to exhaust it!

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“THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM”

4. IN THE SPIRIT OR IN THE WORLD?

“And there came one of the seven angels . . . and he spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and shewed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, . . . clear as crystal” (Revelation xxi. 9–11).

THERE are those people who think that I am wrongly spiritualizing everything, and they say that I am wrong when I say that this city is not a literal city, but represents a spiritual people. But I hold to my position! One would think that it only needs one phrase here to justify that position. The angel said to John: “Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb,” and when he got John there, there was no wife or bride at all: he showed him a city. And there is so much more like that in this book. There was a time when there was a book sealed without and within, and John wept because there was no one who could open it. The angel said: “Weep not: behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome, to open the book . . .” (Revelation v. 5). And when John turned to see this Lion: “I saw . . . a Lamb” (verse 6). Well, what is there in common between a lion and a lamb? You can only explain it if you get the spiritual principles. I think it is worth while taking just a few minutes on this particular point, especially for the Bible students, but, of course, for everybody.

It is essential that we really understand the particular form that John’s ministry took, and this was his method more than of anyone else in the New Testament. John was most concerned with the spiritual meaning which lay behind material things. You know how true that was in his Gospel—everybody will accept this principle in his Gospel! He called all the miracles of Jesus ‘signs’, and did not just say: ‘Now this is something that Jesus did’ but: ‘This is what Jesus meant when He did that.’ When Jesus turned the water into wine, John meant it to teach us that Jesus can give us an altogether new kind of life. When the old wine—or life—fails and disappoints us, Jesus can give a new life. When Jesus raised a poor man from

his bed after he had been there, unable to walk, for thirty-eight years, John says: ‘That is a sign.’ Jesus can take a poor moral and spiritual cripple and put him on his feet: He can give him the power to walk in a new kind of life. When Jesus gave sight to the man who was born blind, John says: ‘That is a sign: a sign that Jesus can give us a new sight so that we can see spiritual things that we never saw before.’ And so it is with all the eight signs in the Gospel by John.

You accept that in John’s Gospel and say: ‘Now these things in the natural world are signs of something in the spiritual world.’ But if you accept that in his Gospel, why will you not accept it in his book of the Revelation? This city, the new Jerusalem, is a sign of something else. Every part of it signifies something spiritual, something in relation to the Lord Jesus.

Do you accept that? If you do, we can go on.

We come again to this tenth verse of chapter twenty-one: “And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and shewed me the holy city Jerusalem.”

Well, “a mountain great and high”, and “he carried me away in the Spirit”. In spiritual terms that just means that John was alive in the spirit. Do you think that this angel took hold of the Apostle John when he was on the Isle of Patmos and lifted him right away to some great high mountain? There would have been trouble in Patmos if that had happened! The Roman authorities would have been saying: ‘John has escaped!’ Do you see what I mean? This was a spiritual experience. It may have been a dream, or a vision. You know that in our dreams we can travel a long way. I have sometimes dreamt that I was in America, and then I have awakened a few minutes afterward and found that I was still in London, but I had been travelling a very long way. You will accept that in the natural. Why will you not accept it in the spiritual?

Now there are two things here, and you must remember that these are fundamental laws of the New Testament, or of the Christian life.

Firstly there is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a great reality. You believe in the reality of the Holy Spirit as a fact, but you cannot see Him, or hear Him with your natural ears, and you cannot know the reality of the Holy Spirit until something happens in you. Early in his Gospel this same

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

John speaks about being "born of the Spirit". When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about being born again, Nicodemus' mind was just working in the natural realm and he said: 'Impossible!' Jesus said: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit *is* spirit" (John iii. 6). What is it that is born of the Spirit? It is our human spirit. Because it has become separated from God it is looked upon as dead, and death is just separation from God, whether it be in time or in eternity.

Now, being 'born again' means that our spirit is brought into life union with God, and what the New Testament means when it speaks of 'being alive in the spirit' is 'in living union with God, the Holy Spirit', that is, our spirit being alive unto God and unto Divine things. Here John was only saying in principle that his spirit was alive to the Holy Spirit at this time, and when that is true, as it should be of every one of us, we see a new world. "And (he) shewed me the holy city", and the Holy Spirit will do that with everyone of us, so that we are able to say: 'I have seen something that God has shown me.' Will you believe me when I say that that ought to be true of every Christian? The Christian life is not just a matter of reading the Bible, saying prayers and going to church. Those things may be good and necessary, but the Christian life really is a walk with God in the light. It is a matter of being alive unto God in the spirit and God being able to show us in our hearts what is His will, so that the true Christian should be able to say 'The Lord is showing me things'.

Now, you mature Christians, be very patient with this, because there are some young Christians here, and we can never go on very far until we have laid a proper foundation. What I have just said, then, is fundamental to the Christian life from its beginning.

Now we can go on to the next step. You say: 'Well, that is very wonderful and I want my life to be like that, but how can it be?' We have our answer here, but in spiritual principle. What the Lord shows to your heart will depend upon how far up the mountain you are. Again you say: 'Oh, Mr. Sparks, what do you mean?' Well, I am not talking about climbing the Jungfrau or the Blümlisalp. What does this mountain mean? What does it mean to go up any mountain? It just means getting away from this world. When you get up the mountain you have left the world behind; there is a great separation between you and the world, and you will never see heavenly, spiritual things until that has happened.

Do believe me: this is not a matter of age, or

years. There are multitudes of Christians who have been saved for many years, and they are still down on the earth. They have still got their interests in this world—this world, and the things of this world, still have a large place in their life. They are what are called 'worldly Christians'. Of course, that is a contradiction in terms, because it is not true Christianity. Listen to Jesus as He is praying to His Father about His disciples: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John xvii. 16). "They are not of the world. They do not belong here. They belong somewhere else. This world is not their life; their life is above." That is in John's Gospel, and it is just clear, straight language, is it not?

In the book of Revelation John puts it in this way of illustration—of a great and high mountain—and he is saying: 'The people who make this city are heavenly people, not earthly people. They are people who are separated in spirit from this world.' The Apostle Paul put it in this way: "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is" (Colossians iii. 1), and that only means: 'Get up on the mountain. Leave this world in spirit, in heart, and come up with the Lord Jesus.'

Let me go back again to what I began to say. This life in the spirit, in union with Christ, is not a matter of years or of age. It is possible that you were only born again yesterday and yet you are high up the mountain, and that is because you have said 'good-bye' absolutely to this world. You are very utter about this matter of new life with the Lord.

As we move about this world we meet many people who call themselves Christians, and the strange thing is that we cannot talk to them about the things of the Lord. These professing Christians open their eyes and their mouths when you begin to talk about the things of the Lord. To them it is as though you were talking the language of another country, and the reason is that they have not yet come right away from this world in spirit. Let me say to the young Christians that this mountain is for you from the day that you are born again.

Now I want to say a very strong thing, and it may be difficult for you to accept it. Do you realize that this world lies under a curse? God has pronounced a curse upon this world as it is, and what is the expression of a curse? The law of frustration operates where a curse is. You just go so far, and you can go no further. Human life just goes so far, and that is the end. It does not go right through to fullness and perfection. Everything is imperfect, and is frustrated by death. A man

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spoken of by Jesus Christ accumulated great stores in his lifetime, and then he rubbed his hands together and talked to himself: 'Soul, you can retire now. You have great stores laid up for yourself, so just eat, drink and be merry.' But God said: "Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?" (Luke xii. 20).

The curse and death mean the frustration of all the purposes of man, and what is true of human life is true of the world. Oh, what a lot man has done to try to break through the sound barrier of frustration! What a long way he has gone today! Why, if you had been told twenty-five years ago how things would be today, you would never have believed it. Yes, man has gone a very long way, even to the moon—and then someone just puts his finger on a button, the nuclear bombs begin to fall and all his work is wiped out in a moment. Everybody knows of that possibility, and the Word of God has told us quite clearly that that is exactly how it will be. Because a curse rests upon this

world it can never go right through to perfection.

What I am getting at is this: If you and I in spirit get bound up with this world we shall come under spiritual death. Any Christian who is sensitive to the Holy Spirit will register something wrong when they touch this world and their reaction will be: 'I have come down. I have touched this cursed world and death is registered in my spirit.'

You will never see the things of God until you get above the fog of this earth. If you come down into the self-life, then it is frustration. If you touch the world's life it is frustration, and you will never see the things of God until you get above this world in spirit. The language is very simple and very significant: 'I was in the Spirit, and I was on a great, high mountain, and then I saw something.' You see, these are spiritual laws of the Christian life and they are very real. I hope we do know something about this.

May the Lord explain to our hearts just what it means where we individually are concerned!

(To be continued)

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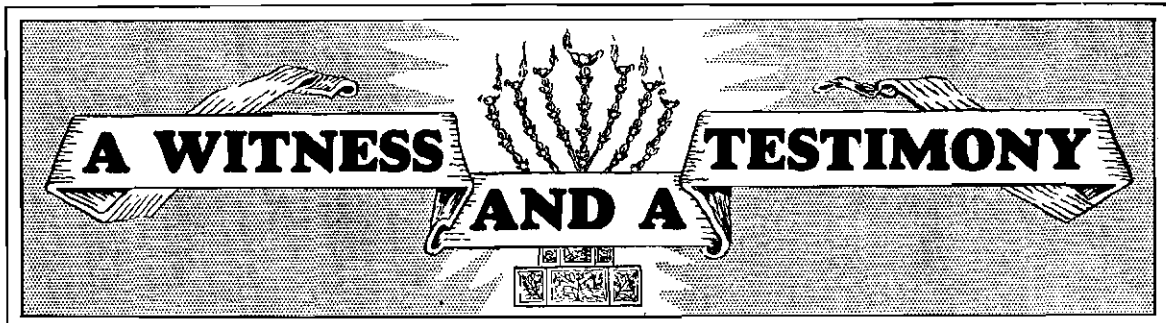
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THE UNVEILING OF JESUS CHRIST

Revelation i. 1

YES, we are in the book of the Revelation; the most controversial book in the Bible. This book has set up more schools of interpretation than any other. It would not be profitable even to name these schools. Of them all, no two are in agreement, and each one is uncertain of the rightness of the others. The only safe and profitable way is to find what is certain. This is the Bible's way of solving and answering its problems and questions. That is, interpretation and application by spiritual principles. In passing, we do point this out as a really valuable and satisfying method of approach. Apply it to the first chapters of Genesis and there will be a very great deal of rest from the weariness of mental wrestling with questions and problems there. The same is even more true with 'Revelation'. This is what we shall do in this message. We begin with reference to

THE APOCALYPTIC METHOD

It is essential to accept the fact that, whatever actuality and literalness there is behind the record here (and of course there is such; it is not a book of myths) it is all presented to us in symbols, figures, resemblances, similitudes, and representations, and not in real and actual things. Dragons, and Beasts, and Bowls, and A Lamb, etc., are not actually such. We ask: why this method?

Well, at least part of the answer relates to the time and condition of the writing. It was a time of terrible and fierce persecution of the Christian Church. The focal point of that persecution was the Christian testimony to the Lordship of Jesus Christ; what the book calls "The testimony of Jesus". That testimony came into direct and immediate collision with Roman Emperor-worship. Caesar took the

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title of God, and claimed worship as such. The Christians both refused to acknowledge this, and preached Jesus Christ as Lord.

This set up a situation in which it was dangerous to speak in plain terms, names, and definitions. So, in writing to the Church and Christians for their instruction, counsel, comfort, correction, and warning, their spiritual discernment and perception was called into use, and they had to—as we say—‘read between the lines’. No Caesar’s name is mentioned, but a representation of him is there. No system is named explicitly, but its character is delineated; and so on.

But the method applies to much more than the immediate historic background, or the prophetic horizon: it is applied to almost everything in the book. That has to do with the *nature* of the book. Now we proceed to the question—Why the book? In another place we are occupied with the last chapters of this book. Here it is with the first chapters, and mainly with chapter one. In this part we are met with

A CHALLENGE TO CHRISTIANS

Asia is the venue of the vari-sided message, or—if you like—the seven messages. Asia was representative of first century Christianity: that is, Asia had received all the primary and essential apostolic teaching. Paul called it “the whole counsel of God”. But some thirty or more years had passed since Paul wrote his great circular letter to Asia and so soon after completed his ministry. In that period—only about thirty years—serious decline had set in in the majority of the churches. The character had changed. Divergence had taken place. The standard had lowered. Measure had been forfeited. The churches were living on a past. The fine gold had become dim. Form had taken the place of life, and works went on without the primary love. It is painful to have to accept the fact that, in even the fullness of the apostolic times, such a change could take place in a comparatively short time. It surely says that, to have had so much is no guarantee of final consistency. This is an age-long peril; the peril besetting the path of anything which had a great and wonderful beginning under the hand of God! It is not difficult to find all over the world the dead shells of what once was a mighty testimony to the sovereign movement of God; a “candlestick of pure gold”. We do not dwell on this aspect for the moment, but move on with the positive method of the Lord to meet it.

So we are brought back to the introduction: “The unveiling of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to

shew unto his servants” (i. 1). While the whole statement as to the ‘shewing’ is immediately related to “the things which must shortly come to pass”, it is essential to note that this *whole* unveiling is based upon, and issues from, an unveiling and presentation of the Person of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. All that follows in the whole book is intimately connected with the personal presentation. The phrase: “to show unto his servants” comes to relate—at least in the first place—to the churches in Asia, and, of course, to John. This full-length presentation of Jesus Christ will occupy us in this present consideration. Note carefully that the Person—in His full and meticulous delineation—is so closely linked with the churches as to ‘hold them in His right hand’ (i. 16, 20), and also “walketh in the midst . . .” (ii. 1).

The point here is

THE INTIMATE ASSOCIATION OF CHRIST WITH CONDITIONS

It is not a contradiction or confusion to see Christ in Heaven and at the right hand of God, as Paul and Stephen speak of Him, and then to hear John say that He is imminent and immediate in the churches on earth. And this is shown to be so even when the churches—the true churches—are in a poor and bad condition. It may come to be that because of certain conditions, as in the case of Laodicea, where Christ is represented as on the outside of the door; nevertheless He has not deserted and abandoned. We shall see that the real force of this first section is the deep and pained concern for His Church in her state of declension.

At this point we should sit back and allow ourselves to register the forceful impact of a serious fact. Taking not one whit from the Lord’s command and commission to evangelize the whole world, it was after the world that then was had been evangelized that practically the entire New Testament was written to Christians who had responded. After ‘Acts’ there is not one book of the subsequent twenty-six comprising the New Testament which was written to the unevangelized and unsaved. This surely is forceful enough (apart from the contents of the books) to convince us that the Lord is—at least—as much concerned with the ‘follow-up’, the saved, as He is to evangelize! The law of God, both in nature and in grace, is “full growth”, and anything less than that is either abortion or stultification; it is sub-normal, or un-normal, and it speaks of defeat and frustration of purpose and design. God is not like that, and Himself suffers in any such condition. We shall come on this again

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later, but it *must* be from *this* consciousness that we begin. If that has impressed us sufficiently, and only if so, we can proceed, and in doing so we shall at once be confronted with

GOD'S ULTIMATE STANDARD

This is set before the Church, the churches, and individual believers ("*He* that overcometh", "Unto *him* will I give . . ." etc.) in the full stature and characterization of Christ. John says, inclusively, "One like unto the Son of Man" (verse 13). The title, used some eighty-two times of Christ in the New Testament, has a double significance. (*a*) It means representation; and (*b*) it means identification. Not to be too detailed and ponderous, we do not include a study of these two aspects, but those who are following closely will at once see how true they are in this final presentation. Here, "Jesus Christ" represents Man as God intends him to be, and as he *will* be through grace, in Christ. And here "Son of Man" means the most intimate organic identification with His redeemed, so that He stands to lose something of Himself if they fail.

When the Ultimate Standard has been presented, we are very soon led on to see that *the Lord is not willing to accept comparative standards*. In the majority of the messages to the churches the comparative is noted. Good things are tabulated, such as 'works', 'labours', sincerity, zeal, hatred of falsehood and hypocrisy, orthodoxy, etc., but when all this is allowed for, warning, rebuke, severity, and entreaty are administered. The "garment down to the foot" (i. 13), is not sleeveless, half-length, or even three-quarter length. It is full length, and all-covering. It is the "seamless robe" of John xix. 23. It is of one piece and complete. Garments in the Bible speak of the measure and the character of the wearer. But here it is the garment of authority, the Judge. By its standards are judged, and criteria are fixed.

With God in Christ there are no substitutes for Divine fullness and no alternatives to the Person. This comes so clear in the confrontation of the churches. When all is taken into account the judgment is gathered into one word: "But".

This could be very disconcerting, discouraging, disheartening, but we must remember that the Lord puts His finger upon causes and reasons, and shows what can be done to make good the defects. Among the multitude of 'overcomers' doubtless there are many who were in the poorest state described in these Messages.

Let us go on, for about this 'seamless robe', the perfect wholeness, there is a girdle of gold about

the breasts. It is oriental symbolism, but it is eloquent. The breasts speak of the affections; here, the affections of Christ. Gold is ever the Divine nature. And the girdle, the symbol of strength and action. To His Church, His people, in their weakness, their decline, their failure, even in their apostasy, He comes in the energy, the strength, the activity of Divine love and affection to recover, to restore, to be faithful, to lift up. It is in love that He rebukes: "As many as I love, I rebuke" (iii. 19). This Divine love is not mere sentimentalism. It is very faithful love. It is parental love which for the child's *good* may slap, but in so doing feels the regret as much as the child. "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it."

I think that perhaps we have something here to learn and to which to adjust. We criticize and harshly judge the Church. We take a very adverse attitude to what we deem to be the faults, weakness, defections, and even evils in the Church. We must search our hearts to see why we do so. Is it really our suffering love and sorrow for the Lord that motivates our spirit and demeanour? Is it *redeeming* love?

Now, seeing that this is not a whole book, we must sum up thus far. What comes out as governing this contemplation is this: whichever school of interpretation may be ours—historicist, futurist, literalist, spiritual, or none of them—one thing governs the whole section (chapters one to three). It is that, whenever things have departed from the pristine glory, fullness, and power, and a decline to a lesser and lower spiritual measure and level has taken place, the Divine method of recovery is a fresh presentation and unveiling of Christ in His fullness and true character. Before there can be any hopeful dealing with the details of the situations which are wrong; that is, before taking a negative course of condemnation, judgment, warning, etc., the Lord presents, or re-presents the positive standard of His Son. This has always been the principle on which God has acted, as we could show from many instances. Unless we have a *positive better* to present, we have no ground for being negative in judgment, criticism, or attitude. There must be a Divine criterion by which all things are measured. People will only see the wrong and be ashamed if the right is set before them. "Show the house to the house of Israel that they may be ashamed" was the command of God to Ezekiel. The Lord would, in our time, have His prophets who can—like John—bring the fullness and significance of Christ before His people. So the whole book of the "Revelation" is governed by the initial unveiling and presenting of Jesus Christ in full stature and detailed character.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

GROWING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD

Reading: John xxi. 1-12, 15

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Peter iii. 18).

THERE are many ways of looking at the need for spiritual growth, and the one that Peter brings before us here is that it is a necessity to prevent our falling from our own steadfastness. A certain—and perhaps the only—way of not going back is to go on.

THE QUALIFICATION FOR GROWTH IN KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD

I want to speak about this matter of growing in the knowledge of the Lord, and, as this is the last word that Peter gives to us, it is surely not unreasonable to look at his own life, and to seek to find in his own case how he knew the Lord, and how he grew in the knowledge of the Lord.

The answer is a very simple one. He grew in the knowledge of the Lord by something which was wrought into him in the course of experience. All that he really learned was far from being merely a matter of information. It came to him, or he came to it, as he went on in the experiences of life, and his only qualification, and the only qualification that we need have, as I can see it, is that which we discover in his talk with the Lord by the seashore. He loved the Lord. He proceeded in his life with many faults and failings, a blunderer, a man who would find it, perhaps, difficult to learn, but he had this saving feature about him—he loved the Lord. In his heart of hearts he wanted the Lord. That is an essential, but if you have that you have what you need for growing in the knowledge of the Lord. I would like that we should look at Peter's life and see how he learned some of the great spiritual truths of the Word.

PETER'S KNOWLEDGE

1 *Of the Power of the Blood*

First of all, the truth about the power of the Blood of Jesus Christ. That is a knowledge worth having! How do people get it?

Well, I look at the part of Peter's life that appears in the Gospels. It is true that he began his ministry with a consciousness of sin, for on that occasion

when the Lord gave him a miraculous draught of fishes and the net broke, you remember that he fell down at the feet of the Lord, saying: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke v. 8). However, with that exception, he seems to have got through the years of the Lord's ministry fairly easily, and with a fair amount of self-confidence; perhaps not always quiet, but with a real sense that he was growing, that he was increasing, that he was something, and was doing something. He could turn to the Lord and say, apparently rather proud of the largeness and generosity of his own heart: "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times?" (Matthew xviii. 21). Peter is growing—at least, he feels he is when he talks like that. Or he could say: "Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee" (Mark x. 28).

But how well we know that there came a point in Peter's life when he became, in those sad and piercing eyes of his Lord, in the eyes of his fellow-disciples, in the eyes of men, and in his own eyes, a very great sinner. He denied his Lord, and when the truth of what he had done burst in upon him, broke in on his heart, the Word tells us that he went out and wept bitterly. What shame filled his heart! What disappointment, nay, what despair concerning himself! How could he ever face the Lord again? And then you will remember that it is the Gospel by Mark, the one in which Peter's influence is said to be very notable, which tells us that, when the angel appeared and spoke to the women concerning the risen Lord, he said: "Go, tell his disciples *and Peter* . . ." (Mark xvi. 10). So Peter, probably in his own eyes and in the eyes of the others, was then a very doubtful member of the band of the disciples. So hopeless, so grave had been his fall and his sin that he needed a special word of the Lord, and we are told that the Lord met him. We are not told anything about that meeting. We simply know that, alone, face to face with his Lord, he received the pardon that he so sorely needed.

And this is how Peter learned the power of the precious Blood. Remember that he is a man who has failed terribly, awfully, and has a shame stinging and burning his heart. Yet we read in John xxi. that when the beloved disciple said: "It is the Lord!" Peter did not hide his face and say: 'No, you others can go and meet Him, but I am ashamed to meet the Lord!' He was the first to go to the

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Lord. We do not find Peter hanging back when the Lord says: "Bring of the fish which ye have taken." It is Simon Peter who runs and draws the net to land. What has happened to him? Read the first chapter of the book of Acts and there, while discussing the terrible fall and end of Judas, Peter makes quite a little discourse about him, but he never says: 'I am an awful failure, and it is only by the Lord's mercy that I am not like Judas!' We find his speeches published again and again after the Day of Pentecost, when he preached to multitudes, and he never says a word about his own failure. We read his letters, and come to one point which must have been provocative at least to his memory: "I, who am . . . a witness of the sufferings of Christ" (I Peter v. 1)—but never a word about his own failure. What does it mean? It means that Peter knows the power of the precious Blood. It does not say so, but by what is not said we have a stronger lesson than by the words that could be said about the power of the Blood. Here is a man who, in the eyes of all and in his own eyes, is a most abject failure, in spite of all the privileges he had. Later we find him walking about, happy, bold, praising God and preaching Christ. And with never a word about his own miserable failure. Was he a man without sensitiveness, and with a hardened heart? No, he was a man who knew the power of the precious Blood.

The knowledge of the Lord is not a matter of increased information. It is something done inside you. Peter has had something done inside him, and if ever there is a tendency in his own mind and thoughts to become remorseful, apologetic or remissive about his sin, his knowledge of the Blood, its power and cleansing, makes that impossible. That is how you grow in the knowledge of the Lord.

Well, so much for the shame, and the power of the Blood to cleanse the shame.

2 *Of the Power of the Cross*

But, you see, it was not just that Peter had slipped and that was one fault that could be explained, or could be just a lapse. The real trouble was with Peter, and in this experience of his he learned another side of the Divine truth about the sacrifice of Christ—the power of the Cross. You see, Peter was a man who apparently was going on well in his discipleship, a man who had very decided views about certain things, a very real consciousness that he was right, and a man who had quite a deal of confidence in himself. Every man has his strong point, and Peter's strong point was in the realm of his affection, his warm-heartedness.

Then there came a point when Peter failed and discovered himself to be a failure, and perhaps the bitterest thing of all was that he failed in the very place where he was most sure of himself. You remember how he protested to the Lord that it would be impossible for him to deny Him, even if he went to death. They were not just words. Peter might have said: 'I may be wrong as to my knowledge, but there is one thing about me—I have a warm, loyal heart!' But that is just how it happens when we are brought into this realm of knowing the Lord. It is our very strongest point, where we are most confident, that breaks, and in our failure, we find what a failure we are. That is what Peter found. He had an experience in his life when he went out and wept bitterly. Have you ever had an experience like that? That is the end of everything! However, that, dear friends, strangely enough, is growing in the knowledge of the Lord.

I remember when I was first in the Lord's service I used to hear and think a good deal about taking up the Cross. I used then to think largely in terms of giving up things for the Lord, being willing to 'rough it', to suffer—that voluntary, willing embarking upon a course which is difficult and which costs. Well, that is the Cross, but in those days I had very little knowledge of this experience that came to Peter. However, there have been times since then when I have realized that the Cross goes deeper than that, deep though that is, for it is no easy thing to give up the solid, substantial things in life for the Lord's sake, and deliberately and willingly embark on a life of hardship for Him. But there is something that goes far deeper than that, and that is a discovery that, even in spite of all that, you are still a most miserable and abject failure. Then you go out and weep bitterly. You are a failure as a man, as a friend, as a disciple, as an aspirant for the Throne, and, indeed, a failure in every realm. That is the Cross. That was Peter's experience of the Cross, or, rather, his recognition of his need for the Cross, and in that knowledge of his own failure he found the Lord's deliverance by His Cross and by His death, so that Peter the failure could yet be Peter the disciple and the apostle.

So, you see, here again Peter's knowledge was a personal and a practical knowledge that came to him as he went on, with this one saving thing about him—he loved the Lord, and that enabled the Lord to teach him, not in words or in theories, but in the depths of the bitter experience of his own heart, his need of the Cross to deliver him from himself, and then—blessed be God!—the power of the Cross to do it.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

3 *Of the Power of the Spirit*

Then, as we enter into the book of the Acts, we find how Peter learned the power of the Spirit. Now, I cannot start a consideration of the many aspects of the anointing power of the Spirit in the life, but let us think of it in this one aspect, for I think it will give us some sense of the truth regarding the whole matter—the anointing power of the Spirit to witness. How did Peter learn that?

Well, there are many things associated with Peter's knowledge of the Spirit that are not the same for us, but there is this that is as true of us as it was of Peter. There came a point when, to the rulers whom he had to answer, Peter said: "We are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit" (Acts v. 32). He found that, as he was a fearless witness to the risen Christ, he was in the way of the Holy Spirit. He was with the Lord, and the Lord was with him.

Now, if you look at those first chapters of the Acts, those audiences that Peter had, and those experiences, you will find that he did not seek them. They came to him. He did not arrange a meeting in Jerusalem; God brought the people together to Peter. He did not go before the rulers; he went on his way and there came the incident of the lame man being healed, and Peter found himself before the rulers. And all the events that followed his being taken to prison, and being released out of prison, were things that happened to him. He did not initiate them. Let us make this comparison, then. Peter goes along in his life and things happen to him, but in the course of those happenings there are occasions when he ought to open his mouth and witness for the Lord, and when he does it, the power of the Spirit is with him. Is that not true of you and me? We may not go up to the Beautiful Gate of the Temple to heal a sick man, but we go somewhere every day. We may not be taken and put in prison, and if we were, perhaps we would not be brought out in that miraculous way, but we do move in and out under the hand of circumstances, as Peter did. It was under the hand of God, we know, but from the human point of view he was moving about under the force of certain circumstances, and there came times when it was for him to open his mouth and witness for his Lord. When he did, the power of the Spirit was with him. That is how Peter learned the power of the Holy Spirit—by opening his mouth and trusting the Holy Spirit to bear witness to the truth of what he was saying as to Jesus Christ.

Of course, there are other things and conditions that must be given—the condition of heart relation-

ship with the Lord, the obedience of faith, and others—but I am thinking of Christians who, up to what they know, in the sincerity of their hearts, fulfil the conditions, and yet they do not know the power of the anointing. I want to suggest to you that, with the demands and opportunities that came to him, Peter, in simple faith, trusted the Lord and found the Lord was with him. Sometimes people were converted, and sometimes they were not; sometimes people liked what he said, and sometimes they did not. We are not going to get romantic ideas as to what will happen, for that is not for us to know. That is for the Lord as to the final results, but, as to our experience, we are witnesses of a risen, glorified Christ, and so is the Holy Spirit. When we are on that ground, we are together and He is with us.

4 *Of the Lordship of Jesus Christ*

Of course, these things overlap, and in Peter's experience he was learning various things. In the matter of going to Cornelius he learned in his own heart of hearts a deep lesson and acquired a very precious bit of knowledge as to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is Lord! How do you learn that? How do you grow in the knowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord? Peter did it like this. He had some very firm religious convictions that were as dear to him as life itself, and as a man he would have laid down his life rather than forfeit them—apart from his relationship with the Lord. There is something certain in his mind. He can give you chapter and verse for it. He knew it was right—and the Lord said: 'That is not right!' 'Ah,' Peter said, 'Lord, it is right. Excuse me, Lord, You are wrong and I am right!' Did you never have an experience like that? It does not come to us all in the realm of the mind, but it comes in that realm to many. Peter is going on now with the Lord and is growing in the knowledge of the Lord, but something has arisen that the Lord could not speak to him about before. As a matter of fact, He said these things in the days of the Gospels, but He did not press them, and perhaps in the early days there in Jerusalem Peter could not have received them. But now he is growing in the knowledge of the Lord, and in that growth he is going to have a new understanding of the Lordship of the Lord. That means that he has to get rid of all his own thoughts, feelings and ideas. It says that, after he emerged from his trance and was waiting for the men to come, he was still pondering what it meant, but he learned that in a living way—"He is Lord of all". He was not quite sure how it was going to work

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out, but he was committed to the Lord over this thing, and accepted it as a fact in a new way. 'Whether I understand it or not, He is Lord of all, and my heart, mind and will bow to him.' Peter is growing in the knowledge of the Lord!

That particular matter came up for a good deal of dispute and conflict over much of Peter's life, for remember this: when we accept the Lordship of the Lord, that does not go unchallenged, nor do we have a clear path, though for the moment the joy in our hearts is so great in having found certainty and over yielding our will. It will be challenged again and again. It was with Peter. His own brethren challenged him, and the devil got Peter himself all tied up over it. Paul writes about that in Galatians. So our knowledge of the Lord is challenged. It becomes a matter of conflict, and, if we may take Peter for an example, the Lord's victories over us are not absolute all at once. The matter may still come up again, but the root question of the Lordship of the Lord is settled once and for all. I think that is why Peter was able to receive what must have been a very bitter experience—the rebuke of Paul at Antioch—for, in his heart of hearts, he had learned the Lordship of the Lord. He had learned it before, but he had to learn the Cross more deeply. He had to learn his own failure once again, but he is all the time growing in the knowledge of the Lord.

5 *Of the Church*

There is another matter. How did Peter learn about the Church? You have read the Apostle Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, and other writings about it, but have you learned the truth about the Church? How do you learn it? How did Peter learn it? He learned a little at the house of Cornelius, but something is crystallized in Acts xii. when Peter learned a new thing about the Church. You remember that he was in prison, and of course you will say that when he was released from prison he learned the power of prayer. But it was not just that, for we never read that he prayed. Does it say that he prayed? This is not just a simple setting forth of the fact that God answers prayer, although He did answer prayer. But as we read that chapter so we find that it sets forth in a simple way the fact that there is all the power of Divine sovereignty vested in the Church of Jesus Christ. I believe that on that occasion Peter learned that in a new way. You notice that none of the church 'officials' were there. It was not a church in an outward formation. Nevertheless, it says that prayer was made of the Church. Some saints were gathered together. It was not just an odd collection of people, but those who

were bound together in life and fellowship, and a challenge had gone forth against the Lord and against His testimony. Peter was shut up in prison; the day of his execution was fixed; and the fact that James had already been killed was a sure indication that Peter's execution would come off all right.

Now the Church of those days had no influence with the civil authorities, no status, and no appeal, but there is something that is far more valuable than influence. I think we all need to learn this lesson. The so-called 'church' has coveted influence. God never meant the Church to have secular influence in this world, but He does mean it to have power—not to pull strings or appeal to men, and get Peter out, as it were, by the back door—but to open the iron gates and bring him forth by the power of God, and, more than that (for this whole chapter is a parable), behind the whole thing there is a sinister figure, a wicked king, one who has set himself to destroy the Lord's servants, and the end of that chapter finds the king not only hindered, but destroyed. And I believe that is why Peter went into prison. Why? To provide the Church with an occasion for being so drawn out in prayer that not only would Peter be released from prison, but that tyrant would be cast from his throne. It is always the Church's work in prayer to assail the very throne of wickedness and bring from it the one who is at the head of all this opposition to the testimony of the Lord. It is a spiritual matter; they could do nothing against Herod except in spirit and by prayer. The word of authority found in that little group of Christians reached the tyrant on his throne and brought him down. Chapter xii of Acts begins with everything all wrong for the Church and all right for the devil, and ends with everything all right for the Church and all wrong for the devil. That is the story of the Church in a nutshell, and the story of this dispensation.

But it is something practical that you learn. These people prayed, and they prayed for something concrete—they prayed for Peter, and they prayed without ceasing. Yet I cannot but help feeling that they were drawn out far beyond this matter of Peter's release, for they were actually surprised when Peter came out. It was not the surprise of unbelief, but of those who had so got to grips with essential forces behind that for the time being they were drawn away from the occasion of it. God is waiting to do both today. That is how we are going to learn the Church by experience. In Peter's case, his own need taught him something of what the Church could do, and that was something he could not do. His prayers never got him out of prison, if he prayed them at all. Perhaps he knew enough not

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to pray, but just to commit himself to the Lord. It was the prayer of the Church exercising the sovereignty of the Lord, and he learned in the experience of those others, as they learned, too, at this time, a very precious, deep and spiritual truth, a fresh bit of knowledge of the Lord—the power of the sovereignty of the Lord as found in His Church.

May I close by saying that you notice how Peter says: "Grow . . ." Not: 'Grow in conscious

strength,' nor 'grow before the eyes of others', nor 'grow in your own eyes', but "grow in the knowledge of the Lord". That is spiritual growth, and let us remember what I have been trying to press by these various examples: such knowledge is deeply wrought in the heart by experience, and the Lord in His grace will give it to us as our hearts are set in love to Him.

H. F.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

GOLIATH, THE BIG MAN WHO MET A PEBBLE

WE are not told anything about Goliath's history, but we are left to guess, and I think that our guess will not be far wrong. It is something like this.

When Goliath was born everybody wanted to see this great big baby. It was the talk of all the neighbours. As he came to boyhood, everybody who came to his home said: 'My, what a big boy you are getting!' Later, as a 'teenager', other boys made him their champion in all their quarrels, adventures, and battles. Some boys may not have liked him, but when he came their way they all ran for their lives, and hid whenever they could. The word went round: 'Here comes Golly. Let's get out of his way!' Then when he reached manhood he joined the army. Being about nine feet tall, or perhaps eleven feet, his armour weighed two hundred pounds. The head of his spear alone weighed twenty-five pounds. It is not surprising that he was made the champion of the army! He was such a big man, but the unfortunate thing was that all that talk about him in babyhood, boyhood, youth and manhood (in his own presence) had got into his head and made him feel very self-important and self-sufficient. He had such big ideas about himself that, not only did he think himself to be more clever than other people, but he got the idea that he was bigger than God.

So, when Israel was drawn up for battle with the Philistines, the Philistines pushed Goliath forward and said to him: 'You just let them see you and hear your big voice, and we shall have no more trouble.' Unfortunately, the Israelites were in such poor condition that it worked, and when 'Golly' strutted out and shouted his challenge, they all fled

and hid themselves. The situation seemed hopeless for Israel. What could be done?

Well, let us leave them and Goliath for a moment and go some miles away.

Outside of the city of Bethlehem was a field, and in that field there was a flock of sheep, and looking after those sheep was a youth, perhaps another teenager. The sheep were his father's; therefore he had a special sense of responsibility for them, and he took this responsibility seriously. This sense of responsibility became a very strong thing in his character and was going to be a big factor in his history. Well, there he was, through the long days and nights looking after the sheep. How did he pass the time? Did he just lie on the ground and sleep away the hours, or lie awake and dream 'day dreams' of unreal and impossible things? Not at all! There were certain things that he did which were going to have a big place in his later life, although he did not know it when he did them. One thing was that he made some musical instruments and taught himself to play them, and sing. He collected some reeds, hollowed them out, cut them into different lengths, bound them together in a row and played tunes on them. Then, because he had no song-book he made up his own songs (Psalms). Perhaps as he watched and cared for his father's sheep the twenty-third Psalm took shape in his mind. He may even have played it on his instrument.

But there was another musical instrument that he made. He went to a tree and cut a strong branch that would bend just so much, but needed some strength to make it do so. To this he fastened some

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strings of different lengths and made the branch stretch them very tight and taut. This was a harp, and he became so expert in playing this that later on the King made him his harpist, and with it he composed a whole big volume of Psalms.

One other thing occupied his time. He practised throwing stones from a sling at objects which he set up at a distance. So expert did he become in this stone-slinging that he could hit an object just where he wanted to hit it, and with such force that the stone either lodged in the object or smashed it. One night a lion came into the field to carry off a sheep. Our young man just lifted up his heart to God and said: 'Oh, God, help me to save the sheep and kill that lion.' Well, it happened, and the lion never got away alive. On another occasion a bear tried the same thing, and suffered the same fate.

There came a day when his father said to him: 'Son, you know that there is a war on and your brothers are in it. I want you to go and see how they are. Don't go empty-handed; take some fruit and other things, and bring me a report of how the war is going.' So he went, and while he was asking a few questions about the war, old 'Golly' appeared and started shouting, asking for a man to come and fight him. Our young friend thought: 'Well, I may not be a giant, but only a shepherd, but when that lion and bear roared at me and tried to destroy the sheep, I prayed to God and He helped me to destroy them. Why should not this fellow meet the

same God? Oh, God, who helped me then, in Your name and strength I will go for this fellow.'

So, going to a stream, he chose five smooth stones, pulled his sling from his belt, and, telling old 'Golly' that it was not him but God that he had to answer to, he put one of the stones in his sling, and as he ran toward the giant he swung the sling round his head with such force that you could hear the whiz, and then released it and away the stone went. Well, it reached the mark and someone has said that 'nothing like that had entered Goliath's head before'. You know the rest of the story and the rest of David's life.

Many things can be taught us by this account. May I mention some?

We never know what God has in His mind for our lives, but faithfulness now, a real sense of responsibility, and learning to trust and prove God in our present difficulties, will certainly be of tremendous value in days to come.

Under God's eye—all unknown to us—we may be being trained for a life-work of great value to Him.

And, our present situation may give us the opportunity for showing that it is not for ourselves, but for God's interests that we live. Then, what old 'Golly' discovered: that it takes a very little thing with God in it to bring down the very big and self-important things.

T. A.-S.

THE VOICES OF THE PROPHETS (XIV)

"They knew not . . . the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath" (Acts xiii. 27).

THE VOICE OF MICAIAH

"How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord?" (1 Kings xxii. 16).

THIS is a thrilling story, and it reads like a drama. Micaiah is—so far as the record goes—a minor of the Minor Prophets, but quite evidently he was of some serious account in Israel, even if not very popular. It is something to be noted that his accountability *was* because of his unpopularity. He was evidently taken seriously even if he was in a very small minority. Among the Prophets of Israel his ratio was

FOUR HUNDRED TO ONE

That is the first impressive thing of which to take note. It *is* possible for a servant of God, or 'voice' for God, to be just one over against a disparity of four hundred! But not just the ratio, but the one to be right and, in the end, vindicated. So this story shows.

Of course, this does not mean that singularity is necessarily a virtue, and that being different from everyone else is inevitably right. But, given that it is the kind of aloneness of Micaiah, it can very well be the 'voice' of truth.

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Our verse above contains a suggestion and implication which is quite enlightening. Said Ahab to Micaiah: "How many times shall I adjure thee . . . ?" This, then, is far from the first time that Micaiah had toyed with Ahab, or taunted him. The Prophet evidently knew his man. He knew full well that Ahab was a man who, if he set his heart on having, or doing, something, he would have it at any cost, even the cost of principle, or the life of a good man, as in the case of Naboth and his vineyard. The deliberate tone of unreality in Micaiah's voice, which even a selfish and wicked man could not fail to detect, had provoked Ahab again and again, and made him, *in spite of himself*, demand the truth; although he had no intention of accepting it.

The voice of this Prophet, in the first place, shows that it is possible to be so set upon one's own course, and determined to have one's own way, as to pursue that end against the knowledge of the truth and all faithful warning and counsel. Such an attitude has at its very core the seeds of doom. It is very impressive that this very strength of self-will became characteristic of Israel in the years following Ahab and ended in the seventy years of captivity. Worse still, it was this very thing that led finally to their being set aside as a nation through the rejection of Him who was the Truth. Micaiah first played with Ahab, like a cat with a mouse, and then slew him. The reason for Ahab's terrible doom? Knowing the truth but refusing to obey it!

But what of Micaiah? The four hundred Prophets had tuned in to the popular strain. The ruling power wanted a certain theme. Policy demanded alignment. The current vogue required acquiescence. The day and the hour said that adjustment to its fashion was essential. Safety and freedom from trouble said—"Fall into line". The four hundred time-servers and opportunists were only concerned with, and actuated by, how things would affect their own interests and prospects. There was, however, the embarrassing presence of Jehoshaphat who, while he eventually smothered his better judgment, had a sense that all this noise and clamour was hollow and lacking in genuineness. He asked Ahab if there was not another 'voice' that ought to be heard. This put Ahab into a peevish mood, because Jehoshaphat, by his question, had brought a discord into the music and a cloud on the gay horizon. Yes, there was that fellow who had not been invited to the convocation because—well—he spoke the unpopular truth. Jehoshaphat insisted that Micaiah should be fetched, and the messengers sought to persuade him to play the popular tune,

sing the popular song, and to fall into line. We know what Micaiah replied.

But Micaiah had every reason to know what would be the consequences of any failure to comply. He knew Ahab quite well; that he was not a man to take pleasantly to having his ambitions thwarted or questioned. Moreover, behind Ahab there was that evil genius, his wife Jezebel. If Jezebel had succeeded in making a stalwart like Elijah run for his very life, Micaiah would suffer no less a fate. He was already in Ahab's bad books. To oppose him on this supreme occasion would not make things easier. With his eyes wide open to consequences, after taunting Ahab, he—at all costs—said what he knew to be the word of the Lord. There are more details, as you can see by reading the story, but the hammer fell and for a time he was in a prison of discredit, ostracism, privation, and exclusion. But eventually his word was proved to be the *truth*. What Ahab's thoughts were when he was borne away, mortally wounded, to linger out the miserable day until he died at sundown, we do not know, but we can guess. We do know what Jehu did to the four hundred and to Jezebel. From this we see that if Micaiah had compromised, his fate would have been very much worse than it was under Ahab.

We come back to our general object in these messages. Our basic passage in Acts xiii. 27 focuses the voices of all the Prophets on Christ. He is the inclusive, full, and final 'Voice'. How true He was to the way of all the Prophets, and how true today! He, as the Truth of God, stood alone, "despised and rejected of men". He was offered bribes in the wilderness, and in His last agonies on the Cross, He refused to "come down" and have an easier path. "He endured the cross, despising the shame."

It is the way of all who have a prophetic anointing which stands against the accepted and popular current; who *really* have a message from God. Not a 'slant', a 'singularity', an idiosyncrasy, an eccentricity. There are plenty of these. Micaiah's stand was for *reality*! This is what all the Prophets stood for, and if there was one thing more than another that drew out the white heat of Jesus, it was unreality, hypocrisy, falsehood, and compromise with 'the prince of this world', in principle or system.

Unless we are mistaken, the Spirit of God is forcing the issue of reality in a very utter and ultimate way in our day. The 'four hundred' may seem to triumph *for a little while*; the Micaiahs may be in an ostracized minority; but reality will issue triumphant at the end.

So says the 'voice' of this Prophet.

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POWER WITH GOD (IV)

EXEMPLIFIED IN MOSES
RESPONSIBILITY BORN OF LOVE

Reading: Exodus xxxii. 31, 32; 11-14; Numbers xiv. 11-20.

"Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind would not be toward this people" (Jeremiah xv. 1).

GOD SEEKING TO MAKE A MAN UTTERLY ONE WITH HIMSELF

"**T**HOUGH Moses . . . stood before me." We have to get right into the heart of this matter as quickly as we can, and it seems to me that the best way of doing that is first of all to look at this God who is presented in these passages. What impression does it all make upon you when you see a man, who himself is shown to be a man of weaknesses and imperfections and human frailty, seeming to exhibit more patience than the Lord with whom he is dealing, and trying to persuade the Lord to be gracious, to be merciful, not to be 'un-Christian', not to be so impatient, and not to be so revengeful, so swift and utter in His judgments? How does that impress you? It almost looks as though Moses is, in grace and character, superior to God. It almost appears that Moses is trying to bring God up to a higher standard. That is how it looks. Taken just by themselves, lifted clean out of the whole Bible and context, such passages of Scripture would put God among the gods of the heathen—cruel, swift to anger, needing to be appeased from His wrath, and persuaded to be kind. But, of course, you all shrink from such an idea! There arises in you, perhaps, something of indignation that one should even say such a thing, but I want to get into the heart of this thing as quickly as I can, and I think that is the best way of doing it.

Is that the Lord? Is that the true position? Is it really a fact that Moses had more of those graces than God had, and had to win God over to his side, to his point of view, to his position? Was it true? No, not in the slightest, not for a moment! Oh, but here it is! Here is God saying that He is going to do something, He is going to blot them out and destroy them, and Moses comes along and says: 'No, don't, Lord! If You do that, You see what it means. First of all, the Egyptians will hear about it and they

will say: "See the kind of God that they have! He is one who starts on a thing and finds He cannot carry it through, and so has to wipe it all out"—the God whom we have declared the only true God above all! They will say it just is not true, that is all. He is not the only God, and He is not any better than any other god.' Can you imagine for a moment, while Moses argues with the Lord like that and presents the situation, the Lord saying: 'I had not thought of that, Moses! That is a new idea. Thank you for reminding Me! You have saved Me.'—Moses saving the Lord from getting into trouble and disgrace with the nations of the world! Do you accept that? It looks like it, does it not? No, we cannot have it. There must be some other explanation, for that is not it. Then what is it? Well, it is just this. The Lord is Himself taking that line deliberately in order to get this man over to His side. The Lord had no intention of blotting this people out, or disinheriting them. He said: 'Let me . . .', but Moses said: 'No, I will not let you'—and that is the point. The Lord wanted to get this man to the position where he was so truly one with the Lord's deepest intention that he could not entertain the slightest suggestion that God should not stand up to His Name, His honour, and carry through His purpose. You will notice all the way through the Bible that that sort of thing is happening. What is He doing? He is out to make a man so utterly one with Him as an absolute necessity for the realization of His purpose.

You see, *man* is involved in this. This is a great heart principle of redemption. God could have dispensed with all instrumentalities and mediators and intercessors and go-betweens, and Himself, sovereignly from heaven, acted directly and have done the whole thing. He could have done it, but that is not the principle, and that is not the way. The whole Bible comes in to show and to prove that, man himself being involved in this, it requires a Man to redeem man. We sing the hymn: "A final Adam to the fight, and to the rescue came." The Man Himself, Christ Jesus, the redeeming Kinsman, the Mediator—that is the principle. Moses is called the 'mediator of the covenant'. Moses, the mediator, had to be in that position where, on the one hand, he was so truly one in heart with God's purpose, and, on the other hand, so truly one in

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heart with the object of God's purpose, that he brought the One who purposed and the object of the purpose together in his own person. He took the hand of God and the hand of man and brought them together in his own person. That is the whole work of the Lord Jesus, and the principle is here. God is testing this man in the same way as Elijah tested Elisha: "Tarry here . . . for the Lord hath sent me as far as Bethel. And Elisha said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel . . . And Elijah said to him, Tarry here . . . for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee" (II Kings ii). Elijah was apparently trying to shake this man off, but was really testing him because of something tremendous in view. He had already cast his mantle upon Elisha, who was to come into the good of that mantle on Elijah's ascension and do greater works than Elijah had done, but he is going to suffer a tremendous testing. But he went on and refused to be put off.

God is working on that principle with Moses. 'Let Me destroy this people, disinherit them.' Supposing Moses had said: 'All right!', what sort of mediator would he have been? And, mark you, the point is this—that God would have lost the essential basis of His work and purpose, and the essential basis was a man whose heart was so deeply and terribly in this matter that he himself would rather perish and lose all than that, on the one hand, God's Name should be dishonoured and, on the other hand, God's purpose should not be fulfilled.

That is a ground of power with God—a tremendous thing! He is saying: 'Oh, I acknowledge it, I perfectly agree and I make no excuses for them. "This people have sinned a great sin." It is quite true. "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—".' He does not finish . . . "And if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." Could anything be more utter than that? 'You disinherit *them* and You disinherit *me*. I have nothing to live for. I do not want to go on in life at all if you disinherit them.' What a oneness! And that is the kind of thing that God requires in order to do His great things. You notice that God went on and did His great things because He had that ground. That ground prevailed with God again and again. And the Lord said: "I have pardoned *according to thy word*." . . . "And the Lord repented of the evil which he said he would do unto his people." That is only a way of putting it. God said: 'All right, I will not do it—*according to thy word*.'

ABSOLUTE ONENESS WITH GOD'S PURPOSE

Where do we begin, then, with this? It begins here. Moses had become, in heart, deeply one with God's purpose concerning His people. God had indicated and intimated what His purpose was concerning this people. Moses quotes that to the Lord: 'Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and what You said.' He has become one with God in His purpose concerning His people, he has seen what that purpose was, his heart has espoused the Divine purpose for the people of God, and he has involved himself in that utterly and without a reservation. For him his eternal destiny is bound up with that and he has nothing else to look for, or hope for if that fails.

I expect you are wondering what that has to do with us! How does it apply to us? It is all very true about Moses, but I think this indicates something to us of what the Lord's will and desire is, and also it is a searching and challenging word. If God, for the realization of His purpose, must have an instrument or instruments (personal or corporate) like this, because He has bound Himself to this kind, and cannot get on with it without such instruments, may it not explain why the coming of the Lord's people to the inheritance, to the fullness of Christ, the attainment of the Church unto the glorious purpose of the ages in which it is called, is so retarded and delayed, and why there is something wrong in this respect? Dear friends, this, to me, is a most searching thing. It has searched my heart tremendously as I have dwelt upon it. It is not just some Bible teaching; this is something which will search us very deeply. What are we committed or devoted to?

GOD NEEDS THOSE COMMITTED TO HIS PURPOSE IN AND THROUGH THE CHURCH

Shall we go back a step before that and say: are we committed? Are we devoted? Here is a company of the Lord's people; not a large company but a representative company, and sufficient to stand right here before the Lord to meet this challenge and to hear it said in the Name of the Lord that the Lord needs people like this, constituted on this-wise, like Moses. He absolutely needs them. He cannot get on with His work until He has this at His command—people who stand in this relationship to Him, to His purpose and to His people, those who are the people of the eternal purpose. God must have people like this, men and women who have seen God's purpose concerning the Church and who know what that purpose is.

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It is not just a matter of doctrine, teaching, or Bible study. God needs people who have seen it in their hearts. And then He needs such people who, having seen it, are committed up to the hilt to it without any reservations. God is needing such people, committed utterly to Him for His purpose in relation to His people, the Church. Have you seen? What is it that you are doing? This is where I think the thing is so searching and challenging. There are many people of God who are committed to the work. I am not asking you if you are committed to Christian work or Christian service. That is not what I am after at all. There are any number of people who are up to their eyes in Christian work. Let the work test them out, and they will resign from the work. Let the conditions become too hard, and they withdraw from the work, or they will change their sphere of work, or the nature of their work for the Lord. It is the *work*. The work has an appeal. Oh, the appeal that is made for the work of the Lord, and how appealing it is made to be! The romance of it all, the fascination of it all, the idea of realizing something, expressing yourself, of being in the work, is the force of the appeal.

Moses is not there. Ask him about the work! He would say: 'Oh, may the Lord have mercy upon me and deliver me from the "work"! Moses said he was not able to bear the people (Deuteronomy i. 9), and that is the 'work'. Moses was not interested in, or concerned with the 'work'; he was concerned with a people for the realization of God's purpose. We can get this abstract idea of the 'work' of the Lord. We do not stay to define it, but, somehow or other, it is something we get into. We come up against difficult people and we begin to despise and criticize them. We think of them according to their natural constitutions and put them into 'pigeonholes'—'This is a worthwhile person, *this* is not'. There is all this sort of thing—human judgments about people. We have no room for certain people. All that, however, is false to this principle. No people on God's earth have ever been more difficult than Israel! Yes, all that you can say about the Jews is true, and yet look at this man! It is not the work; it is the people. He loves the people and his heart is bound up with them. Oh, what a people—and yet the marvel of this love for them! Not the *work*, but the people, just as they were and as bad as they were. He put his whole destiny at stake for that people. Why? Because he saw that God's purpose was bound up with the people and not with the work and not with organization.

It is challenging! What am I committed to? Is it a ministry, or a teaching? Am I interested in the teaching of the Church, this teaching and that

teaching, this kind of work and that, and this kind of ministry and that? The people may be another thing. Do you see the point? You can divide between those two things. You can be thoroughly in your work, in your ministry, in your teaching, in your system of things—but the people! There is something else when you really come to think about it. How much pains are you going to take with the people? How much are you going to give yourself to the people, to *that* difficult one, and *that* difficult one, and *that* awkward one, those who show so little response to it all, those who turn upon you when your heart is really burdened and say: "Who made you a ruler?"? That is what they did. And when Moses went to them in Egypt, they turned against him. We sing: "From Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand"—all wanting you to come. If only you will go to China they will all rush to you and be saved. Go and see! They will begin to stone you.

Well now, what about the people? Moses met that affront on the very first movement into Egypt to bring out the people. God needs those amongst us who are not interested in teaching, and orders, and Christian work as such. It can all be so abstract and can all be a fool's paradise when you come up against facts. God needs those who are right in this thing for His purpose, and who will meet the affront and the discouragement, and who will not suffer the shock of disillusionment because they have been building 'castles in the air' about the Lord's work. Those who know that this is a life and death matter, that it is going to cost everything, and they are in it to that degree. They have no illusions. "I know this people have sinned a great sin." You do not make any excuses for them, but nevertheless your purpose is bound up with this 'bad lot'. 'I am committed to the purpose.' That is what the Lord was trying to get.

You can follow it through to His Son, the inclusive, supreme example of this very thing. Oh, He has given all, and He has been cast out by those for whom He had given all and for whom he had left the glory. What is the end? "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 24). His heart still yearns. He is not invoking Divine judgment upon them because He is a disillusioned and disappointed man, and they had not responded. His heart is in this.

Hear Paul! "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake" (Romans ix. 3). That is the sort of thing. It is that that has power with God. That is why Moses, to speak after the manner of men, caused God to repent, changed the mind of God. It is not true when

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you know the real truth, but that is how it looked. He had that power with God. God said: "According to thy word."

What are we committed to? Are we committed to the interests of the Lord like that? Have we seen His purpose concerning the Church? Are we in it?—and do remember that the appeal is for servants of God. Two great titles used more of Moses than of anyone else are these: Moses, 'the man of God', and Moses, 'the servant of God'. Outstandingly Moses carries those twin titles: 'The man of God', and 'Moses My servant'. The Lord is wanting men of God, servants of the Lord.

But this is the nature of service. I do not ask you to come and give yourself to the work of the Lord, to go out and begin to organize Christian work here and there, near and far, and to do this and that and other things for the Lord. The appeal is: the Lord needs people, not necessarily to go out in the romance of missionary service, but just where they are to be committed right up to the hilt to the Lord's own honour as bound up with His purpose in the Church and through the Church, and upon whose hearts in the first place is the Church. I am very emphatic and careful in saying that—in the first place, the Church. If only that were recognized there would be a very great deal of difference in the situation today. God's instrument of evangelization is the Church. God's means of realizing His purpose is the Church. The Church has been ignored, and the thing has been attempted on a wide scale without the Church. The result is, for one thing, a terrible failure to accomplish the purpose, and you have to say that in a large degree the Church has failed. And what about the type of Christian that exists? A vast number of converts do not go on very far. You cannot leave them alone. You have to hold them up, support them, and put them on crutches all the time. And so you find that, whenever people try to organize an evangelistic campaign, they have to start with getting the Church right. Very often the whole thing resolves itself into a mission to Christians first.

Israel was not an end in itself. If Israel failed, if God let Israel fail, or let Israel go, the nations would be lost. But by means of Israel being kept and strengthened and built up, and moved on, the nations will be compelled to confess that God is in the midst of them and God is with them. That is Moses' argument: God is amongst you, and this is

the kind of God He is. That is revealed by a people living in the good of Divine fullness.

RESPONSIBILITY BORN OF LOVE

What does it amount to? It just amounts to this: coming into a place of the responsibility born of love. Not busy responsibility, nor official responsibility, but the responsibility born of love. It is the responsibility which a mother feels for a child, a parent for a child, and a parent's sense of responsibility for a child is not a business responsibility, nor an official responsibility, but a heart responsibility. The heart is bound up with this. Will you not agree with me that the most terrible and tragic thing of which we can conceive is a parent without a sense of responsibility for his or her children? And here the relationship between Moses and Israel was the responsibility born of love. Something had been wrought deep down in the soul of Moses, so that he and the people were one in life, and one in destiny. It was a great love.

"Christ . . . loved the church, and gave himself up for it" (Ephesians v. 25). There is a relationship there which is the deepest, most sacred of all the relationships God has ever created: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church." Moses loved Israel; Christ loved the Church. And if you want to see all that summed up in few words, you have only to look at Hebrews xi. and read: "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." That is the first thing about Moses—he refused. "Choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Refusing all the honour, reputation, status, resources, and choosing, definitely choosing, to be evil-entreated with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. "Accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." . . . "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." Just make a sum of those words: He refused, he chose, he accounted, he forsook, he endured. There is a heart in something. It is a *heart* that is the ground of power with God. That is the kind of servant that the Lord needs, concerning whom He can say: 'If Moses stood before Me . . . Moses My servant'.

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THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (XI)

11. THE CAPTURE OF JERICHO

WE come to the sixth chapter of the Book of Joshua. This chapter contains the story of the capture of the city of Jericho, and is one more chapter in the story of the greatness and glory of the Lord Jesus as represented by the ark of the covenant. You will notice that the ark is the most conspicuous thing in this story, for it is mentioned eight times in the chapter. We will not make much of that number, but perhaps you know that the number eight in the Bible is the symbol of resurrection, and in this chapter we are over Jordan and on resurrection ground.

This chapter, then, represents the great transition from one ground to another, and it very powerfully represents the new ground of resurrection life. An impressive thing is that it marks a big change in the life of God's own people—not the change from not being God's people to becoming God's people, but a great transition in the life of His people.

We look back to the ground which they had already held. They had had an experience of redemption from the world and the prince of this world, for Egypt represents the power of this world in which these people were at one time, but by the power of God they had been separated from that world and its power. Most of you know the story of the great deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and the one point upon which we will put our finger is the completeness of that separation according to the mind of God. Note that it is according to *God's* mind. The whole of His mind did not become actual in them, but here is God's mind, which was, and still is, that His people shall be absolutely separated from the power of this world.

That is illustrated for us by the ten judgments which God poured upon the Egyptians. Time after time God struck tremendous blows at that which tried to keep His people in bondage. At last that great power began to weaken, and tried to get the people on to the ground of compromise. Pharaoh said: 'Just go three days' journey into the wilderness.' He meant: 'Don't go altogether out of my reach. Don't put too great a distance between yourselves and my power.' But the Lord said: 'No! None of that!' And then Pharaoh said: 'Well, let the men go and leave the women and children behind.' I don't know what kind of men Pharaoh thought they were, but the Lord knew what kind of

man Pharaoh was, and He said: 'No! I will not have one single hoof of one single animal left in Egypt.' The mind of the Lord was absolute separation from this world and its authority. There was the great care of the Lord for these people. He had said to Moses: 'I have heard the cry of My people and have seen their distress.'

The Lord's desire to have His people completely separated is because He loves them. I think a lot of people, especially young people, have the idea that this teaching about separation is something that is not very happy. You have to give up the world, and you have to give up this . . . that . . . and the other thing. If you come out to be the Lord's people you are going to lose a lot. But this separation of Israel was an expression of the Lord's love and care for them. Our deliverance from this world and its power is because God loves us: and He wanted to give His people something better than ever they had had in Egypt.

Now you ask any true Christian about this and hear what they have to say! 'Yes, we as the Lord's people have really had to suffer many things. The way has not always been easy, and sometimes it has been very hard, but if you ask us whether we would rather have the world than the Lord and what He has given us, we would have no hesitation in giving you an answer. The Lord's love for us means more than anything else.'

Here, then, you have the mind of the Lord, the love of the Lord, and then you have the power of the Lord. It is a mighty thing that the Lord has done to make us His people!

Now let it be understood that we shall never get very far until this complete separation has been made. We have to remember that this is the way that the Lord Jesus went. He has gone right through all the difficulties, the sufferings and the sorrows, to the Father in glory, and the Father has filled Him with His heavenly fullness. The Father has answered His prayer. The Lord Jesus had prayed: "Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John xvii. 5), and that prayer has been fully answered. But on what ground was that prayer answered?

We have to go back to that temptation of the Lord Jesus in the wilderness. The prince of this

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world (that was the Lord's own name for Satan. He said "the prince of this world cometh"—John xiv. 30) came to Him and showed Him all the kingdoms of this world and said to Him: "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew iv. 9, 10). Jesus refused all the kingdoms of this world at the hands of Satan, and got them at the hands of His Father. Jesus fought this fundamental battle with the prince of this world. He refused to acknowledge Satan and his claims. It was a complete break with the prince of this world, and because of that He could go through to the glory.

Now Israel was called upon to take that position. That was the mind of God for them, but they failed to live up to it in the wilderness. Although they were positionally out of Egypt, they were not out conditionally. Or we can put that in another way: they were positionally out of Egypt, but Egypt was not out of them, so in the wilderness they failed to reach God's full mind for them.

Are you beginning to see the meaning of Jericho? They had come through the Jordan on to a new ground, and that new ground had come into them. It was the new ground of perfect harmony with the mind of God, and the first thing on the new ground was Jericho. Jericho was the full embodiment of this perfect purpose of God.

What is the dominant number of Jericho? It is number seven. You notice that Jericho was the gateway to the seven nations that were going to be overthrown. Then it was seven priests who were to take up the ark—that is, who were to take up the testimony of the greatness and glory of Christ. These seven priests were to have seven trumpets. Every one of them had a trumpet. This was a band of seven instruments. They were to go round Jericho seven times—once every day, but on the seventh day they were to go round seven times. You see what a prominent place this number seven had? Seven nations, seven priests, seven trumpets, seven days, and seven times on the seventh day.

Of course, a lot of you know the meaning of Bible numbers. I only have to remind you that seven is the number of what is spiritually complete, the fullness of what is spiritual. It is spiritual life from the dead, and is the fullness of spiritual power by resurrection. The ark here is the testimony to Christ's full victory and dominion. You see, everything in this story is at a discount except the ark. The only thing that is in power here is the ark. You may say that these seven nations are very strong, but before the ark they are as nothing. This ark is

going to lead the way to a complete victory over them all. The greatness and the glory of the Lord Jesus makes everything else as nothing.

Look at the people! And look at what they were told to do and what they were told not to do! I wonder what any general would say today if you told him to go to war like this! If you said: 'Now, look, here is this nation that you have to overcome', or 'Here are seven nations that you have to overcome. All you have to do is just to walk round quietly and blow your little trumpets. You do not have to draw any sword or fire one shot. You just go walking round quietly and let seven men blow trumpets. After you have done this for one week just shout, and it is all over.' I am glad that you smile, for it is so ridiculous, is it not? Perhaps some of the people on the wall of Jericho just looked down and laughed at these people, saying: 'Well, you just go on walking round for ever. Nothing will happen!'

What I am trying to say is this. This is a picture of human weakness, of human foolishness, of human nothingness. Do you remember what Paul said to the Corinthians? "God chose the foolish things of the world . . . the weak things . . . the things that are despised . . . and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are" (I Corinthians i. 27, 28). Everything here at Jericho speaks of that human weakness and foolishness . . . at least, everything but one thing—and that was the ark. The ark was a symbol of the greatness and glory of Christ, and Christ is perfectly capable of overthrowing all the other powers in this universe.

But before I come to the conclusion, let me emphasize one thing. Before that ark could manifest its power the Lord's people had to be on special ground, what is called in the New Testament 'heavenly ground'. This spiritual separation from the power of this world is essential to know the power of Christ. We have pointed out that the passage of the Jordan represented a separation from all self-sufficiency, and a standing on the ground where Christ, and Christ only, is our life and our sufficiency. This truth runs right through the New Testament. The Apostle Paul said: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (I Corinthians xii. 9). That is the great principle in the New Testament Christian life. The Lord has to empty us of our own self-strength. Before ever He can fill us with His strength He has to empty us of our own wisdom and make us feel that we are very foolish people, in order that His wisdom may be manifested in our lives. He has to bring

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us to nothing in order that He may be everything.

That is the meaning of Jericho. This is laid down as the foundation of the whole conquest of the land. If you are uncertain of that, you will soon see that if they just departed from that principle they were defeated. For the power, the greatness and the glory of Christ to rest upon us we must have no power, no greatness and no glory of our own.

Do not make any mistake about it. This is not a negative life. It is only negative where we in our own lives are concerned, but it is very positive where the Lord is concerned, for it is a life of the positive power of God.

I am going to finish where I began: It is a matter of our absolute committal to the Lord. In a gathering like this there are always four kinds of people. There are those who have never come out of Egypt and started on the way with the Lord, and we are very glad to have unsaved people with us for often they get saved. That has happened in more than one of these conferences, and I am told that it has already happened in this conference—some who were not on the road with Christ are now on that road. However, there are still those who have not started on the road, who have not given their lives to the Lord Jesus, and I hope that this conference will not finish before they have done so. That is one class of people.

A second class contains those whose position is a mixture of Egypt and the wilderness; I mean, a mixture of the world and Christianity. It says in the twelfth chapter of the Book of Exodus: "The children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth . . . and a mixed multitude went up also with them" (verses 37, 38). Apparently there had been mixed marriages, between the Hebrews and the Egyptians, and these people who were neither one thing nor the other went out with Israel. They were a multitude of those who were neither one thing nor the other. They had some of the world, and some of Christianity, and it may be that there are some people like that here tonight.

Then there are some belonging to a third class: those who have come out of Egypt, or are out of the world, on the ground of the Blood of the Lamb. They are the people who believe in the fundamentals of Christianity. They believe that Jesus died for them and their sins, that His precious Blood was shed for them, and that He is their Saviour. They have accepted Him by faith, but that is as far as they have got. They have just accepted the first things of the life in Christ. They believe in all the truths about Him: that He is the Divine Son of God, that He was born of the virgin Mary, that He lived a perfect life on this earth, that He was cruci-

fied and died, that He was raised from the dead, and that He is coming again. They believe all those things—but they believed them long years ago and have never moved further than that. Israel were like that in the wilderness, and went on like that for forty years. In effect, they just lived there for a whole lifetime and never went on further than that with the Lord. Perhaps there is that class here tonight. You have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, have taken Him by faith as your Saviour, and now you go to church every Sunday and read your Bible and pray every day. You do other things that are expected of you because you are a Christian, but your Christian life is just a daily routine like that, and if you were asked about your Christian life you would say: 'Oh, I was saved ten . . . twenty . . . thirty years ago.' There are multitudes of Christians like that! They form a very large category.

But then there is this fourth class: those who, like the people who went over Jordan, are going right through with the Lord to all the fullness of His purpose. They realize that this Christian life is a warfare, and, like these people over Jordan, they are going right on in the warfare until the final victory is won. Are you a Jericho Christian? Or are you a half-Egypt Christian? Or a half self-life Christian? Or are you a one hundred per cent the Lord's Christian? Can you say with the Apostle Paul: "One thing I do . . . I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"?

The Lord Jesus said there would be these four kinds of people. He put it into one of His parables—the parable of the Sower, who went forth to sow. One part of the seed fell by the wayside and the birds of the air came and took it away. Another part of the seed fell upon stony ground, and another part fell amongst thorns. All those three classes never came to fulfil the purpose of the sower. The devil did not have very much difficulty with some of them, for he could just come and snatch away the seed. They were not very careful about this matter. Then the cares and the affairs of this life, like thorns and thistles, swallowed up another part. The business and the pleasures of this world were more important to those people than the Word of God. Three categories never realized the purpose, and out of the four categories only one produced the result that the sower required, and that fourth class brought forth fruit "some a hundredfold, some sixty and some thirty". To which class do we belong? Are we determined that the Great Sower shall have all that He intended to have? That is Jericho: spiritual fullness, and all that will satisfy the Lord.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

"THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM"

5. THE LOVE OF GOD

"And he that spake with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth; and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal" (Revelation xxi. 15, 16).

FOR the sake of friends who have not been with us before let me just give this word of explanation. We are considering in these days the meaning of this new Jerusalem, this holy city, which the Apostle, in a vision, saw coming down from God out of heaven. We have pointed out that this is not a literal city, but a symbolic representation of Jesus Christ and His Church as God is going to have it at the end.

So now we come to the greatness of the city. The Apostle says that in his vision he saw an angel, in whose hand was a golden reed with which he was measuring the city, and then the Apostle tells us that the measurement was given by the angel—twelve thousand furlongs high and twelve thousand furlongs on every side. And the city was made of transparent gold. That, of course, is something that you have never seen on this earth! The reed with which the city was measured, and the city itself were of the same material: the measurement of the city was by a reed of pure gold, and the city itself was of pure gold. In the Bible gold is always the symbol of the Divine nature, and the supreme thing in that nature is love. It is this same John who says: "God *is* love" (I John iv. 8), and everything that is of God is measured according to the standard of Divine love. When we approached this city earlier in the chapter John told us that he saw "the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God", and the supreme thing about the glory of God is the love of God.

THE GREATNESS OF HIS LOVE

Now look at the size of this city. The measurement is given as twelve thousand stadia. I don't know whether any of you have worked that out, but in English that is one thousand, three hundred and seventy-nine miles, and in metres it is two million, two hundred and twenty thousand. Do you recognize what that represents? That is many

times higher than the Jungfrau, and, indeed, many times higher than the highest mountain in this world, Mount Everest. Do you understand now why I say this cannot be a literal city? It is as high as that, as long as that, as wide as that, and is as great as that on every side. This is impossible of literal interpretation, and must therefore represent spiritual principles.

Now understand that we are speaking about the love of God in Jesus Christ expressed in a redeemed people and manifested in its fullness in eternity. If this measurement is something beyond all natural conception, the love of God in Christ Jesus toward us is completely beyond our imagination, and this immense city is a symbol of the immensity of the love of God. The Apostle Paul mentions this in one place, when he prays that the Church may be "rooted and grounded in love", and that it "may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge . . ." (Ephesians iii. 17, 18). The love of God surpasses knowledge, just as this symbolic city is something altogether beyond knowledge. That is why we sang that hymn which is all about that Divine love:

"It passeth knowledge, that dear love of Thine . . .
Oh, fill me, Jesus, Saviour, with Thy love!"

It will require all eternity to understand that love.

Do you remember what the Apostle Paul says about this love? His description of how great this love is is that it is beyond the greatest things that are known in our human life. He says, in the eighth chapter of his letter to the Romans: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (verse 35), and here are some of the big things in human life: "Shall tribulation?" Perhaps you do not know very much about tribulation, but there are some of God's people in various parts of the world who do know the meaning of that word, and for them the second greatest thing in life is tribulation. "Or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" These are all very big things! If you know anything about them you know that they are bigger than anything else except the love of God. But the Apostle has not yet completed his list. He goes on like this: "I am persuaded, that neither death . . ." Is death a big thing? ". . . nor life"—and life is a

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big thing, for it can hold a great many big things—"nor angels . . ." Well, now, you will have to have a good Bible Study with that word! Read all the great things that angels did. On one occasion the earthly Jerusalem was besieged by a great foreign nation, who came with their chariots and their horses, and their men in armour, and they spread themselves like locusts over all the land. The servant of God prayed, and God sent one angel. In the morning, when the men of Jerusalem awoke, that whole army consisted of dead corpses. Only one angel—and a vast and mighty army lay dead! Shall angels separate us from the love of God, whether they be good or bad angels? "Nor principalities . . ." They are the spiritual authorities that govern the nations of this world, and you must remember that they are *spiritual* forces. They are evil forces, and today you are seeing what they are doing in the nations of this world. They are doing very terrible things: but the Apostle goes on: "Nor things present . . ." and there are plenty of things present today, enough to frighten anyone. It would not do for me to begin to speak of all these terrible things which are now present. We have read in our papers today of the assassination of the Prime Minister of South Africa, and that within the last few years twenty-six world rulers have been assassinated. These are only a few of the things which are now present. "Nor things to come . . ."—and the Bible tells us of terrible things that are going to come on this world. On he goes: "Nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation . . ." Think of anything that would be terrible and great, and the Apostle says: 'Put them all together and they will *not* be able to separate us from the love of God.' How great is the love of God!

This same John wrote in his Gospel: "God so *loved* the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). How great is His love!

It takes something that man cannot measure even to consider the love of God. These measurements of the city are only symbolic of the greatness of the love of God toward you and toward me in Jesus Christ, and when God has done His work in His people eternity will show how great His love was. We may not be able to grasp it or understand it now, but then we shall fully understand, and I think that the thing about which we shall all be talking for all eternity will be: 'Oh, how great was His love!'

Presently the Apostle will tell us who are outside of the city, for he says that there will be many outside. These are the people who never accepted

God's love, and for all eternity they have lost this wonderful thing—the immense love of God. What a great thing, therefore, it is for us to accept God's love!

THE STABILITY OF HIS LOVE

If these measurements represent the greatness of God's love, this immense city must be a very, very stable thing. It would be a very big thing to be able to move the Jungfrau, but if you put a hundred Jungfraus on top of one another, no Samson would be able to lift that! Here we come, year after year, year after year, and the mountain is still just in the same place. When I was a little boy I lived where there are some mountains, and I go back there now—and I won't tell you how long it is since I was a little boy!—and see the mountains in exactly the same place. They have not moved nor changed one little bit. You see what I am coming to—how reliable is this love of God! "They that trust in the Lord", said the Psalmist, "Are as mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever" (Psalm cxxv. 1). One of our New Testament texts says: "Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Hebrews xii. 22), and in spiritual language that just means: 'You are come to the love of God, which is unchanging and immovable.' Stability is a characteristic of Divine love.

The Lord Jesus has given us a picture of this in His well-known parable of the Prodigal Son. That son was a son of his father's love, but he despised it and packed up, and went right away from where that love was. He spent all his father's resources in sinful living and brought shame and dishonour upon his father's name. Then, at last he remembered his father's love and said to himself: 'I will arise'. He did not say: 'I will arise and go home', but: 'I will arise and go unto my father'. So he turned his footsteps toward his father again, and Jesus gives us the picture of the father on the top of the house looking to the horizon. I suppose that father had been praying every day: 'Lord, bring my son home.' So every day he went out to see if his prayer was being answered—and then this wonderful day arrived. He saw a black spot on the horizon and said: 'Someone is coming.' He watched, and then he said: 'It is my son!' He did not wait for the son to arrive. Down the stairs he went and out on to the road. The boy began to make some excuses and give explanations, but the father smothered it all and he could not get it all out. It says: "He (the father) fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke xv. 20). He brought the son back into the house and said: "Let us eat, and make merry: for

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this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." Now Jesus was saying: "That is the love of God for man, for sinful man, for man who has gone away from God. God's heart just longs to have that man back again." The unchanging love of God! The father did not say: 'He is a bad boy. He has not appreciated my love. I wash my hands of him and will have nothing more to do with him!' Oh, no, God's love does not change when we go wrong. How strong is this city! How immovable is this city! How unchangeable is this city! And all that is true of the love of God.

THE EQUALITY OF HIS LOVE

One more thing: I did not expect to be preaching the Gospel in this way this evening, but I have the feeling that this is what the Lord wanted said, and I think He wants us all to have a new understanding of the greatness of His love.

It says that this city is equal on all its sides. It is all the same on the east, on the west, on the north and on the south. The love of God is not bigger for people who live on the east than it is for people who live on the west. It is not different for those who live on the north from what is for those who live on the south. There are the people who have everything that they need and want. We say that they were born with a silver spoon in their mouths. On the other side there are the people who have nothing, the poor, miserable people of this world. There are

the people who live in the sun of the east and the people who live in the cold winds of the north. There are all kinds and conditions of people in this world, but the love of God is equal to them all. God has no favourites. There is no partiality about the love of God. It does not matter what we are, or where we are. On every side the love of God is the same. How equal is the love of God! Are you not glad that it is like that? There are those people who have all the advantages. They have godly parents and grandparents, were born into a Christian home and brought up in a Christian atmosphere. There are those people who never had any godly parents or grandparents. They were born into very sinful homes and families. You know, General Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, said a very strong thing about those people, and used a word that we don't like using: 'My work is for the people who were damned into this world!' Well, it does not matter which side it is. God's love is no greater for the people who have all the advantages than it is for those who have none. God's love is a very righteous love. It just levels everyone out, and in eternity it will not matter what we were here—we shall have to say: 'It is the love of God that got me here.'

The greatness of His love; the stability of His love; the equality of His love—how wonderful is the love of God! And you and I are called by that love that we, through eternity, shall show it forth to the whole universe.

CHRIST IN THE VESSEL

(Mark iv. 35-41)

"MAN'S extremity is God's opportunity." This is a very familiar saying. It often passes amongst us; and, no doubt, we fully believe it; but when we find ourselves brought to *our* extremity, we are often very little prepared to count on *God's* opportunity. It is one thing to utter or hearken to a truth, and another thing to realize the power of that truth. It is one thing, when sailing over a calm sea, to speak of God's ability to keep us in the storm, and it is another thing altogether to prove that ability when the storm is actually raging around us. And yet God is ever the same. In the storm and in the calm, in sickness and in health, in pressure and in ease, in poverty and in abundance—"the same yesterday, today, and for ever"—the same grand reality

for faith to lean upon, cling to, and draw upon, at all times, and under all circumstances.

But, alas! alas! we are unbelieving. Here lies the source of the weakness and failure. We are perplexed and agitated when we ought to be calm and confiding; we are casting about when we ought to be counting on God; we are "beckoning to our partners" when we ought to be "looking unto Jesus". Thus it is we lose immensely, and dishonour the Lord in our ways. Doubtless, there are few things for which we have to be more deeply humbled than our tendency to distrust the Lord, when difficulties and trials present themselves; and assuredly we grieve the heart of Jesus by thus distrusting Him, for distrust must always wound a

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loving heart. Look, for example, at the scene between Joseph and his brethren in Genesis 1: "And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him." It was a sad return to make for all the grace and love and tender care which the injured Joseph had exercised towards them. How could they suppose that one who had so freely and fully forgiven them, and spared their lives when they were entirely in his power, would, after so many years of kindness, turn upon them in anger and revenge? It was indeed a grievous wrong and it was no marvel that "Joseph wept when they spake unto him". What an answer to all their unworthy fear and dark suspicion! A flood of tears! Such is love! "And Joseph said unto them, Fear not; for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now, therefore, fear ye not; *I will nourish you, and your little ones.* And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them."

Thus it was with the disciples on the occasion to which our paper refers. Let us meditate a little on the passage.

"And the same day, when the even was come, Jesus saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship; and there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship asleep on a pillow."

Here, then, we have an interesting and instructive scene. The poor disciples are brought to their extremity. They are at their wits' end. A violent storm—the ship full of water—the Master asleep. This was a trying moment indeed, and assuredly we, if we look at ourselves, need not marvel at the fear and agitation of the disciples. It is not likely that we should have done better, had we been there. Still, we cannot but see wherein they failed. The narrative has been penned for our learning, and we are bound to study it and seek to learn the lesson which it reads out to us.

There is nothing more absurd and irrational than

unbelief, when we come to look at it calmly. In the scene before us, this absurdity is very apparent; for what could be more absurd than to suppose that the vessel could possibly sink with the Son of God on board? And yet this was what they feared. It may be said, they did not just think of the Son of God, at that moment. True, they thought of the storm, the waves, the filling vessel, and, judging after the manner of men, it seemed a hopeless case. Thus it is the unbelieving heart ever reasons. It looks only at the circumstances, and leaves God out. Faith, on the contrary, looks only at God, and leaves circumstances out.

What a difference! Faith delights in man's extremity, simply because it is God's opportunity. It delights in being "shut up" to God—in having the platform thoroughly cleared of the creature in order that God may display His glory—in the multiplying of empty vessels, in order that God may fill them. Such is faith. It would, we may surely say, have enabled the disciples to lie down and sleep beside their Master, in the midst of the storm. Unbelief, on the other hand, rendered them uneasy; they could not rest themselves, and they actually aroused the blessed Lord out of His deep sleep by their unbelieving apprehensions. He, weary with incessant toil, was snatching a few moments' repose while the vessel was crossing the sea. He knew what fatigue was; He had come down into all our circumstances. He made Himself acquainted with all our feelings and all our infirmities, being in all points tempted like as we are, sin excepted. He was found as a man in every respect, and as such, He slept on a pillow, and was rocked by the ocean's wave. The storm beat upon the vessel, and the billows rolled over it, although the Creator was on board, in the Person of that weary, sleeping Workman.

Profound mystery! The One who made the sea, and could hold the winds in His almighty grasp, lay sleeping in the hinder part of the ship, and allowed the sea and the wind to treat Him as unceremoniously as though He were an ordinary man. Such was the reality of the human nature of our blessed Lord. He was weary—He slept, and He was tossed on the bosom of that sea which His hands had made. Oh! reader, pause and meditate on this wondrous sight. Look closely, think deeply. No tongue, no pen, can do justice to such a scene. We cannot expatiate; we can only muse and worship.

But, as we have said, unbelief roused the blessed Lord out of His sleep. "They awake him, and say unto him, Master, *carest thou not that we perish?*" What a question! "*Carest thou not?*" How it must have wounded the sensitive heart of the Lord

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Jesus! How could they ever think that He was indifferent to their trouble and danger? How completely must they have lost sight of His love, to say nothing of His power, when they could bring themselves to say, "Carest thou not?"

And yet dear Christian reader, have we not in all this a mirror in which to see ourselves reflected? Assuredly we have. How often in moments of pressure and trial do our hearts conceive, if our lips do not utter the question, "Carest thou not?" It may be we are laid on a bed of sickness and pain, and we know that one word from the God of all power and might could chase away the malady and raise us up; and yet the word is withheld. Or, perhaps we are in need of temporal supplies, and we know that the silver and gold, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, belong to God, yea, that the treasures of the universe are under His hand; and yet, day after day rolls on, and our need is not supplied. In a word, we are passing through deep waters, in some way or another, the storm rages, wave after wave rolls over our tiny vessel, we are brought to our extremity, we are at our wits' end, and our hearts often feel ready to send up the terrible question, "Carest thou not?" The thought of this is deeply humbling. To think of our grieving the loving heart of Jesus by our unbelief and suspicion, should fill us with the deepest contrition.

And then the absurdity of unbelief! How can that One who gave His life for us—who left His glory and came down into this world of toil and misery, and died a shameful death to deliver us from eternal wrath—how can such an One ever fail to care for us? But yet we are ready to doubt, or we grow impatient under the trial of our faith, forgetting that the very trial from which we so shrink and under which we so wince, is far more precious than gold, for the former is an imperishable reality, whereas the latter must perish in the using. The more genuine faith is tried, the brighter it shines, and hence the trial, however severe, is sure to issue in praise and honour and glory to Him who not only implants the faith, but also passes it through the furnace and sedulously watches it therein.

But the poor disciples failed in the moment of trial. Their confidence gave way, they roused their Master from His slumber with that most unworthy question, "Carest thou not that we perish?" Alas! what creatures we are! We are ready to forget ten thousand mercies in the presence of a single difficulty. David could say, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul"; and how did it turn out? Saul fell on Mount Gilboa, and David was established on the throne of Israel. Elijah fled for his life at the

threat of Jezebel; and what was the issue? Jezebel was dashed to pieces on the pavement, and Elijah was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire. So here, the disciples thought they were going to be lost, with the Son of God on board; and what was the result? The storm was hushed into silence, and the sea became as glass by that voice which, of old, had called worlds into existence. "And he arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."

What a combination of grace and majesty is here! Instead of rebuking them for having disturbed His repose, He rebukes those elements which had terrified them. It was thus He replied to their question, "Carest thou not?" Blessed Master! Who would not trust Thee? Who would not adore Thee for Thy patient grace and unupbraiding love?

There is something perfectly beautiful in the way in which our blessed Lord rises, without an effort, from the repose of perfect humanity into the activity of essential deity. As man, wearied with His work, He slept on a pillow; as God, He rises and, with His almighty voice, hushes the storm and calms the sea.

Such was Jesus, very God, and very man; and such He is now, ever ready to meet His people's need, to hush their anxieties and remove their fears. Would that we could only trust Him more simply. We have little idea of how much we lose by not leaning more on the arm of Jesus, day by day. We are so easily terrified. Every breath of wind, every wave, every cloud, agitates and depresses us. Instead of calmly lying down and reposing beside our Lord, we are full of terror and perplexity. Instead of using the storm as an occasion for trusting Him, we make it an occasion of doubting Him. No sooner does some trifling trouble arise than we think we are going to perish, although He assures us that not a hair of our head can ever be touched. Well may He say to us, as He said to His disciples, "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" It would indeed seem, at times, as though we had no faith. But oh! His tender love! He is ever near to shield and succour us, even though our unbelieving hearts are so ready to doubt and suspect. He does not deal with us according to our poor thoughts of Him, but according to His own perfect love toward us. This is the solace and stay of our souls in passing across life's stormy ocean homeward to our eternal rest. Christ is in the vessel. Let this ever suffice. Let us calmly rely on Him. May there ever be, at the very centre of our hearts, that deep repose which springs from real trust in Jesus; and then, though the storm rage and the sea run mountains high, we shall not be led to say,

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"Carest thou not that we perish?" It is impossible we can perish with the Master on board, nor can we ever think so, with Christ in our hearts. May the Holy Spirit teach us to make a fuller, freer, bolder use of Christ. We really want this, just now, and shall want it more and more. It must be Christ Himself laid hold of and enjoyed, in the heart, by faith. Thus may it be to His praise and our abiding peace and joy!

We may just notice, in conclusion, the way in

which the disciples were affected by the scene on which we have been dwelling. Instead of the calm worship of those whose faith had been answered, they manifest the amazement of those whose fears had been rebuked. "They feared exceedingly and said, one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and sea obey him?" Surely they ought to have known Him better. Yes, Christian reader, and so should we.

C. H. M.

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PRAYER REMINDER AND REQUEST

May we earnestly ask our readers everywhere to pray much for the coming special ministries and gatherings?

July 24th to 30th

Camp Wabanna, Maryland, U.S.A. Ministry shared by Mr. DeVern Fromke, Mr. Stephen Kaung and the Editor.

August 5th to 9th

Indianapolis, U.S.A. The Editor.

September 9th to 18th

Aeschi, Switzerland, when we expect to have Mr. DeVern Fromke, Mr. Golsworthy and Mr. Lambert to share the ministry with the Editor.

LITERATURE NOTICES

Details are given at the end of the List of Literature overleaf of a recent reprint (CHRIST OUR LIFE) and of a new publication (THE MORE EXCELLENT

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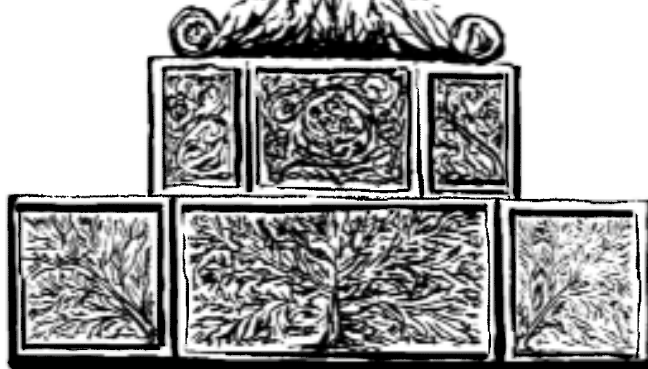
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THIS MINISTRY

THE OBJECT OF THE MINISTRY of this little paper, issued bi-monthly, is to contribute to the Divine end which is presented in the words of Ephesians iv. 13—" . . . till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge (literally—*full knowledge*) of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we be no longer children . . . "

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THE NEED FOR POSITIVE GROUND

"Certain men . . . taught, saying, Except ye . . . ye cannot . . ."

"There rose . . . the sect . . . , saying, It is necessary . . ." (Acts xv. 1, 5).

EXCEPT ye . . ." "It is necessary . . ."
 What history of confusion and frustration is bound up with that clause! Here in "Acts" we have the beginning of that history which has reached such immense proportions today. It is the slogan of numerous "Sects", parties, teachings, interpretations, and emphases. Every one of these, either explicitly or implicitly, by positive affirmation or by attitude and implication, says: "Except ye . . . ye cannot"! It is a barrier to fellowship, less or more. It throws believers into uncertainty, and uncertainty always means weakness, or worse. It was the first

and mightiest threat to the Church, and it became the battleground of the unity of God's people. The nature of this contention was that it was, firstly, based upon tradition. That is, there was originally something which had a principle of truth in it, and that *principle*, or germ, *could* have *organically* and *spontaneously* grown into a living spiritual body; but, at some point, had been taken into men's hands and crystallized into a set system and form. It was then handed down (Latin: *trans*, across; *dere*, to give = passed on) in that set form. With the extension of time it had become very hard, and people gave much credit to it on the ground of antiquity. The setness, and fixedness closed and bolted the door to further light, and created biases, prejudices, suspicions, fears, and—in some cases—bitterness and cruelty. It, in its fullest development, hampered and eventually crucified the Lord of

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

Glory. The Jews of Paul's day were totally incapable of believing that a man could separate himself from their tradition and, at the same time, be devoted to their well-being.

But it is not always to a long tradition that the divisive and limiting "Except ye" applies. It can govern any aspect or emphasis of either truth or error. Not least among the limitations of Christ's fullness is the unbalanced state resulting from an over and undue emphasis upon a particular aspect of truth. It may be an aspect which is essential, but if it is out of relation and proportion to all other essential aspects it will sooner or later 'run to seed' and defeat its own ends. So many "Excepts" cut off so much that is truly good and necessary, and close *everything* into their own complexion. What we have said so far is surely enough to indicate that just one expression—"Except ye . . . ye cannot"—can be the cause of deformity, limitation, confusion, and suspicion; to say nothing of exclusion and spiritual superiority, in the body corporate. It therefore becomes necessary for us to get away from what works out as negative ground (although it is so positive with those concerned with it) and seek to be strong on what is positive. In this matter we can snatch and steal the very term from the wrong usage to the right.

(1) THE BEGINNING OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

"Except a man be born again he cannot . . ." (John iii. 3, 5). That is a categorical imperative. Lest a certain easy acquiescence and agreement is the reaction to the statement in our relating and applying it to those who are obviously and unquestionably the sinners, the 'bad' people, the drunkards, thieves, murderers, drug addicts, and fornicators, let the force of the imperative hit us clean between the eyes: that this imperative was *not first* said to the poor woman taken in adultery, or to the Quisling tax-gatherer, Zaccheus, or to the dying thief, etc; but it was said to the teacher in Israel; a meticulous observer of the law; a Pharisee, the straitest of religious sects; a man who attended all the religious services and joined—conscientiously—in all the traditional ritual of the most religious of nations! The context of this declared necessity shows that by a repeated "How", even such a man was incapable of knowing the essential spiritual principles of the Kingdom of Heaven; hence the force of the "Except" and the "Must". At the very threshold and door of the Kingdom of God any and every man must be as though he were not yet born, and to enter he must be as one newly born. This necessity was repeatedly emphasised

by Christ to the Jews and their best representatives, and to His own disciples (see Matthew xviii. 3). This is very sure ground to begin with; but not only for belief; it is a truth to be "made more sure" by experience! Without that we shall never really be sure of anything. Given that, we shall be in a fairly certain position, like that of the healed blind man—"Whether (this or that) I know not. One thing I (do) know; whereas I was blind, now I see." 'You cannot shake me on that!' 'How?' 'Well, I cannot explain, but the fact, I know.'

(2) THE MAINTENANCE AND MATURING OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

"*Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves.*"

"*How can this man give us his flesh to eat?*" (John vi. 53, 52).

"*Except ye . . . ye have not . . .*"

If it is imperative that a new entity is demanded for entrance into the Kingdom of God *now*, it is equally imperative that such entities shall be sustained and matured. The New Testament is full and emphatic on this matter. In the miracle which led to the statement of the Lord it is clear that He both recognises this necessity and acts supernaturally to meet it. If the new birth is supernatural, so is the sustenance of the newborn. If we try to grasp either naturally, as did Nicodemus, we shall, as he, be defeated by the "How". The basic mystery was the plight of the Pharisees in John vi, as it was in the Pharisee of John iii. But it is not the method or process that is of primary concern, but the fact. And yet the "How" is answered in the New Testament. Let us first, however, get quite clear on this—that we have *got* to be fed in our new spiritual life for its maintenance as truly as the natural body has to have food. Then, it is as true in the spiritual as in the natural that normality is marked by growth unto maturity. And, finally, that full, abundant, provision is made for this by the Lord, even to twelve baskets' full over. Is it necessary at this point to take time to show that it is *not* normal to be born again and finish there? The whole New Testament is against such an idea or state!

But when we have said that, what of this "How" by which the imperative is answered, and the "Except ye" satisfied?

The superficial answer is—of course—feeding, and feeding on Christ. If many Christians were asked what that means, they would probably answer that it is feeding on His Word. Thus it might resolve itself into reading a 'portion' of the

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Bible every day. That is very good, and important; but is that what 'feeding' really is? Is it not *what Christ becomes to us through the Word*? Now this is an immense matter, because Christ is so immense, and by this 'feeding' an immense Body has to be brought to full-growth and stand complete in eternity. It is what Paul calls "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ". Here, we can only give an indication of what this feeding is, and it will point to much more.

It is all a matter of

WHAT CHRIST IS MADE UNTO US

I Corinthians i. 30 says: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." "Wisdom" here is inclusive. It is really: "Wisdom; both righteousness, sanctification, and redemption". These three things as the provision of the wisdom of God are all that ever man needs to bring him to full-growth and to glory.

What is the wisdom of God as made unto us in His Son? Wisdom is more than the theory of things. We may have a great deal of head knowledge and carry many academic degrees, but at the same time be totally lacking in wisdom. Cleverness is not always wisdom. Wisdom is the know-how to do things. The builder rendered his account for labour, time taken, and materials, but then added 50% for what he called "Knowing how to do it". When God's verdict upon *the entire human race* is that "there is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans iii. 10), and when every human effort and recourse to make a single man righteous (that is, to be in right standing with God) has utterly failed, a situation exists which raises an ultimate question of wisdom; the know-how!

That is only the beginning of the problem; it has to do with standing. Then the whole question has to be faced as to condition; the changing of man's

state. And finally, there is the big issue of his full and final redemption of spirit, soul and body. A new inner man; a new selfhood; and a glorious, sinless, incorruptible body. You will agree that no human wisdom can know how to do all this. Very well, then: it is here that God's provision in His Son becomes the answer. It is all this that is contained in the Bible that is food for our hearts. The Bible is all about this "Bread of Life come down from heaven" as the Life of the world. And it is here that the great "Except ye" comes in. That challenge comes up again and again very severely in the course of Christian life, especially when we are under acute pressure. When the reality of sin and righteousness arises because of adversity and trouble. When the Lord allows some severe suffering, and He seems to hide Himself and be silent. When, as in the case of the Bethany sisters, He is called in and stays away, seeming to be unsympathetic. Or when, like the disciples in the storm, He is asleep and seemingly uncaring. Then the accuser is quick and fierce to raise the question of sin and interpret the Lord's ways as His condemnation of us. Or, further on; as we discover really how imperfect we are, and what a long way we have to go to be really like Him; so that the whole question of sanctification lays our heart very low, even unto despair; and when the weakness, infirmities, and breakdown of this mortal body seem to becloud the hope of its redemption; then, what do we feed on? Do we, as is so easy, feed on ourselves, what we are or are not; on the adversities as being the end and the all? Then it is that what Christ is made unto us becomes our wisdom; righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Wisdom as God's 'know-how'. Righteousness over against our sinfulness. Sanctification as offsetting our falling short. Redemption as assurance that full and final deliverance for spirit, soul and body is assured because already secured in Him.

Oh, that we did feed more upon Him, and, in so doing, progress unto that ultimate!

THE UNVEILING OF JESUS CHRIST

2. THE FOUNDATION OF RECOVERED TESTIMONY

IN our first chapter our main point was that this book of the Revelation is, in its first section, a call-back to a position which had been lost by most of that representative body of first Christians. The first chapter must be read in that light, and it is that

fact which will most truly interpret its symbolical content. The following messages to the churches must also be related to the full presentation of Christ in chapter one. This will become clear as we proceed. We reached the point where we saw

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

that the "garment down to the foot" introduces all that follows as signifying the fullness and completeness of Christ as the standard for the Church and churches. More will be said about this later. For the present we are going to take a step backward, and a step forward because this full-stature description of Christ stands between two important fragments. Verse 5: "Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins in his blood", and verse 18: "I was (became) dead, and behold I am alive for evermore." These words, as we have said, form the boundary within which Christ in heavenly fullness is presented. This boundary, or basis, is something to be very carefully noted, for its significance is immensely important. Whenever God has moved for the recovery of the lost testimony (chapter i, verse 2) He has always called back to the Cross. That was always His starting-point, and any deviation will necessitate a return there. There are three very clear and strong instances in the Old Testament. These were in the reigns of Josiah and Hezekiah respectively, and, later, in the time of Ezra. In the revivals under Josiah and Hezekiah recovery was definitely related to the Passover.

Three features in that connection are noticeable:

(a) It is impressive and instructive that the two godly kings concerned were characterized by a clear perception as to the key to the prevailing spiritual weakness and complications. Not a 'conference' or 'convention' or 'convocation'. Not a 'round-table discussion'. Not an entertainment or 'holiday camp'. But a celebration of the Passover. A solemn yet joyful reaffirmation and celebration of the one fundamental and inclusive basis of their life as the people of God. The Passover had constituted them God's distinctive people, and it had, year by year, been the central power in their testimony. That both Josiah and Hezekiah discerned that this was the ground of resolving the so deplorable situation, and not any of the other methods resorted to since, is a very clear evidence of the sovereign guidance and instruction of the Spirit of God. The Passover had *all* the aspects and content of the Cross of Christ, just as the Lord's Table—or Supper—is the *inclusive* embodiment of everything foundational to New Testament Christianity.

In the case of Ezra, it has only to be pointed out that after the seventy years of Israel's exile, when the 'Remnant' returned, it was the altar which was the centre and focal-point of the recovery of testimony.

With the Church in the New Testament the testimony becomes definitely the Testimony of Jesus, and, as we are seeing, after decline at the end

of the apostolic period, the Lord works again for recovery by introducing and presenting Himself in terms of the Cross.

(b) The second thing noted in this method and means of revival and recovery is that the Passover was

THE ALL-UNITING GROUND

We know that in the times of Josiah and Hezekiah the nation was divided and in strong conflict; ten tribes against two. It would have been impossible to restore or get an expression of unity by any organizational recourse, or any friendly gesture. Jehoshaphat resorted to a compromise with Ahab, but with disastrous consequences. Hezekiah ignored the division and disunity and sent his appeal to ALL Israel. It is true that his call was met with laughter, scorn, and ridicule by some, but a great number responded favourably. "They made proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba even unto Dan that they should come to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel, at Jerusalem." What a tremendous lesson and principle this is with regard to all efforts to secure unity in broken Christendom, evangelical Christianity, and all realms of broken fellowship! It would truly work if all concerned really and truly understood and embraced the true meaning of the Cross—"Christ our Passover"!

No other ground or means will ever secure the kind of oneness mentioned by the High Priest as He was about to offer the one great sacrifice on the Cross (John xvii).

(c) There is the third feature which comes into view in those Old Testament instances of revival and recovery. It is that the Passover was

THE ALL-CORRECTIVE DYNAMIC

Idolatry was rife and widespread in the land. Altars and monuments to other gods were numerous. But nothing was said in the appeal as to these things. 'Come to Jerusalem and restore the Passover to its central place' was all that was mentioned. They came; the Passover was the one object and interest. It was a time of such blessing from God that nothing like it had been known for very many years. So blessed was it that the people wanted to extend the period beyond the appointed time, and they did. But that was not the end. As they returned to their own homes they passed those objects of false worship which had before been their life of devotion, and they smashed the lot! Nothing before would have displaced those altars and idols. But a taste of the real thing did what nothing else could

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do. How we ought to stand still and consider this! There are so many *things* which both divide us and account for our spiritual weakness, and all our efforts and plans to change that situation are so abortive and unsatisfactory. If only we could meet on the sole ground of the Cross—the infinite love and grace of God, so costly, and so eternally efficacious—and of an inward sight of our Redeemer-Saviour, the work would be done!

“I have seen the face of Jesus,
Tell me not of aught beside.”

The Cross, Christ crucified, is the great corrective.

How often we have said that if only our gatherings and gathering-place were full of the life and light of the Lord, and the power of the Cross was manifested in His gathered people, there would be a spontaneous forsaking of all that divides and

weakens the testimony! It is difficult to set down all that we see in this ultimate presentation of Him as alive, who became dead, and is risen for evermore.

What it amounts to, in the Passover and its counterpart or full unveiling, is that God must be ALL. That which takes His place, or divides place with Him—the idols of men—may just be *anything* which is of any consideration before or beside this one thing: is it wholly and undividedly the Lord and His glory? Our institutions, organizations, traditions, enterprises, even denominations, associations, etc., etc., may obscure or limit the Lord. The answer is a new, captivating, all-mastering and over-circling vision of Christ in all His Divine fullness and significance. The last movement before “Behold, I come quickly” *must* be a Christ-movement.

THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

12. DEFEAT AT AI

WE are going at this time to be in the seventh chapter of the Book of Joshua, which chapter, as you will know, contains the story of Israel’s defeat at Ai, but before we go on with that I want to refresh your memories with words from the Letter to the Ephesians:

“*Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*” (vi. 10–12).

We leave that there for a few minutes while we move toward this message in Joshua vii. I confess to you that I find this message perhaps the most difficult to explain. The story of Ai is quite a simple one, but to explain its spiritual meaning is not at all easy. All I can do is to set forth the principles that are here, and leave the Lord to make you understand.

As we are coming to the close of these meditations, I think it is important that we should understand why they are written. They are not just for general Christian purposes, nor just to give Bible teaching. The special purpose of these messages is to help Christians in relation to the *full* purpose of their

calling. I underline and emphasize that word “full”. The Lord’s people are called in relation to the *fullness* of His purpose. We have been emphasizing the changes which take place in the position of the Lord’s people and, not only in the position, but the changes in the Lord’s people themselves. In the Old Testament we see this illustrated in the three different positions of the people of God.

Firstly, Israel’s position in Egypt. The Lord has a people in this world. It is said in the New Testament that He visited the nations “to take out of them a people for his name” (Acts xv. 14). So in the nations there is a people known to God whom He is going to take out of the nations, just as He took Israel out from among the nations. The Lord has been doing this for the last two thousand years, and He is still doing it today. It may not be very long before He has completed that people. That is the first position.

The second position is that represented by Israel in the wilderness. There, by the power of God and the virtue of the blood of the lamb, they were taken out to be God’s people. Their position was that of people redeemed unto God and separated from the world. That was a Divine step forward in the life of the people of God.

The third position is that represented by the people in the land of promise—and let me say at once that that does not represent our going to heaven after this life. So many of our hymns speak

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

about Jordan as being between this life and the next. Of course, you will go on singing those hymns, all about when the time comes to pass over Jordan, but that is not the teaching of the Bible. Jordan is in the life of the Lord's people *now*, and the promised land is our life now with the Lord Jesus in heavenly places. It is the difference between the Letter to the Romans and the Letter to the Ephesians—but we are going to speak about that later on.

Well, here are three positions of the Lord's people, and they represent three different levels of spiritual life. The lowest level is in the world; the next level upward is in the wilderness; and the top level is in the land. The spiritual history of the Lord's people is one of going up.

Now note this other thing: the Lord deals with His people according to the position in which they are. If you are in Egypt, that is, in the world, all His dealings with you will be to get you out of Egypt. If your position is in the wilderness, that is, if you have come out to be the Lord's people, the precious Blood of the Lamb of the Passover having redeemed you from the world, the Lord will be dealing with you according to that position. There we have the whole history of the Lord's dealings with His people in the wilderness. He adjusted His dealings with them according to the position in which they were, but all His dealings with them were always with something in view. Of course, what I have just said wants a lot of time spent on it—all the way in which the Lord dealt with His people in that place between the world and the fullness of His purpose.

What I am saying is this: God deals with us according to the position in which we are spiritually, and I want you to notice that the more the people of God come toward His full purpose, the more exact He is. That is the message of Ai, but I must go back for the sake of the young Christians.

If we are only newly out of the world and have become the Lord's, He will deal with us according to that position. In a sense, He will come down to our position. He will be dealing with us as with children, and not as with full-grown men; and yet, a father always deals with his children with the idea of making them full-grown men or women. As we go on with the Lord, He will be dealing with us in different ways. He will be changing His ways with us. We shall find that things which we were once able to do, we are no longer able to do. That is, the Lord once allowed us to do some things, but now He is not allowing us to do them. The situation is changing, and the methods of God with us are changing. We shall find, as we go on with the Lord, that He is disciplining us, and the discipline will

be the greater difficulties which arise in the way.

When we first come to the Lord what a good time we have! Everything seems so wonderful and so good; but as we go on with the Lord, it is not that He becomes different. We had such a happy time in those early days, but now Father says: 'The time has come for you to go to school.' Perhaps we say: 'Oh, can I not stay at home from school?', and we get afraid of the prospect of school life. We know that we are going to have a Schoolmaster who will say: 'You have got to learn this lesson!' Our position is changed, and our experience is changed.

Now I wonder what you are going to say to this next thing! As you look back upon your school life, are you prepared to say: 'Well, this idea of education was a bad invention! The person who first thought of this school business ought to be put in prison!' Some of you may feel like that, but would it be a good thing for everyone in this world to be just an ignorant child? No, there is a real value about education. It may represent many difficulties, but on the whole we are glad we went to school. We had to find that our changed position needed a changed dealing with us, and in the end it works out for good.

When we come over Jordan into the land we find that we have come into an altogether new position, and it is a position where we have very largely graduated from school. That does not mean that we have ceased to learn. We have not finished schooling because we have graduated from school. All that has been only now serves the purpose of a new kind of education.

All that leads us up to Ai, and as we go on you will see the meaning of what I have been saying. I used to think that the story of Ai was of something not quite so big as anything else. Of course, the conquest of Jericho was a big thing, and from there you go on to Ai, which is not so big. You just read the story, and then you go on further. However, the more I have thought about Ai the more I have seen what a tremendous thing it is. You see, Ai stands for this: whether all that God means in the new position is going to be or not going to be. Ai therefore relates to the whole of this new position.

Everyone knows the difference between the Letters to the Romans and Corinthians and the Letter to the Ephesians! Romans and Corinthians have to do with beginnings and foundations, and with formation. They see the Lord's people in the position that Israel occupied in the wilderness, where they were being formed for the future. When you come to the Letter to the Ephesians, while you carry over the lessons of the past, you are in an

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altogether different realm. If you sit down and read the Letter to the Romans, then the Letter to the Corinthians, and then the Letter to the Ephesians, you would feel, as you read Ephesians, that you are breathing an altogether different atmosphere. Romans and Corinthians are like being down here on the earth, and Ephesians is like being in the heavenlies. Indeed, that is the word of Ephesians. This is a new position for the people of God. Here they are represented as having passed over Jordan. In Ephesians the people are represented as 'seated together with Christ in the heavenlies.' That is a spiritual and not a literal position. They are represented as walking here in a heavenly life, and most of all they are represented as being engaged in spiritual warfare. In Corinthians the people were wrestling with flesh and blood, and that is why the divisions at Corinth are referred to. One party was in opposition to the other party, and there was conflict between the different groups of the Lord's people. They were going to law against one another, and they were doing many other things that men on this earth and in this world do. That was an earthly Christianity, but when you get into the Letter to the Ephesians you have left all that, and Paul says: 'Here our wrestling is not with flesh and blood. It is not with men and women, nor in sects and denominations, nor with the divisions and parties of the Lord's people. When we get into this position our wrestling is with principalities and powers, and with the world-rulers of this darkness'—and if you have the idea that that refers to Caesar, or the Caesars, the Apostle will correct you by saying: 'with hosts of wicked spirits.' That is the kind of warfare that we have when we move into this new position with the Lord. In the highest position of the spiritual life we come more intimately into touch with the evil spiritual forces.

Now, if that sounds very terrible, do not worry about it. There is no need for fear, because Jericho lies behind, and Jericho, as we have seen, is the type of the complete spiritual victory of the Lord Jesus over all the powers in the land. So complete was His victory that the people had to do nothing about it; all they needed was to have faith. And so it says: "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down" (Hebrews xi. 30). The mighty ark of the testimony of the greatness and glory of Jesus Christ was triumphant at Jericho, and He who was represented by the ark triumphed over the whole range of Satan's power in His Cross. So we need not have any fear as to whether the enemy is going to triumph in the end, but we must realise that we are in a warfare, that we must be girded with 'the whole armour of God', and that we must be very watchful. This new

realm, then, is one in which we enter a special kind of spiritual conflict.

Now let us come to Ai for our lessons. After the great victory at Jericho the people were completely defeated at Ai. I wish that all the details in the seventh chapter of Joshua were fresh in your minds! If you are not familiar with them, I advise you to read the chapter again, and then what I am saying will come back to you.

This that happened at Ai represented a retrogressive movement on the part of Israel. It is true that what happened was caused by one man only, and that man was Achan, but the Lord did not say: 'Achan has sinned.' He said: "*Israel* hath sinned" (verse 11). Achan's lesson was to be learned by all Israel—and all the people of God have to learn this lesson through Achan. Perhaps you say: 'Well, it is hardly fair that if one man sins all the people have to suffer', but that is not the situation. We shall see in a minute that all the people were involved in this. We have said that this was a movement of retrogression, going back, and it went back a very long way. It went back over the Jordan again, right back through the wilderness, right back through the four hundred years in Egypt—and right back to Adam.

Let us look at this seventh chapter of Joshua, and we hear Achan making his confession: "And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Of a truth I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: when I saw among the spoil a goodly Babylonish mantle, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them" (verses 20, 21). Can you hear something coming from the garden of Eden? 'I saw . . . I coveted . . . I took.' The Lord had said to Adam: "Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis ii. 17). Adam did eat, and said, in effect: 'I saw . . . I coveted . . . I took.' That is going back a long way! But where do you put the emphasis? 'I'! 'I saw . . . I coveted . . . I took.' The self-life has taken command, and where did that come from? Before ever Adam sinned another one had sinned, and that other one said: "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; . . . I will be like the Most High" (Isaiah xiv. 13, 14). That was the very spirit and motive of Satan.

Well, poor Achan had become a victim of Satan, and will God allow that? You see, the very Jordan itself meant that these people were entirely separated from the self-life. The ark in the middle of Jordan represented a division between the self-life of the people and the Lord's life in them.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

I have not the time to speak about the details—that is, as to the Babylonish garment and the silver. They represent a link with Satan's kingdom. But I would remind you of the gold: the Lord claimed it all. Just look at Joshua vi. 18: "And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the devoted thing, lest when ye have devoted it, ye take of the devoted thing; so should ye make the camp of Israel accursed, and trouble it. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are holy unto the Lord." The gold represented the glory of God, and Achan, in type, took the glory from God to himself.

This is a very great lesson for the people of God. All the glory has to be the Lord's glory. Later on we shall be glorified together with Him, but now we are to suffer with Him, and the suffering is having no glory here in this world. But Achan took the glory to himself, and God says: "My glory will I not give to another" (Isaiah xlii. 8). In this realm of spiritual warfare Satan tries to take the glory to himself, so are you surprised that there is so much spiritual defeat amongst the Lord's people? They are always trying to give glory to man in their Christian work. If they are going to have some special meetings they will advertise the chairman as being some very great man—a General or a Field Marshal, or a 'Sir' or a 'Lord'. Organized Christianity rests upon this principle of giving glory to man, so you are not surprised that the Lord is so limited, and, as with Achan, death comes upon so much of our Christianity.

Go back to the Book of Deuteronomy, where

Moses says to the people: "Beware . . . lest when thou hast eaten and art full . . . and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply . . . thou say in thine heart, *My* power and the might of *mine* hand hath gotten me this wealth" (viii. 11–13, 17). When the spies which Joshua sent from Jericho to Ai came back, they said: "The men of Ai are but few. It is not necessary for all our men of war to go up against them. Just let two or three thousand go up and smite them."

Do you see what has happened? '*We can do it!*' Here is self-sufficiency! And the men of Ai came out against them and there was a great slaughter amongst Israel that day. The whole thing was arrested. It was a retrogressive movement, back to self-sufficiency.

We cannot treat this enemy with contempt. A very few evil spirits will be more than enough for our strength, and that is why I underlined those first words in Ephesians vi. 10: "Finally, *be strong in the Lord*, and in *the strength of his might*." We shall be easily defeated in this heavenly warfare unless our faith is in the Lord.

I have not mentioned the place of the ark in Ai, but it was the ark that decided this whole issue. Do you not agree with me that Ai is a very big issue? All the past leads up to Ai, and all the future depends upon Ai—that is, upon whether we learn the lessons of Ai.

(To be continued)

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

GETTING THINGS DONE

HOW does one remove screws which have been rusting in for so many years that they refuse to budge? This was Mr Abel's problem, and after struggling for a time with a screwdriver he was no nearer to the answer.

Brute force would never do it. In fact, it might easily break the head of the screw and so make the case quite hopeless. He wondered whether to try to lever off the metal plate which the screws held, but knew that this would damage the woodwork and might even spoil the whole window frame.

What was the answer? The screws had to come out to remove the metal bracket, and yet they could not be moved. There must be something to help

him. He had a vague idea that it might be possible to use penetrating oil to loosen them, but for the life of him he could not imagine how such oil could be forced into the right place, even if he had it.

In his difficulty he remembered a scientist friend who did not live very far away, so off he went to his friend's house to ask for good advice.

The friend did not fail him. After listening carefully to Mr. Abel's problem he suggested that heat would do it. "Make a poker red-hot", he advised, "and then hold it on to the head of the screw until that has become hot, too. The heat should make it expand and press back the wood, then, when it is

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cold again, it will be reduced to its normal size and so be looser."

Now Mr. Abel was no scientist, but he knew enough to recognize that this was good advice. Many years ago he had seen an experiment to show that metals expand when heated. Yes, that was it, expansion and contraction. It sounded very likely, but then his friend nearly spoiled it by adding: "I have never tried it myself, but it ought to work."

On his way home Mr. Abel began to have his doubts. Was this, after all, only a theory? There was no doubt that metals expand and contract. He had been glad to have the advice. But would it work? He wondered.

Well, at least he could try even if he was gloomy about the prospect. It did not take him long to get the poker red-hot, so he could soon be seen on a step-ladder, holding the end of the poker against the head of the screw. He felt rather foolish, standing like that, and when other members of the family heard that Father was trying to get a screw out with a poker, he felt even more foolish. However, he said nothing, but when the poker cooled off he got down from the steps and waited. Would the screw move now? He longed to try at once, but knew that the secret lay in letting it get cold again, so he had to wait.

At last the moment came. Mr. Abel pressed hard with his screw-driver, but it refused to move. And

then, slowly it moved just a little. Then the screw began to turn. It had worked! The metal really had expanded and contracted enough to be moved out of the wood in which it had been embedded for so long. With a sigh of pleasure Mr. Abel took it out, and then began to reheat the poker for the other screw. In due course that also let itself be taken out, so it was a very triumphant Mr. Abel who told his family that the job was done.

For many years he had known the scientific lesson, but it had never given him any pleasure to know about it. The thrill was to put it into practice and to prove that it worked.

This is just what the Lord Jesus promised concerning the lessons which He taught. He did not say that it was good to know them, but He did say that if we listen and then obey, we shall get a real blessing. Mr. Abel's scientist friend knew all about it and could give good advice, but he had not proved it, whereas Mr. Abel himself not only listened and agreed with what was said, but he did it.

"If ye know these things", the Lord told His disciples, "happy are ye if ye do them" (John xiii. 17). It is important that we should not only enjoy hearing what the Bible says but be sure to do it; then we shall have truly lasting enjoyment.

H. F.

POWER WITH GOD (V)

EXEMPLIFIED IN SAMUEL

A PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD

"Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind would not be toward this people" (Jeremiah xv. 1).

"Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the Lord, and he answered them" (Psalm xcix. 6).

"And the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not; for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king. And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have indeed done all this evil; yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart: and turn ye not aside; for then would ye go after vain things which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain . . . Moreover as for me, far be it

from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will instruct you in the good and the right way" (I Samuel xii. 19-21, 23).

WE come now to the fifth and, for the time being, the last of these representative men who stand in that relationship with God which is acknowledged by Him to be one which has great weight and great power with Him. In our previous meditation we were seeing what Moses represents as to the ground of God's power put into operation. Moses stood at the beginning of Israel's national life. His work was mainly the shaping of the rough material, the raw clay, into a vessel for God, and he found it hard work.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

THE SITUATION WHICH CONFRONTED SAMUEL

When we come to Samuel, we come to the point where that vessel is marred in the hand of the potter, and there are extra and even more difficult conditions. Samuel's work was with a vessel which was not being made from the beginning, but with a lot of material that had gone all wrong. It is important for us to recognize exactly where Samuel stood, and that with which he was confronted, in order to see the specific and peculiar significance of his ministry, and therefore in what way he represents power with God.

There were many features which made Samuel's time very much like our own, and therefore many features in our own time which are very much like his time. His was a time when the people and the work of God were not upon God's essential basis. They were on a secondary line and basis, which was only accepted by the Divine sovereignty. It was being governed and ruled, and, as far as possible, blessed, in the sovereignty of God; but it was not immediately in the thought of God. Taking Saul as an illustration of that as a part of a much greater whole, it is perfectly obvious that Saul was not God's essential thought. But God went as far as He could in the acceptance, the recognition, and the blessing of Saul, and in using Saul and that order of things which obtained in his days. God just did the best He could. But it was not His real mind. It was secondary, and it only came within His purview at all on the ground of His sovereignty. God sovereignly uses and, so far as He can, blesses whatever there is in existence—but, oh! that it might be otherwise! That is His attitude, and that is clearly seen as to the Lord's and Samuel's attitude toward the whole order of things in those days.

A SITUATION AKIN TO THAT OF OUR DAY

It does not require a great deal of spiritual understanding, perception, enlightenment and education to see how akin to that time is our own. There is, so far as what is of God on this earth is concerned, something of which God is taking account, is allowing, is accepting in a sense; He is using it, He is blessing it, He is going as far as He can, but it is only just as far as He can. He cannot wholly commit Himself to it. It is a secondary idea. He has His own thought, but His people are not in the good of that. I cannot very well go further than that statement. It is a general statement, but I say that you do not need a great deal of perception to see that God is limited, and if you are

at all exercised and concerned about the situation—that is, about the effectiveness, the fruitfulness, the permanence, the purity, the power of what is related to God on this earth—and troubled that it does not go further, then you should look into it from this standpoint: is it on a secondary line, or does it correspond to God's original and full thought as to His way, His means and His purpose? Well, read about the times of Samuel and you see how restrained, limited and straitened God was, and therefore, what an unsatisfactory state—to say the least of it—existed amongst the Lord's own people. That is the setting of Samuel, and that really is the key to the whole situation: something which God uses as far as He can because there is nothing else, and because the real thing has been lost.

There are a lot of things in the whole course of the Christian era, from those early New Testament days which are not God's thought as to how the work of God should be done, by what means, on what basis, according to what principles, which He has blessed and used, and is still doing so, but they represent a limitation to the Lord because they are secondary. And that is where we are! There is no doubt about it. That is Samuel's situation, and because he had to contend with such a situation we see the significance of his life.

SAMUEL AGAINST THE SECONDARY AND FOR THE PRIMARY

What was that significance? Samuel came in at a time like that to stand in the midst of it; on the one hand against something secondary, and on the other hand for something primary. I think his life is summed up in that. Samuel did not wholly accept Saul, and he was inclined to have absolutely nothing to do with the idea of a king, so that the Lord had to say to him: 'Samuel, they have not rejected you; they have rejected Me' (I Samuel viii 7). Samuel was not going to have anything to do with this, and the Lord had, in other words, to say sovereignly: 'We cannot have what we would have, but we will allow this. We know how it will work out; nevertheless, give it a chance, facilitate it as far as you can.' Samuel had that secret with the Lord all the time. He knew how it would work out, and he was not accepting it. He was there to hold things for God's primary, full thought amongst His people. That is what he represents.

Now we are going to break that up, and I want to do so very simply. I do want that the Lord should get this across in very definite ways, in simple ways. When things are like that, when there is a lot of

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history in the background, a lot of tradition, and the things of God and the people of God have become very mixed and confused, and are not clear, precise, definite, distinct in relation to God, what does God have to do if He is going to be true to Himself, to His own thought, to His own intention, and go on without committing Himself to a lower level, a lower standard, and wholly compromising and surrendering? If He is going to react again to His full intention, what will He do in such a day? He will do exactly what He did with Samuel—and I do hope you are not just following this with an objective mentality, thinking back to Samuel and his day, or looking out in a sort of nebulous, abstract way. I do hope that as we go on, step by step, you are putting yourself right into this. If it is true that the situation in our day is very similar to the situation in Samuel's day, so far as the Lord's people and the Lord's work are concerned, that represents a loss to the Lord, something other than the Lord intended to have at the beginning of the dispensation, and we have to come to some position about it and ask ourselves: Is God going to accept that as final? Is He going to settle down and just take that attitude, saying: 'Well, we can have no more. We will be thankful if we can have half a loaf if not a whole one, so we will leave the other.' We do not believe that is God's attitude.

A NEW BEGINNING

If it is like that, then in such a time God must react to the situation. His reaction will be on the same line as it was in the case of Samuel—and what was it in his case? Well, firstly, Samuel was a new start in himself. That is a simple way of putting it, but it is very precise. He was a new start in himself. Samuel was not a child of tradition. He could not be; it was impossible. A miracle from heaven had to be worked to bring Samuel into this world at all. There was no open way for Samuel to come into this world. He began at a grave, a place of death. You know what I am referring to in the case of Hannah. Oh no, this is not a succession, this is not taking up a tradition, this is not just following on something that has been. This is a new beginning. Right from zero, right from death, he in himself is a new beginning. He does not take things up with a background of inheritance. God has taken precaution against that in His sovereignty again. The impossibility of Hannah having that child was God's sovereignty in relation to His purpose. Nothing could have been at all but by a special act of God. There is no carry-over from the past, no link at all. It is a clean-cut, new beginning.

You are wondering how that is going to be applied. It can be applied in various ways, and quite simply, too. Perhaps most of you have a tradition. You say: 'Well, I am out of it. I do not come into this, for I have a tradition.' Yes, many of us had a tradition. I suppose everyone who comes into Christianity comes into a tradition; but, you know, God can do something in a life with a very big tradition to cut them clean off from their tradition and bring them to an end of it. They can make a completely new start, and if He is going to do the kind of thing that He did with Samuel, He is going to do that. But is He not doing it? Some of you young people have been born into Christian homes and have been brought up in godly surroundings, and you have received a great deal of your Christianity secondhand. How you view that, I do not know. I used to think that if only I had had a long line of godly people behind me, it would be a tremendous asset. I have changed my mind about that. I used to think that the men who were 'sons of the manse' had all the advantages. I was not a 'son of the manse', and therefore I was handicapped. I have changed my mind about that. Your tradition, even your Christian home, may be a handicap to you. You may have got a lot secondhand and it may not be yours at all; it may be your parents'. You have taken it over. It may have become just a straitjacket to you, or it may be an altogether false position where you are concerned and it is not yours right from the beginning. What is God doing with you? Is He not putting you into positions and situations and taking you through experiences where father's or mother's religion is no use and you have to have your own? The knowledge of God which has been given to you and which may have helped you in the matter of counsel and influence in your childhood does not stand up to the situation now. You have to know God for yourself, and unless you do, you are not going through. You know quite well that if you are going to be of real value to God you must not be just a child of tradition; you have to be born right 'out of the blue' and know God right there from zero. That is the application of this.

That application, I say, is made in various ways and various stages. The trouble with a lot of people is that they will not hand up their tradition to God and let Him transcend all that is merely secondhand and bring them from zero into something of Himself. They are clinging to their accepted, already-made beliefs and doctrines, and God has His great difficulty there. He has to say, in effect: 'All right, I cannot do anything here. I must go and work where I have a chance.' If God is going to do today

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

what He did in Samuel's day, somehow there has got to be that clean cut in between what is merely tradition and what is experience, what is secondhand and what is firsthand, what has come to us from the outside and what has come to us inside.

You can see how true this was with such men as Paul. What a tradition! What an inheritance! What a history! Ah, but what a break right down to death and starting all over again! He said: "It was the good pleasure of God . . . to reveal his Son in me" (Galatians i. 15-16). That is the beginning. We need not enlarge upon it. This is the very first thing. God needs men and women, a vessel which is not constituted upon something secondhand, although that something may be true and right and of Himself. Do not despise it, but remember that is not good enough. You have got to have it from the beginning in yourself, and God would do that. He can do it, and some of us know how drastically He can do it. We have had a big tradition; we have had it all and been in that whole history and realm, and then an end was brought, and so complete that it was beginning all over again, even although we were preachers and in the full flood of Christian work and activity—an end, and a new beginning, everything born right out from God in a new way. Well, something like that is necessary. The Lord will have his own way of doing it. You ask Him to do it. Your transaction with the Lord must be this: 'Lord, give me firsthand knowledge of Yourself. Bring me into the place where everything is living between You and myself, and where I know You for myself.' You may go through it, but God will do it. It is essential.

Do you brethren—those of you who have had years of experience—agree with me that one of the paralyzing handicaps today is a fully-fledged, established system of Christian doctrine which is taken up in a secondhand way and propagated? Put that round the other way. Is not the weakness of today the inability of men to come forth and say: "Thus saith the Lord! The Lord has spoken to me and He has spoken to me today! I am not speaking about stuff that I have been collecting, gathering up from books and libraries. God has spoken to me, and this is what He is saying." Do you not feel there is a need of men to come out with a message straight from God? What is being given? So much that is secondhand, so much tradition, so much long-established truth, but it is not alive and crucial in the hearts of the preachers. That is the situation. God must begin again. Samuel represents a new start, and a new start in himself.

A PERSONAL LIFE WITH THE LORD

And going hand-in-hand with that is this: Samuel represents a personal life with the Lord; not only a new start in himself, but a personal life with the Lord. The Lord did not let him off. He did not say to Eli: 'Go and tell Samuel. Samuel does not understand. He is a little child and you must teach him.' God called *Samuel*. It was one of those double calls of God which made it emphatically personal: "Samuel, Samuel." The only thing that Eli, with his long experience, could do was to tell Samuel to get personally into touch with the Lord—"You say, 'Speak, Lord!'" . Samuel is just that. It is very simple, but it is a wonderful and mighty thing—a personal life with God. No one will bring God in power to meet and to change situations which are not according to His mind and satisfying His heart who has not a personal life with God. Have you a personal life with God, so that you are outgrowing a lot of things? There was a time when you picked up a spiritual book and got a lot of help from it. You now always think of that book as a wonderful book, for it meant so much to you. After a year or two you pull that book down again. Where has it all gone to? There is nothing to bite on! Where did you get all that help from? You have outgrown it. Yes, it belonged to a certain stage, but not now. I use that only as an illustration. Have you that personal life with God which means that you are outgrowing your spiritual clothes all the time? The clothes that were all right at one point are no use any longer. Have you a growing personal life with the Lord? Are you living upon the past—even of your own experience? Are you living upon meetings, upon conferences, upon addresses, upon someone else's help? All these things are good, but if you live on these things and they are the beginning and the end—well, conferences will soon fade out. You see, the very strength and value of a conference is that there are living people together, people who are moving with God and who are growing. It is a living thing. Is it like that with you? Are you sure you have a personal life with God, that God is speaking to you, dealing with you in your own life, that He has His hand upon you and He is doing something in you? It may be a painful thing—perhaps one or more of a whole lot of things—but you know that God is active in your life and is doing something.

On the one hand, He is undoing, He is weakening, taking away your own strength and stripping you of your own sufficiency, but, on the other hand, He is making Himself known. Oh, young people, let me beg of you to take this to heart. It is so

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wonderfully and gloriously possible for every one of you, the youngest and the simplest, the one who has the greatest complex of inferiority, to know the Spirit of God working and speaking in your own life so that you can say: 'The Lord would not allow me to do that. The Lord checked me up on that. I know the Lord spoke to me about that.' That is Samuel! It is simple, I say, but it is essential if God is going to do something effective. He must have a people walking with Himself. That does not admit of any independence and unrelatedness and freelance line of things where you say: 'God has spoken to me and I therefore brush aside all that others have to say about it and I recognize no authority in the Church.' God will never do that. Because you have a personal walk with God, it does not mean that He makes you a law unto yourself spiritually. That is a misapplication of this principle. Well, do please take this to heart. Do have very definite dealings with the Lord. 'Lord, I must know you dealing with me, speaking to me.' There are times in your life when God allows you to do certain things, but as you move on with Him you know that no longer does He allow that. God overlooked it in the times of your ignorance, but now He is not accepting it, and you know it.

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD IN HIS DISSATISFACTION

Samuel had a personal life with God. These two things—an absolutely new beginning in himself and a personal life with God—led to Samuel being a link with God in the Divine discontent, the Divine dissatisfaction and the Divine reaction. God was not satisfied. What does Eli know about that? What do the other people know about that? They are going on; they have no registration of God's dissatisfaction and discontent. God is not having it and is reacting, but they are insensitive to His feelings. That is the state of things. They simply go on with the form of things. Yes, they are having their services in the tent of Shiloh, they are still carrying on their round of meetings and sacrifices and priestly orders, but they are not troubled or disturbed with a disturbance of God in their hearts. They simply go on, and, I say again, there is a lot like that today. Samuel, because of the things which we have mentioned, came immediately into a sensitive, conscious, intelligent union with the dissatisfied heart of God, and that night in the temple God made known to him that dissatisfaction. It involved him in difficulties and in most painful courses. It was no easy thing for a young one like that to go and have to tell the old what God thought about the situation. But Samuel was

brought so much into the heart of God that he was able to be perfectly loyal to God and hold nothing back. We will give Eli credit for this: that he compelled Samuel to tell him what God had said, and Eli accepted it, though tragically.

MINISTRY OUT OF A BURDENED HEART

But here the point is this: when God gets that foundation with Himself, then there begins to arise in those concerned a sense of things not being right. It is not just that outward discontentedness, "agin the Government" kind of thing—criticizing and judging and superiority. Oh, dear friends, anything of the pedestal judgment is foreign to what I am talking about. It is utterly in a different world. But there is that deep heart pang, the echo of God's disappointment, dissatisfaction, something that you feel God's Spirit is grieved about: it is suffering. It is out of that that ministry is born. It was from that time that Samuel began his ministry. When he came into heart union with God's anguish and disappointment and dissatisfaction, and that had its echo in his heart, then his ministry began. Effective ministry from God must spring out of something like that. Oh, you are not just going to *make* addresses, no matter what the subject, however high the truth may be. It comes out of something that God has done inside and you have a burdened heart about the state of things; you have seen what God wants, and you have seen what exists, and out of a burdened heart ministry begins. You need not go and become an official in ministry for that. You have not to go into what is called 'ministry' and don a certain kind of attire and join some society. You will just be where you are until God moves you somewhere else. Samuel started there where he was, with his burdened heart. Later on he went in circuit from Ramah round in his ministry. The extension of ministry may come later, but it is just where you are that your ministry begins. Where you meet God, where you come into the personal experience of Him, where you have your own personal life with Him—that is where your ministry begins.

And what is your ministry? To be there in relation to God's desire, God's thought, as one standing against the tide of what is contrary to God, and even if that tide will break over you, you stand against it. That is the essence of ministry.

In that ministry Samuel became a bridge. He and his ministry were a bridge for God, a bridge for God's transition—Saul to David, from this kingdom to that, from this state of things to that. The first book of Samuel is called the book of transition,

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and that is what it is. You know the issue—the transfer of the kingdom from Saul to David. That is the issue of Samuel's life, and he and his ministry were that bridge over which God could pass, leaving one order behind and bringing in another. Yes, it may in our case only be in measure, in a limited way, but God needs the bridge to be the link—one side rejecting, and the other side standing for.

You see, all that just comprises this ground for God. You say: How is God going to work, move, commit Himself, come in? It is just on those lines. He must have a beginning which is a beginning with Himself and not a secondhand thing at all, not something of the past, not something from someone else, but with *you* from the 'A' of the alphabet of spiritual life and experience between you and God. He must have a walk with Him on your part. Yes, in fellowship with His people, having all that there is available of spiritual help in a related way, but, nevertheless, in the midst of it all, you are walking with God. It is only in that way that the Holy Spirit says the same thing and safeguards what He is saying to you, because He will say the same thing in all who are walking with Him and that will be a great safeguard. But the point is—a personal knowledge of and walk with God is His way; then coming steadily, quietly to know what God does not want, what He really does seek and what He really must have to be a link with His heart in that way. And then a bridge for God—that is, God is able to reach His object in measure through us individually and through us collectively. Oh, that it might be like that with the Church as a whole! Perhaps it is too much to expect. Because the whole is not like that, are we just going to capitulate and say that *nothing* can be like that? If Samuel had taken that attitude, it would be a very different story, but he did not. Samuel will be a bridge for God between all that is not, and what God could have.

Do take this to heart! I do not want to leave anyone out. I do not want to seem to be despising anybody. I am not doing that when I especially appeal to my young friends in this matter. Of course, it may be that some who have been on the way a long time need a word like this as a safeguard, or a deliverance from things, even their own experience becoming a tradition, something that *was* many years ago but is not right up to date with God. Young people, you can be saved from so much like that. You need not have many years of undoing. You can come so quickly into this if you will be very definite with the Lord. Say: 'Now, Lord, as for me, I want everything to be firsthand. I do not despise what I have been taught, what I hear, or people who know, but, Lord, I must have it firsthand, I must know it for myself. You must begin in my case as though I were the first that ever knew You. You must bring me into a life where I am just walking with You, where I am learning, where I am knowing You in a growing, progressive way. Then, getting that, You bring me into fellowship with Your heart, what You feel about the situation, to constitute me a servant, a useful instrument in relation thereto. Whether You want to call me out into full-time service or not is not the point; the thing is that I should be here standing for God and influencing the situation according to Your mind.' God commits Himself to that; that counts with God, and that has power with God.

The great thing said about Samuel is: "God . . . let none of his words fall to the ground" (I Samuel iii. 19). That is God committing Himself to Samuel. Just think of a man speaking and not one of his words falling to the ground, not one being in vain or ineffective! That is tremendous! The point is that God commits Himself, and that has power with God.

(Concluded)

"THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM"

6. "CLEAR AS CYRSTAL"

... and he that sat was to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius" (Revelation iv. 3).

"Having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were jasper stone, clear as crystal . . . And the building of the wall thereof was jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were

adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper . . . and there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie" (Revelation xxi. 11, 18, 19, 27).

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from

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the beginning, and stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof" (John viii. 44).

"And as for you, the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but as his anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie" (I John ii. 27).

WE have now passed the half-way line of this consideration, and it is very important that we should understand clearly what it is that the Lord is wanting to show us. There are many words, and there is much teaching, and we just ask ourselves: "What is it all about?" The one thing about which we shall have to be clear at the end is: "What is it that the Lord has really said?" Therefore, leaving all the symbolism, that is, the means the Lord uses to lead us to the truth, let us seek to understand exactly what the Lord is saying.

THE END TOWARD WHICH THE LORD IS WORKING

It can all be gathered into a few words: The Lord is trying to show us what is the great end toward which He is moving in the lives of His people, and that end is the expression of His own Divine nature in them. That Divine nature has been brought to us in His Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit has come to reproduce Jesus Christ in the Church, so that when God's work is done in His people there will be a manifestation in His universe of the Divine nature in a people. God is not doing two things, but one thing. Evangelism is just the gathering of the people, the adding of believers to the Lord Jesus. From that time it is the work of the Holy Spirit to conform those believers to the image of God's Son, and the end of the work of the Holy Spirit is the manifestation of Christ in and through the Church.

The Christian's life is progression in the increase of Christ. That explains all the dealings of the Holy Spirit with us, for His one object is to bring the Church to the fullness of Christ. If you want to know what the fullness of Christ is, then you have it in this symbolic presentation of the holy city, the new Jerusalem. Every aspect of this city represents some spiritual feature of the Lord Jesus, that is, it represents some feature of the Divine nature which is to be reproduced in the Church, the people of God. Is that quite simple? Now do you understand what it is all about? If you do, we can go on.

JUDGMENT ACCORDING TO THE JASPER STONE

We will come to another feature of the Divine nature to be produced, not in some imaginary thing called the Church, but in you and in me.

We have already seen that the all-inclusive character of the city is gold. Pure gold is the dominating presentation of this city, and we have seen that in the Bible gold is always the symbol of Divine character, especially love. We considered that last time. Now we are going to look at the first feature of that Divine nature. If you have read carefully those passages cited you will have noticed that there was one idea in all of them—that which is "clear as crystal". It says that the city is like "a jasper stone, clear as crystal." Jasper, as a symbol of clearness, is mentioned in all the main connections of this book of the Revelation. Immediately the Lord has dealt with the seven churches in Asia, the second part of the book begins, and the Apostle John says that he saw "a door opened in heaven . . . a throne set in heaven . . . and he that sat was to look upon like a jasper stone" (Revelation iv. 1-3). The churches have been judged, and now all the world, and everything else, is going to be judged, for the throne means judgment. It is the governing of everything from heaven, and everything is going to be judged in the light of the jasper stone, that is, according to that Divine nature which is absolutely clear. The churches have been judged in that light, and the world is to be judged in that light. It is judgment according to what is absolutely true. Did you hear that word? Transparent—you can see right through it. There is nothing here that is not perfectly clear and true. There is no darkness whatever in the Divine nature—it is perfectly transparent. There is nothing false about God, nothing that is not real. There is no mixture of two contradictory things in the nature of God, nothing that is imitation or artificial. There is no hypocrisy in the nature of God and nothing that deceives or pretends to be what it is not. It takes all these words, and many more, to get to this characteristic of God, which is complete purity, clear as crystal.

THE LIE AN ABOMINATION TO GOD

In this description of the city John says that nothing can enter in that makes a lie, and he calls the lie "an abomination". That which is not absolutely true is an abomination to God. In this way the Lord Jesus showed what God's nature is like. The strongest and most terrible things that came through His lips were against hypocrisy. I would not like to have been there on that day

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when He looked at the Pharisees and said: "Ye hypocrites!" "Hypocrite" just means "play actor"—he is on the stage of this world playing a part which is not real and true. In the face of the Lord Jesus there was anger against what was not genuine. We read those terrible words from John viii when He said to those Pharisees: 'You are of your father, the devil, and the works of your father you will to do. He is a liar and the father of lies. When he speaks a lie he speaks of what he himself is.'

THE ENTRY OF THE LIE INTO THIS WORLD

That brings us to an issue which has a very long and terrible history. Jesus was thinking of what happened right back at the beginning in the Garden, when Satan told a lie about God and Adam accepted it. The whole history of the terrible tragedy of this world came from that lie. There is a lie right at the heart of this universe, and there is no truth in this universe outside of God. The history of this fallen creation is the history of a lie.

Jesus said of Satan that he "abode not in the truth". Therefore he must have been in the truth at some time, and at some point he abode not in the truth. He departed from it and the terrible judgment of God fell upon him and all those who shared the lie with him. So he came to impart his own lie and nature to man, God's creation, and the Apostle says: "The whole world lieth in the evil one" (I John v.19). This is a very long and terrible history, but it is coming to its climax now. One of the most powerful influences in this world today is that which does not believe there is truth. It says with Pilate: 'What is truth? There is no such thing as truth. It is just as good to live by lies as it is to live by anything else.' That ideology is spreading over all the world—cynicism as to truth. This world is a deceived world, and Christians know how artificial, unreal and empty this world is. Here we are face to face with one of the most solemn issues in the whole history of this world.

GOD'S ANSWER TO THE LIE

It was in relation to this historic lie that the Son of God became incarnate in this world. Jesus said: "I am the truth" (John xiv. 6), and "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth" (John xviii. 37). Jesus is the embodiment of the great answer to the history of the lie. That is why the devil hated Him so much, and why those who were children of the devil, according to His word, hated Him so much. He tore the mask of their

hypocrisy and their play-acting in religion off from them. He exposed their true nature and, driven by the devil, they took counsel to destroy Him. Truth with the Lord Jesus was not just some abstract thing. It was not just that He spoke the truth—He *was* the truth. He became a personal power in this universe, a mighty, effective witness against all that was not true. When Jesus came into this world the battle was on between the truth and the lie, and He was only just born into the world when that great hypocrite, that false man, Herod, sought to destroy Him.

Jesus is the truth. In Him there is no darkness at all, and that is why He could also say: "I am the light of the world" (John viii. 12).

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

The Holy Spirit is called "The Spirit of Truth" (John xvi. 13). Jesus said: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth", and: "The Spirit of truth . . . for he abideth with you, *and shall be in you*" (John xiv. 17). Jesus was saying: 'What I have been outside of you the Holy Spirit will be *in you*.' "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John viii. 32)—free from the lie. So John says: "As His anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie."

Now you can see how we are coming to the city. Dear friends, do try and be patient with me, for I am dealing with something of very serious consequence and this is God's solemn truth. If this city represents any great spiritual principle of the Divine nature, and if the One upon the throne of government is as a jasper stone, we are all going to be judged according to what is now being said.

A GLORIOUS CHURCH

Well, then, here in the symbolism of the city the Church, in relation to Jesus Christ, is presented. The Apostle Paul said that He is going to "present the church to himself a glorious church" (Ephesians v. 27), and here it is at last, "having the glory of God". But then the Apostle defines what he means by "a glorious church"—"not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." That means not having any dark thing in it, or any of the marks of this deceived creation—in a word, nothing that is not absolutely true.

All this may sound very terrible to you, and I expect some of you are saying: 'Why is he talking to us like that?' Well, I am talking to myself just as much as to you. What is the Holy Spirit seeking

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to do in you and in me? He is seeking, on the one side, to deliver us from that nature of ours which is so impure, and, on the other side, to bring into us the nature of the Lord. The Lord, the Spirit, is trying to purify the gold until it is like transparent glass, that is, a gold which is quite different from what is natural. Is there anyone who has seen transparent gold like glass? A piece of gold which you can look right through as you can look through a window? Well, I have seen a lot of gold in many parts of the world, but I have never seen any like that! This is something that is not natural: it is Divine. This is not what we are by nature, but it is what we are going to be by grace. To change the metaphor: 'Whiter than the snow'. That is why I chose that hymn this morning. I had been looking out of my window upon the Blümlisalp and I saw that perfectly white snow glistening in the sun. I said: 'Is there anything whiter than that snow?', and then the Word of God came: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah i. 18). Later on we shall have to see the place of the Lamb in the city and then we shall see why the city is transparent like pure gold.

You see, this book of the Revelation gives us a picture of the Church at last arrayed in white robes, clothed in that pure, righteous nature of God and "they shall walk with me in white" (Revelation iii. 4).

The message of this book of the Revelation comes from one who says: "He that is true" (Revelation iii. 7).

Dear friends, the Lord wants us to be people who are real, genuine and transparent. You know, fellowship is impossible unless there is absolute transparency. It says that the street (and there is only one street) of the city is *pure gold*. It is going to be the fellowship of the Lord's people in absolute transparency. You cannot have that fellowship while you are suspecting one another, while you are not sure about the motive of the other person, and while you have to say: 'Now, I wonder what he—or she—is after! I wonder if he is trying to find something out! I wonder if he is trying to get hold of something that he can use against me! I don't trust him. There is something about him that is not transparent.' You see, that is the world. You cannot have fellowship when it is like that, and if you want to mingle on the golden piazza it will only be if all that is not true, real and genuine has been removed.

The Lord cleanse our hearts and our minds from all that is not true!

(To be continued)

The following message was published in pamphlet form, but has been out of print for some time. As there is a call for it we reprint it in this issue of "A Witness and A Testimony" and it will probably be issued again in booklet form if there is sufficient demand.

THE SUPREME VOCATION

Reading: Daniel x. 1-21.

FROM the tenth chapter of the book of Daniel I want to take just this fragment from the nineteenth verse:

"And he said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong."

And I want to add to that, for later purposes, two fragments from the New Testament:

"Withal praying for us also, that God may open unto us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ" (Colossians iv. 3).

"We would fain have come unto you, I Paul once and again; and Satan hindered us" (I Thessalonians ii. 18).

AN EXPRESSION OF THE HEART OF GOD

"O man greatly beloved." The actual and implied content of that declared approbation of Daniel comprehends a very great deal of the whole revealed heart of God. There is no doubt that it is a heart expression, and it is the expression of the heart of God. "O man greatly beloved." "Thou

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art greatly beloved" (ix. 23). Three times was that said to Daniel, and when we have the Lord speaking like that there must be a very great reason for it, and very great content in it. It is not just some emotional overflow of sentiment. God does not waste Himself like that, however kind He might want to be. If God says a thing like that, there is much behind it and very much in it. This declaration gathers up many of the major features connected with God's relationship with man, and man's relationship with God. If I indicate just two or three of these features, it will be immediately seen how true what I have just said really is.

VOCATIONAL LOVE

For instance, we have in the statement the tremendous truth that it is possible for a man—or let me use the larger term—for *man* to advance beyond the wonder of redeeming love, which is no small thing, to something even more—a vocational love, where, because of man's fellowship with God's purpose, Heaven may attest him in such language: "Thou art greatly beloved." Now, that is not peculiar to Daniel. That is a great Bible truth—it is something in the Bible. It is positively immense that an archangel, right out from Heaven, should be battling his way through to reach this man, and be saying, in effect, 'Heaven's estimate of you, Daniel, is a very great one. In Heaven you stand in a position of very high value. "Thou art greatly beloved."' I say that is something beyond, much beyond even the wonder of redeeming love. We feel that redeeming love itself is more than we can grasp. It is beyond us; it gets us out of our depth. Redeeming love is our theme, our song, and we say it will be so for eternity. And yet here is a love of God and Heaven toward a man which goes beyond redeeming love. It is what I have called vocational love: the love which lights in a peculiar way upon that which serves God's ultimate purpose.

We say: 'Can there be anything more glorious than redeeming love for man—anything more wonderful than man standing in the love of God redemptively?' That you and I, knowing even the little that we do know about ourselves, should be compassed about by redeeming love—that man, such as he is, should be in such a position—is nothing short of marvellous. And yet there is something more, after redeeming love. It is a love which relates to the purpose of God served, God satisfied as to His purpose. Notice that it is *man* again; this is the word that we shall emphasize and underline all the way through. And Heaven is declaring, angels and archangels are speaking for

God concerning man: "Thou art greatly beloved", "O man greatly beloved". Is that a theme? That is only one thing included in the statement. We may see much more of what that means.

INTELLIGENCE AS TO GOD'S PURPOSE

We note another feature gathered into this declaration—the immense importance and value of being a part of God's heavenly intelligence system. Perhaps that sounds strange, but that is what is here. Notice how repeatedly the thought occurs of Daniel knowing, understanding, having understanding, being in the knowledge of things, in the intelligence of Heaven about things, having intelligence as to God's purpose and the meaning and portent of the present situation. If God finds someone like that in that position, that someone or that instrument is of tremendous value to the Lord. It was that intelligence, that knowledge, that understanding, that spiritual insight, which led to this—"thou are greatly beloved". It was because of that that all the other followed. What a tremendous thing it is to have spiritual understanding and intelligence, to be in what I have called 'Heaven's intelligence system', being 'in the know' as to God's thoughts and intentions. It must be noted here that, in the case of Daniel, this included light through the Word of God. He had been studying the Scriptures, and he received light through the Word. We shall perhaps see more of this later.

HEAVEN-AFFECTING PRAYER

Take a third thing included in this declaration—the basis and nature of that kind of prayer which reaches beyond temporal things and touches the whole spiritual order, setting in motion the powers of Heaven, celestial and diabolical. If we read the whole chapter, we shall see that that is what is there. That goes beyond our temporal affairs and matters, our personal and private things, the things of everyday life. They are very important, those requests which relate to the details of life; but this goes beyond the temporal and beyond the earthly. It touches the whole spiritual background of this world, and sets angels in action and Heaven on the move—and Satan, furious to combat, resist, withstand, frustrate. Is that a small thing? But that is a great Bible subject, not peculiar to Daniel.

Now I know what you are thinking. You are thinking: 'All this sounds very high, very exalted

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and beyond us. This is not the simple Christian life.' But, dear friends, listen. The fact is that this is *the* very nature and explanation of the Church's existence. We have failed, utterly failed, to grasp the real significance of our calling in this dispensation if we have not apprehended this fact: that, just as much as Daniel, in another dispensation and another relationship, but with the very same setting, was called into this realm of things, so are we. This is definitely shown to be the case in Ephesians, and it heads up in chapter vi. 10-20.

Now, if these things which I have mentioned are examples of what is contained in this phrase: "O man greatly beloved", I am sure you will agree that there is very much in it. If all that was true, then Daniel certainly stands for something.

Let us then consider *the basis and nature of Heaven-affecting prayer*. I believe that this is a key to everything. Everything hangs upon and circles around this whole matter of Heaven-affecting prayer—the prayer that really gets right away and touches things at their ultimate source, gets right through to the throne, to the place where "the heavens do rule". That is a phrase, as you know, peculiar to this book of Daniel.

The following passages indicate something of the estimate placed upon Daniel because of his prayer influence:

"Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel; for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to humble thyself before thy God, thy words were heard: and I am come for thy words' sake. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me: and I remained there" (the margin says "was not needed", because the other one had come to help) "with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for the vision is yet for many days" (Daniel x. 12-14).

"When a land simeth . . . though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God . . . Though Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they should deliver neither son nor daughter; they should but deliver their own souls by their righteousness" (Ezekiel xiv. 13, 14, 20, A.R.V.).

What is the basis and nature of such prayer? Well, to begin with, as we have already intimated, it is intelligence as to God's purpose, and as to the meaning and portent of the present situation. That is essential as a basis to this kind of prayer.

THE PLACE OF THE WORD OF GOD IN DANIEL'S UNDERSTANDING

Now notice first of all the place of the Word of God in Daniel's understanding. If you look at chapter ix. 2 you will grasp it. "I Daniel understood by the books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet." As I said earlier, he was reading what Bible he had, reading it prayerfully, thoughtfully, devotedly; and as he was seeking, not to get Bible knowledge as such, but seeking to know what God was really after, what God really intended, what God's purpose really was, and how the immediately present phase of things stood in relation to that—as he so sought, in and through the Word, intelligence and understanding were given. It is not my intention at this point to spend time on how to read the Bible or how to study the Bible. What I am seeking to indicate is this: that before you can touch the powers on high, you must know what God wants to do. Before this kind of prayer—whether it be of the individual or of the company, or (would to God it could be!) of the whole Church—before this kind of prayer which had the effect that Daniel's prayer had, can be made, there must be this intelligence and understanding as to God's purpose, God's intention, and where we stand at this time in relation thereto.

Dear friends, I cannot be stronger. It would be, I think, impossible to be too strong in emphasis upon the importance of this matter. I must leave you to consider it in the light of the whole situation. Here it is. Tremendous things issued from Daniel's prayer, things in heaven and in earth, but nothing at all would have happened if Daniel had not known what he was praying about, if he had just flung out petitions and requests and longings and desires into the air without knowing quite clearly and definitely what God was after, and therefore what he himself was after. It is strange that, while so many will devote themselves to the subject of the fulfilment of prophecy—Daniel's included—so very few will seek to discover what God has revealed concerning His eternal purpose and the character of their own dispensation—the meaning of the present condition of things in relation to God's eternal purpose.

Yes, there are many, many, who will study the Bible along the lines of prophecy and its fulfilment, and yet there are very few who devote themselves to the understanding of God's eternal purpose, and the peculiar character of the dispensation in which they live. Fulfilment of prophecy lies so very largely, although not exclusively, in the future, in what is

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going to be; and there are many other such related subjects, but they all belong to the future. The most important thing of which we can conceive is: What is God after *now*, and what does the present situation say as to that? You see, there can be a wonderful knowledge of prophetic truth without in the first place the spiritual life of the student being affected at all; and what is the good of that? Though I know all about prophecy, if it does not come right home to my own spiritual life and make tremendous differences in me now, it is nothing. That is the estimate of all your prophetic study. It is possible to have this great knowledge of prophetic truth, and yet for the great purpose of God in this present dispensation not to be served at all.

Oh, how many side-tracks there are, side-tracks of secondary interest; whether they be true or whether they be false, they are side-tracks. British-Israelism is a very fascinating subject. I only mention it; I am not going to discuss it. Universalism is a very likeable idea, sweeping like fire across Europe, carrying away multitudes; and so I could go on. What effect do these things have upon the spiritual life of those occupied with them, and what effect upon the present aspect of the eternal purpose of God do they have? *Nil!* They count for nothing in the spiritual life where there is a touching of things heavenly. For the most part they are either future or earthly.

Now note: Daniel knew God's thoughts for His people, and he knew what was characteristic of the dispensation in which he lived. And that is where we must begin. What is the characteristic, from God's standpoint, of the dispensation in which you and I live? What is the nature, object, purpose, of this dispensation, the day in which you and I have our time on this earth? What does God mean? Daniel knew quite well what was characteristic of his dispensation, and he knew further that, until that dispensation was finally closed, that purpose of God held good.

Now, why do we say that? What is the point? It is this. There are many people today who are giving up the revealed character of the dispensation as unattainable, hopeless. But God does not change the character of any one dispensation in itself. If God has said that a given dispensation or age is to serve such-and-such a part of the eternal goings, He does not change that. He neither goes back upon it nor alters it to fit into the conditions which arise.

Listen! If what we have in the letter to the Ephesians is the sum, the substance, the comprehensive and conclusive revelation of God's eternal purpose, and God saw it worth while to take a man

away from his world-wide activities—from all his visitation of churches, all his personal contacts with believers the world over, all those affairs with which his whole life had been occupied—to take him right away and shut him up for a period where all that was cut off, and cause him to write the full revelation of His purpose as centred in this age: if it is true that the letter to the Ephesians is the consummate presentation of Divine revelation, centring in the Church as the Body of Christ of which He is the Head, and that the securing of that, with all *its heavenly nature and heavenly vocation* for the ages to come, is the Divine characteristic given to this dispensation, then God will not depart from it, no matter what we find as to the state of the Church on this earth.

There are many who have despaired of there being any realization of an 'Ephesian' revelation of the Church in a practical way in this dispensation. Things seem so hopelessly confused and divided that they turn to evangelism as the only way of any effective work.

We cannot dismiss the New Testament as easily as that. The answer is not in trying—however devotedly—to realize the ideal New Testament Church, but, having the vision clearly and strongly before us, to keep the *fullness of Christ as the object* of all spiritual attainment and exercise, and the Cross in its fundamental and continuous power as the Holy Spirit's way of realizing the true fellowship which is the meaning of the Church. We must work from the inward, not from the outward; the spiritual, not the temporal.

Daniel knew the characteristic of his own dispensation, and he knew that, while that dispensation continued, and until it finally closed, God would not change; and that led him to pray as he did. A man never prays for a thing about which he has lost all hope, given up all expectation, sees no prospect. Certainly he does not pray like this. But because Daniel knew, because he had intelligence on this matter, he set himself to pray it through—and he prayed it through. When Paul came to the close of his great letter to the Ephesians, he concluded with: "praying at all seasons in the Spirit . . . for all the saints . . ." (vi. 18). We shall only pray like that if we have in ourselves the sum of what is in that letter, and spiritual apprehension as to its meaning.

DANIEL KNEW THE MEANING OF THE PRESENT SITUATION

Further, Daniel knew the meaning of the then present situation. The existing situation of the people

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of God was not according to God's original thought. Of course, it was obvious in his case because it was so much in the realm of temporal things. It did not need a great deal of insight and perception to recognize that Israel in Babylon was not what God intended. Nevertheless, the principle holds good. Daniel knew the difference between what was and what ought to have been, according to God's mind. That is the principle. However it works out, either in that dispensation of what was temporal, or in this dispensation of what is spiritual, the principle is this—having knowledge and understanding of the difference between what God intended and what is.

DANIEL'S STAND FOR RECOVERY

And that situation, so contrary to God's mind, was due to lost spiritual and heavenly position. That is another mighty principle. If things are today far from what God intended them to be, and from the condition in which He actually had them at the first, the same reasons lie behind it—firstly lost spiritual and heavenly position, and then the loss of the understanding of the nature, the essential nature, of God's heavenly kingdom. There will be no improvement, no recovery, no getting what God is after until there is a recovery of those two things, spiritual position and understanding. Daniel stood in the reality of that position. Though physically actually in Babylon, he was standing in a spiritual and heavenly position altogether out of and above Babylon. He was just not a part of it. That is a very costly place to be in.

And then the recovery of the essential nature of God's kingdom. You see, the disciples of the Lord had their own conception of the kingdom before the Cross. It was earthly, it was temporal, it was material. The Cross shattered that whole thing for them for ever. The coming of the Holy Spirit gave them an entirely new conception of the nature of God's kingdom. Oh, how revolutionary and transforming was that Holy Spirit's enlightenment as to the true and the essential nature of God's kingdom: not meat and drink (Romans xiv. 17), but power, heavenly power (I Corinthians iv. 20). These things have to be recovered, and that is what God is after, and that is what Daniel saw God was after, and that is the meaning of the present situation. Take note of this, friends—*God is more concerned with character than He is with systems and institutions.* Israel, even in Babylon, may have been clinging to their systems, traditions and institutions, but God was transcendently more concerned about character than all that.

THE PURPOSE OF SUFFERING

Listen now to this very important, particularly important thing. It is, indeed, all-important. Daniel knew that God was using adversity, suffering, disillusionment, to force His people back to His original and primary thought. For Daniel it was perfectly clear that God was using all that was in Babylon, that suffering, adversity, affliction, to force them back—yes, to force them back; not just to call them back, but to force them back—to His original full thought. They were being driven, literally driven, by Heaven to a position where they would just have to make a choice between two things: either a counsel of despair and compromise and frustration, or, alternatively, all that was involved in going back to, and standing for, God's full thought.

There is much of present history in that. Let us go to China, to what has been in China for some generations from the standpoint of Christian activity and endeavour. Now what I am saying is not meant for a moment to under-value or disparage all the sacrifice and all the poured-out devotion. That will find its place in what abides. But when the whole story is read, as we are now able to read it, it is clear that *much* crept in that was not according to God's full and original thought. It came to be very largely something foreign, something institutional, something organizational, something of man's making. And what has happened? Oh, a deluge of suffering, of adversity, of disillusionment, of break-up and disintegration and scattering. What is surviving? What is coming out of it? The *things* have gone; the people of the *things* have departed. What is surviving? Only—but surely—that which is heavenly and spiritual. And it *is* surviving, thank God. Something not made with hands; something not of man's making, however well-intentioned. Oh, the suffering, the unspeakable suffering! But what has it done? It has driven believers back to God's original thought, to His full thought, with all that is less and other than that stripped off.

China I have taken as an example. But this is spreading, and it is going to spread. It is going on and coming on. God is doing in relation to His heavenly purpose what He was doing in Daniel's day in relation to earthly purpose. He uses suffering and adversity to *compel* back. That is the explanation of your suffering and my suffering. What is God doing by means of all this adversity and suffering? Just driving us, forcing us to a position which cannot be shaken, to the truth which cannot be destroyed, to the spiritual which will ever over-

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come the temporal. He is just forcing us; we are under compulsion. And this is going to spread, dear friends. That is a mark of what belongs to the present age.

Have you intelligence as to what God is doing—doing in you by way of suffering, disillusionment, doing in the world, doing in the Church? God has not abandoned what He set out to realize, and if He cannot do it in any other way, He will force to the point of a decision. Either you deliberately accept this situation as hopeless, and you compromise, as the majority did in Babylon, and settle down; or you take the course of the remnant who said: 'All this points clearly to the fact that God is not satisfied, that the situation is not what God intended, and we are going to give ourselves to that which God meant.' Will you be like the few who went back for that? But oh, how costly! You see, Daniel's prayer had to do with that, the bringing about of that issue, the forcing up to that decision—co-operation with God to secure that parting of the ways. Are you going to stay behind, or are you going on with God?

COMPLETE SEPARATION

And that prayer was based upon a life, in the case of Daniel, firstly of complete separation from self-interest. If you have got interests, personal, private interests, in the kingdom of God, then you will not be able to pray like this; you will not be able to touch Heaven. Secondly, there was complete separation from all worldly principles. They tried to involve him in their worldly principles. He said: 'No, never!' Much ought to be said about that—the Church and worldly principles. Thirdly, there was complete separation from the fear of man. How delivered from the fear of man was Daniel! And, finally, there was complete separation from merely earthly associations. That involved him in something. The den of lions prepared for himself, and the seven times heated furnace for his companions—they were Satan's alternatives to going his way. To Daniel's companions Satan said: 'Either you come my way, or you burn. Those are the alternatives. Abandon your line, your way, your life of separation and your objective, and come my way—or burn.' You can interpret that as you like. You know something, perhaps, of what that means spiritually.

DANIEL WAS DELIBERATE

In prayer such as Daniel's, there are four things to be taken account of. First of all, he was deliberate. The angel said to him, when at length he arrived:

"From the first day that thou didst set thine heart . . ." "*Thou didst set thine heart.*" There is a man gathering up all the loose folds of his interests and girding to concentration on this one thing—"Thou didst set thine heart." If (to anticipate for a moment) we are to fall into the train of the apostle Paul and his brethren, and take up that which particularly relates to this present age, to bring it through to consummation by prayer, it will not do for us to be diffuse and scattered. There will have to be a setting of ourselves to this thing; it is very practical. Whether it be in our own individual life of prayer with God, or when we come together for prayer as a company, smaller or larger, representing the Church and God's eternal purpose concerning it, we shall have to come in this mind, deliberately setting ourselves to this thing. 'We are set, we are committed, we are gathered; we know what we are after. Like Daniel, we have seen, and what we have seen of God's thought has become a pattern, a body; and we set ourselves.' God characterize all our prayer times by this feature of the man beloved, precious to God, that which God approves.

DANIEL WAS PERSISTENT

Then Daniel was persistent. The angel said: "From the first day . . .", and Daniel himself, describing it, said that this engaged him wholly, utterly, for twenty-one days. It is something to pray about the same thing continuously for twenty-one days! How we just ask the Lord for a thing, and leave it there, perhaps in a false notion of faith. Here is an example of the opposite. Daniel was persistent. He did not let go, he would not let go; he held on until the thing was done. Let us take his example and lay it to heart. Very, very great issues are bound up with such prayer.

DANIEL WAS ABANDONED

Daniel was abandoned. "From the first day that thou didst set thyself . . . to humble thyself . . ." Daniel again described it like this: "I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth." Here is a man 'all-in' on the issue, abandoned; not allowing indulgences, distractions, other interests, secondary things; just abandoned.

DANIEL WAS CONCLUSIVE

And finally he was conclusive. Daniel stood for and would take nothing less than a verdict. The angel said: "I am come for thy words' sake." He had spoken, and he would take no other answer

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in this matter from God—yes, but because he knew so deeply that this was what God wanted. Effectual prayer demands such conviction, such assurance, such knowledge. If we do not know what the Lord wants, then we do not know how to pray. But if, as Daniel had, we have made the discovery by revelation through the Word of God, that is tremendous strength. We must be *there* to pray in this way.

The object was of such importance to God that Satan fought it until he could fight no more. It is something to take note of, when Satan fights. It is very significant and indicative when hell rises up and is provoked by the object which is in view. And whatever may have been in Daniel's case and Daniel's time, there is a counterpart of this in our own time. The counterpart of this, in this present dispensation, is, in the first place, Paul and his brethren, who understood what God eternally intended in regard to the Church, who abandoned

themselves to that with such abandonment, who travailed and who prayed, and through whose travail and prayer there was given to the Church its charter for the whole dispensation. But that charter is passed on to us—to you, to me—for it is the same dispensation, and what was characteristic of them must be characteristic of us, if we are to come to that place of superlative value to the Lord where, not only as accepted in the beloved One, and beloved for Jesus' sake, but because of our co-operation with God in the thing that is deepest in, and nearest to, His heart, He is able to say: "O man . . .!" It may be to individuals; it may be to companies just as well. Man is a collective term as well as an individual term. "O man greatly beloved."

We are in the consummation of this dispensation, and it is necessary to know what God is going to have, what He has set His heart upon, and to be with Him in it. The Lord give us a heart for that.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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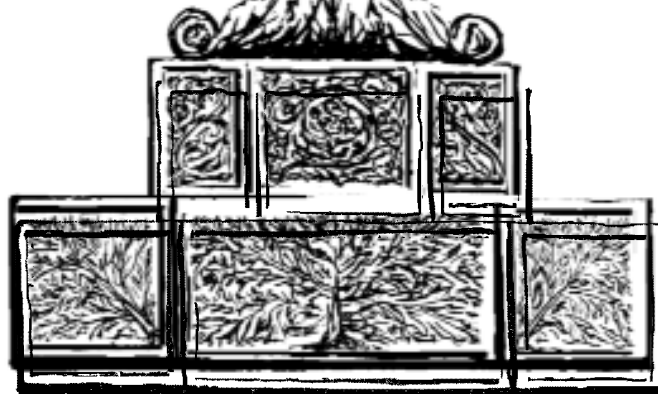
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Vol. 45. No. 6.

Nov.—Dec., 1967.

THIS MINISTRY

THE OBJECT OF THE MINISTRY of this little paper, issued bi-monthly, is to contribute to the Divine end which is presented in the words of Ephesians iv. 13—" . . . till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge (literally—*full knowledge*) of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we be no longer children . . . "

It is not connected with any 'Movement', 'Organization', 'Mission' or separate body of Christians, but is just a ministry to "all saints". Its going forth is with the prayer and hope that it will so result in a fuller measure of Christ, a richer and higher level of spiritual life, that, while bringing the Church of God into a growing approximation to His revealed will as to its 'attainment', it may be better qualified to be used of Him in testimony in the nations, and to the completing of its own number by the salvation of those yet to be added by the Lord.

This ministry is maintained by the Lord through the stewardship of those who value it. There is no 'subscription', but gifts can be sent to the Editor, 'A Witness and A Testimony', 30, Dunoon Road, Forest Hill, London, S.E.23, England. All cheques should be made payable to 'Witness and Testimony A/c'. The paper is sent only to those who personally desire it, and we count on friends to advise us if this is no longer the case, or if they change their address.

'Personal' letters should be addressed to
Mr. T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.



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EDITORIAL

WITH this issue of *A Witness and A Testimony* we conclude the forty-fifth year of its ministry. In doing so, and reviewing that considerable period, we—in the words of a greater servant of Christ—"are bound to give thanks". "Not by might, nor by power . . ." But "having received the help which comes from God, we continue unto this day". There is no room for boasting, neither is there elation. Rather is it wonder and humiliation. Indeed, we have to confess to real surprise. Not just survival, but right up to date—this very year—the unsolicited demand for the little paper and related books is increasing. The Lord alone knows the depths of the waters through which He has brought us!

Perhaps it will not be amiss if we make a precis of the nature and purpose of the ministry which we believe was God's purpose in bringing this instrument into being. It can be tabulated in a four-fold relatedness.

1. The eternal counsels of God, firstly in relation to His Son, who became Jesus, the Christ, our Lord. The superlative and transcendent place and greatness of God's Son in the counsels of God from everlasting to everlasting. We have been extended far beyond our ability in seeking to convey to our hearers and readers the Greatness of Christ, and to indicate His significance in God's universe.

2. The greatness of man *in those thoughts of God*. "What is man?" has remained an unanswered question as to its fullness in God's purpose concerning him. With all his "Fall" and depravity; his ruin and evil propensities, he still remains a conception of God for glory, honour, and dominion over "the inhabited earth to come". This is not "Humanism", the antichrist counterfeit of God's thought.

3. The greatness of the Church; the "one new man", the complement of Christ. We have given much time and space to trying to show the true nature and vocation of this elect Body of Christ; its

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present out-calling and preparation, and its glorious destiny and function in the ages to come. What the Word calls "a glorious Church".

4. The greatness of the Cross, by which Christ gains His pre-eminence of victory. By which alone man—redeemed man—can reach his purposed nature, glory, honour, and dominion. By which the Church can attain to its "Eternal purpose".

We could add a fifth feature to these four magnitudes of Divine revelation, which has had to be mentioned in this ministry: it is the great warfare. Not because we are interested in Satan and his evil hosts, and certainly not because we want to keep him and them in a foremost place—God forbid!—but because he is a reality and his sinister shadow lies across the history of God's ways and purposes. The arch-enemy of God and His Son; of man according to God's intention; and of the Church as the elect vessel of Divine fulfilment to supplant that evil kingdom.

If these *are* the realities of God's eternal counsels, and if ministry concerning this has—in a small way—been entrusted to us, it is not to be wondered at if this adversary has done a good deal to discredit, injure, limit, and malign both ministry and its in-

struments. No, there is no pride nor boasting. This ship of ministry is not likely to be top-heavy with pride. The ballast of adversity is sufficient to safeguard that. With renewed earnestness we seek the prayers of those who have any sense of value in this ministry that, neither by over-pressure nor by subtle seduction, may we be turned from truth and purity, strength and faithfulness until the Lord says "It is enough".

We did seek your prayers in relation to the two conferences, in Maryland (U.S.A.) and Aeschi (Switzerland), and we can report that these were times of spiritual strength and blessing.

Many of our readers will have known, either by name or in person, our brother Harrison, who has been with us in this ministry for quite a number of years, and for the past ten years has been in Los Angeles. The Lord has called him away suddenly, and the ministry is that much short of a valued servant. The Lord graciously make good this real loss.

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS,
Editor.

WORK IN THE GROANING CREATION (I)

"Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned:—for until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come. But not as the trespass, so also is the free gift. For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many. And not as through one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment came of one unto condemnation, but the free gift came of many trespasses unto justification. For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ. So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so

through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous" (Romans v. 12-19).

"But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name" (Philippians ii. 7-9).

"Who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews i. 3).

"Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he subjected all things unto him, he left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we see not yet all things subjected to him. But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that by the

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grace of God he should taste death for every man" (Hebrews ii. 8, 9).

"Seeing therefore it remaineth that some should enter thereinto, and they to whom the good tidings were before preached failed to enter in because of disobedience" (Hebrews iv. 6).

"Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body didst thou prepare for me; in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure: then said I, Lo, I am come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews x. 5-7).

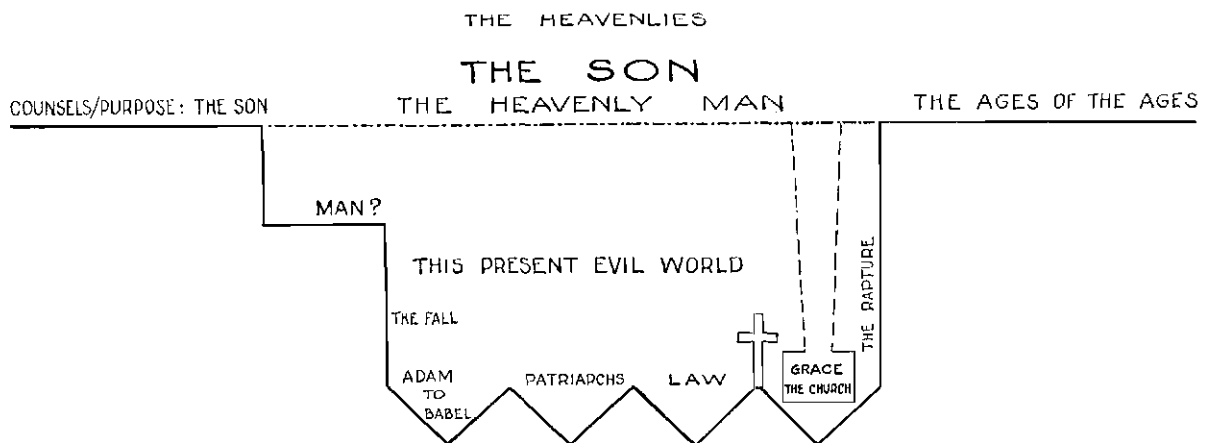
"It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (I Corinthians xv. 44-49).

These passages will lead us to one other—Romans viii. 29: "For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son . . ."

THERE are two great lines, or departments, of revelation given us in the Word of God throughout. One is that of the purpose of God eternally; the

other is that which has to do with the whole scheme of redemption. These are two things, although now related. Originally there were not two things, but only one thing, for in God's eternal thoughts and intentions the scheme of redemption had no immediate place. While being eternal, and always living as much at the end as at the beginning, He would, because of His own omniscience, have that whole plan of redemption present. But it was simply to meet an emergency, and was not in the original purpose. To allow it a place in the original purpose means that you must allow the fall as being a part of God's purpose, and you must make sin a part of God's purpose. That we could never do. So that what we have through the Scriptures is the straight line of God's eternal thought, and then the hiatus, or shall we say the detour, the bend in the road, in which the whole redemptive plan is found. That bend strikes off from the eternal straight way, and comes back to it at the end, and is, therefore, only contributory to the purpose. It is something which has to be, because of something not intended having taken place.

It would seem that the greater part of the Scriptures are occupied with the bend, and it would also appear that primarily the straight line of God's first and supreme thought is revealed to us through the Apostle Paul. The magnificence, the glory of the revelation which came through that Apostle particularly is that of God's eternal thought. Paul is particularly used to bring us back into the counsels of God before times, before man, before, therefore, the fall, and to show us the straight line of God's thought unto its ultimate manifestation in realisation. Most else—not all, but most—has to do with the redemptive programme. But when Paul does



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bring in his specific revelation, what he calls "My gospel"—and by that term he does not mean something that belonged to him, but something which came through him particularly—he knew that a specific and peculiar revelation was entrusted to him. When that does come in through the Apostle we are able with his key to unlock many doors in the Scriptures and so get the solution to much that is otherwise covered.

GOD'S ETERNAL THOUGHT

The point for our present occupation is that of the eternal thought of God as here summed up in this remarkable clause, so far as man is concerned: "Whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son . . ." Christ, the image to which God eternally intended to conform man. That is our object, and that is what is before our eyes—Christ, Christ, as the image to which God is working. Of course, now we can clearly see the need for the redemptive programme, but before ever there was a fall, before ever sin entered, that was God's thought. It is not something which has come in later, a subsequent intention of God. This is the eternal thought which rides above all the course of fall, and sin, and ruin, and redemption—the master-thought of God.

Having that before us as the object, then, we are able to come to these Scriptures which we have before us, and find that they interpret a very great deal more for us. We have read in one fragment that Adam was a figure of Him that was to come. Now that does not mean that Adam was the image to which God intended to conform all Adam's race, not even unfallen Adam. A type is marked by contrasts, as well as similarities. All types bear those two marks. There are similarities between types and anti-types, but there are also differences, contrasts, and it is important to note the contrasts as well as the similarities. There are distinct contrasts between the first Adam and the last Adam as well as similarities. The first, "a living soul"; the last, "a life-giving spirit". There is an enormous gap between those two. That is a contrast; that is not a comparison. The first, "of the earth, earthy"; the last, "of heaven", heavenly. There again, you see, even in the presence of the type and the Anti-type, you have the most emphatic differences; while, on the other hand, there are quite obvious likenesses. We will come to that in a moment.

Let us stay with what we have just said about Adam not being the image to which God was working for the race. Adam was not the full image to

which God intended to conform the race, not even the unfallen Adam. He was only God's thought potentially and probationally. Potentially: that means he was capable of being brought to God's full thought. He was made with the possibilities of being brought to the fullness of God's thought, that ultimate image of God's Son; but, it being merely and only potentially, it was governed by what was probational. And there was one word which governed the probation, and—like a peg upon which there has rested a greater weight of responsibility than any other peg in the history of this universe—that word is "obedience". It is well-nigh impossible for us to range and gauge the measure of responsibility bound up with that word "obedience". All the potentialities in Adam concerning God's full thought, the image of His Son, hung upon that one word. "By one man's disobedience"!

There is your type. But how the type fell short of the Anti-type: "Obedient unto death"! 'By one man's obedience'! What a difference! You are not surprised, when you have that simply stated, that God is so particular about obedience. You are not surprised that the whole of the Scriptures state that God will have utter and implicit obedience, and that He never waives obedience one hair's breadth, and that every act of disobedience is lifted into a realm where it is made something glaring. Disobedience is never covered up. Disobedience is brought out by God every time and put into a place where it is made to speak of the most terrible thing in God's sight. Think of some of the instances in the Scriptures!

Think of Moses, the man who had been through the forty years of discipline in the wilderness; the man who had for another forty years taken the weight, the burden, the strain of that great host; the man with whom it is said: 'God spake face to face as a man speaketh with his friend'. Think of all the close and intimate touch with God that Moses had, entering into the very cloud where God was, and hearing His voice. And then at last, over one act, having the one life-long ambition and desire of his heart forbidden him. He pleaded with God to let him go in, until God said: "Speak no more unto me of this matter . . . thou shalt not go over . . ." It seems so hard and cruel. This man has poured out his life so utterly for God, has stood in the breach again and again, and has upheld God's honour so continuously; and yet the one thing upon which his heart was always set was refused him because of one act. It was an act of disobedience. God must show what is His attitude toward that. For all time and in all subsequent generations the story must be told with bated breath so

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that all may know the tragedy of disobedience. Moses is in a better 'Land of Promise' now, but he has ministered a terrible lesson in time.

Think of Achan. Only one wedge of gold, one Babylonish garment—there are plenty of others! A small thing in itself. Yes! But Achan, his wife, his children, his cattle, his tent, and all that pertained unto Achan has to be utterly destroyed *in the sight of all Israel!* Why? One act of disobedience!

You see God's thought about it, God's estimate of it. And if that represents God's mind about disobedience, surely God's heart is, commensurately at least, toward obedience. Later we shall see something more of the range and the power of obedience. We mention that here because it relates to that probation of Adam, and all the lost potentialities in him for the realization of God's ultimate thought. They were all frustrated, not only in Adam, but in Adam's race, by one act of disobedience.

We leave that for a moment while we just look at some of these comparisons and contrasts between the type and the Anti-type; between Adam and Christ; the first Adam, and the *second* Man, the *last* Adam. We have noted, as to nature, the first, "a living soul", the last, "a life-giving spirit"; the first, "of the earth, earthy", the last, the second, "the Lord from heaven". Now let us check our thought there, and, if we are not so, make ourselves quite clear that it was not sin that made Adam what Paul calls, in I Corinthians xv., the 'soul man'. In that chapter, you remember, in speaking about the body, and the resurrection of the body, he says: "If there is a *natural* body, there is also a *spiritual* body." We know that the word 'natural' there is the soul body, the soulical body. There is a soulical body, and there is a spiritual body. "That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural." The first, then, was the natural, but that is not the fallen Adam. That is Adam unfallen, which shows quite clearly that the type was less than the Anti-type and very different. It is unfallen Adam who has the soulical body. We have not soulical bodies because we are fallen man. We need to be very clear about that. We have soulical bodies simply because we are joined to Adam. When we become joined to Christ we have the germ of the spiritual body: "He that is joined to the Lord is one *spirit*."

Adam, on the side of comparison or parallel, and not contrast, was the first among many brethren. He is called the first in relation to the creation. There were to be many more like him; there was to be a whole race conformed to his type, the Adam type. Unfallen Adam would produce after his kind; fallen Adam would produce after *his* kind, as it has proved. He was the first, then, of a race. In the

same way the Lord Jesus is the Firstborn among many brethren. It is important in this connection to note an essential and fundamental difference. The Greek word for "Firstborn" has two meanings: 'priority' and 'primary'. 'Priority' just means the first of a line. 'Primary' means supreme, chief, above. Adam was a first; but Christ was more than that—He was supreme. That is the whole argument connected with Colossians i. 15. (See that Letter.)

In the Letter to the Hebrews the words are used: "Bringing many sons to glory." And then Scriptures are quoted concerning Him: "I and the children which God hath given me"; "I will declare thy name unto my brethren". That is the outworking of Isaiah liii: "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days." But this is spiritual after type, and that stands over against a query in Isaiah liii: "Who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken." "Cut off"! "Who shall declare his generation?" You see, he stepped into the place of Adam voluntarily, under judgment, condemnation, and His soul is made an offering for sin. And that ends the generation, and there will be no posterity in Christ to declare His generation. Who is to declare His generation? He will have no seed along that line. Let us say it reverently: Jesus was not married because He was—on the Adam-representation side—to have no posterity. It is only in resurrection that He has "children" and "sees his seed". When that happens He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days. There is another seed in Christ. In Christ the Adam seed is brought to an end, but in the same place, the Cross of the Lord Jesus, in the power of resurrection, a Christ-seed is brought in, and He is the Firstborn among many brethren, the Firstborn from among the dead. Adam was the first of the race which was according to *him*. Christ is the First of the race which is to be according to Him.

In Divine intention Adam was not only the first, but was to be the head of the race. That is something more than first. As head he was to occupy the place of authority, government, supremacy; the race was to be subject to him. I wonder if you have ever seen the inside of that little fragment in this Letter to the Hebrews! It is an extraordinary fragment. In speaking about Melchizedek and Abraham, it says that Levi paid tithes to Abraham, though Levi was still in the loins of Abraham when Abraham met Melchizedek. Now that is an extraordinary statement, but it contains a principle. It is this principle—that all the unborn race in Adam paid its tithe to Adam. You and I by nature are paying our tithe to

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Adam today. By one man's disobedience, by one trespass, the many are made sinners. And well we know it! We are paying to Adam today, and it is a costly thing. You see, he was head, he held that position of authority, that he should demand from the race yet unborn a recognition of his headship. The whole race is gathered up into that head, and that head stands over the race, and what that head is the race is, and the race cannot get away from Adam. You can never detach yourself from Adam by nature. You are tied to Adam, and you have got to pay your tribute to Adam. What he is, you are, and you have to recognize it. In nature the headship is perverted and false, but it is powerful.

The Lord Jesus is also Head of His race. He is "Head of every man", and He is given to be "Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body." But what a contrast comes in with the comparison! The comparison is headship; the contrast in the kind of headship. None of us will mind paying tribute to the Lord Jesus. *In the thought* of God there was a race in the very loins of Christ from eternity; a spiritual seed. And that spiritual seed should, in Him, as its Head, pay tribute to Him; and those of us who are in Christ in His sovereign Headship should rejoice in it, and ought to pay Him what He requires. I trust we do! We owe Him everything! The natural man owes Adam a great deal, and he is paying Adam. But the spiritual man owes Christ everything as Head.

There you have your comparison and your contrast between the first Adam, and the last Adam.

THE SIGNIFICANT TITLE "SON OF MAN"

Now let us notice titles again for a moment. The Lord Jesus is called "Son of Man". That title carries with it one thought, which links the Adam race and the new creation in the eternal intention of God. It is a wonderful thing to see what Christ represents, and His great representative title is "Son of Man". In that title He gathers up God's eternal thought as it is in the Adam race, as well as in the new creation. That is, it represents the continuity of humanity in Him. God's thought was humanity. "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?" That relates to Adam in the first place. That first Scripture in Psalm viii applies to Adam unfallen. When it is taken and quoted in the Hebrew Letter it is carried on to Christ, or carried into Christ. So that this thought, "Son of Man", embraced God's intention to have a humanity in charge. The literal translation, as we know, of those words is this: 'What is

man that thou makest mention of him, or the son of man that thou puttest him in charge?' That is set over against this: "Not unto angels did he subject the inhabited earth to come, whereof we speak. But one hath somewhere testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou puttest him in charge?" Of what? "The inhabited earth to come, whereof we speak." That applied to, and was bound up with, Adam unfallen; he was put in charge. But God's thought has broken down in Adam, and there is to be another inhabited earth to come. And God's original thought is realized in Christ. But as it was collective in Adam, so it is collectively in Christ. It is not Adam as an isolated unit, but Adam's race in charge. It is not Christ as an isolated unit, it is Christ's race in charge. "Son of Man" is an inclusive term. While that is a general thought, there is that in this other title of the Lord Jesus which is specific and unique, "the second man". We must not be confused and talk about the second Adam. There is no second Adam; it is the last Adam, the second Man. That is uniqueness, something by itself. He is the Lord from heaven; God manifest in the flesh; the last Adam. That represents the deepest point of the contrast. There will be no more Adams after Him. Go through your Old Testament, and, if you can by any means mark the Hebrew words, you will see that the word "Adam" was a more or less general term for man. When it refers to man again and again it is simply the word "Adam", a general term. There is the other word, "ish", which means 'husband' or 'lord', or man in a specific sense, but very often it is the word "Adam" applied to any man. But when you speak about the last Adam, Christ comes into a unique place. There are no more Adams after that. Christ is the end; Christ marks a finish.

The "second man" represents a new order. The "last Adam" represents that that is the last order. The last order is the order of Christ. It is very blessed to realize that we need not fear any other order of man after Christ's order. He is the end of orders, because God realizes all His thought in Him, and there is no need to create any more. It is all realized in Christ as the "last Adam". That word "last" speaks of uniqueness, finality, conclusiveness in God's eternal thought.

Having made that more or less general and fragmentary survey, let us come back to the original thought of God bringing a humanity, a race, to the image of His Son. It was not in the eternal thought of God that Jesus Christ should be the Lamb of God slain. Although God in eternity knew what would be necessary, yet it was not part of the original plan, only provisionally. God's plan was

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straightforward; His Son the image, a race created and conformed to that image. And so God's Son in eternity represented God's thought for a race, and stood there in that position, in that capacity. Then man was disobedient, sin entered, there was the fall and all the consequences, and the Son of God voluntarily accepted a new capacity, and in a voluntary way, because of what had taken place, He emptied Himself, and was made "in the likeness of sinful flesh". Be sure of your terms! Not made in sinful flesh; He never was! But, "in the *likeness* of sinful flesh". Found in fashion as a Man, He became *obedient* unto death, the death of the Cross. A new capacity to come down to that point where everything in God's thought had gone wrong on the question of *obedience*, in order to bring it back into the straight line. And so the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus was a voluntary thing on His part, a thing which He accepted of Himself, and not as a part of God's eternal intention.

Now there enters this, which seems to be a necessary thing, that at some time or other, apart from any fall at all, a manifestation of the Son of God would have been necessary. If He were God's image for the race (leaving the fall out), and God was working in that race, with its potentialities, for that image, and that image developing, developing, developing, there had to come about a point at which a change took place, and the "living soul" was changed into the other kind, "a life-giving spirit", the natural changed to the spiritual. When does that take place? "When we see him we shall be like him." When He appears we shall be changed. In that hour of the trump this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible put on incorruption. It is at the end of the redemptive programme, just where the bend comes back to the straight road, where you again strike the main road of God's thought, that is the manifestation of Christ, our manifestation with Him, and the final change takes place. Conformity to the image of His Son in fullness, in finality; no longer the natural, but now the spiritual. So far as the body is concerned, that is the

final touch. "That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural." So that the manifestation of the Son of God was essential sooner or later in the history of this world, to bring about that. His manifestation in flesh was for redemptive purposes. His manifestation in glory will be for consummative purposes.

To whom, and for whom, will He be manifested? For those in whom already there has been introduced that life which is His life, which is essentially spiritual, and has in it the power of conforming to His image. Fallen Adam was forbidden to touch that tree which represented life. It was guarded, protected. It is born-again man who receives that life. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." We who are born again have received the life of the Son, and that is operating in us. What is it doing? If it is having its way, and we are truly in fellowship with it; if we are *obedient* to it—which is only in another way saying, obedient to Him who is the life—conformity has already commenced. We have potentially become spiritual; we have received the Spirit. I use that word 'potentially' in the light of what is ultimate. What is ultimate is that the natural body will be changed for the spiritual body, the fullness of what is spiritual. That has commenced in the born-again ones. It is the power of His life, by which we are being conformed to His image.

The thing that rests with us—and which must be postponed for a later meditation—is how to live on the life of the Lord Jesus, with a view to being conformed to His image. What we have said is preliminary and very largely general. It is going over a good deal of ground in a general way.

Let us get the Lord Jesus, as God's great object and goal, before our eyes, and see that God's eternal thought is conformity to His image, and that He has now in Christ put into us that life eternal, and that we have not to struggle toward the image of Christ, to battle and wrestle for Christ-likeness; we have to be obedient to His life within us. Obedience carries conformity to His image.

(To be continued)

THE NEED FOR DIVINE ILLUMINATION

SPIRITUAL truths differ from natural truths both in their constitution and in the manner of their apprehension by us.

Natural truths can be learned by us regardless of our moral or spiritual condition. The truths of the

natural sciences, for instance, can be grasped by anyone of normal intelligence regardless of whether he is a good man or a scoundrel. There is no relation between, say, chastity and logic, or between kindness and oceanography. In like manner a suffi-

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cient degree of mental vigour is all that is required to grasp philosophical propositions. A man may study philosophy for a lifetime, teach it, write books about it, and be all the while proud, covetous and thoroughly dishonest in his private dealings.

THEORETICAL STUDIES

The same thing may be said of theology. A man need not be godly to learn theology. Indeed, I wonder whether there is anything taught in any seminary on earth that could not be learned by a brigand or a swindler as well as by a consecrated Christian. While I have no doubt that the majority of theological students live far better than average lives, yet it should be kept in mind that they can easily get their lessons without living any better than is absolutely required to stay in the institution.

It does not strain my imagination to think of Judas Iscariot as coming out of school with a Th.B., if such a thing had been offered in his day. There is simply no necessary relation between the studies engaged in by students in a divinity school and the state of the students' hearts. Anything that is taught under the heading of hamartiology, soteriology, eschatology, pneumatology, or any of the rest, may be grasped as easily by a sinner as by a saint. And certainly it takes no great degree of sanctity to learn Hebrew and Greek.

Surely God has that to say to the pure in heart which He cannot say to the man of sinful life. But what He has to say is not theological, it is spiritual; and right there lies the weight of my argument. Spiritual truths cannot be received in the ordinary way of nature. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." So wrote the apostle Paul to the believers at Corinth.

Our Lord referred to this kind of Spirit-enlightened knowledge many times. To Him it was the fruit of a divine illumination, not contrary to but altogether beyond mere intellectual light. The fourth Gospel is full of this idea; indeed, the idea is so important to the understanding of John's Gospel that anyone who denies it might as well give up trying to grasp our Lord's teachings as given by the apostle John. And the same idea is found in John's First Epistle, making that epistle extremely difficult to understand, but also making it one of the most beautiful and rewarding of all the epistles of

the New Testament when its teachings are spiritually discerned.

NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING

The necessity for spiritual illumination before we can grasp spiritual truths is taught throughout the entire New Testament, and is altogether in accord with the teachings of the Psalms, the Proverbs, and the Prophets. The Old Testament Apocrypha agrees with the Scriptures here; and while the Apocrypha books are not to be received as divinely inspired, they are useful as showing how the best minds of ancient Israel thought about this matter of divine truth and how it is received into the human heart.

The New Testament draws a sharp line between the natural mind and the mind that has been touched by divine fire. When Peter made his good confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," our Lord replied, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." And Paul expresses much the same thing when he says, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

The sum of what I am saying is that there is an illumination, divinely bestowed, without which theological truth is information and nothing more. While this illumination is never given apart from theology, it is entirely possible to have theology without the illumination. This results in what has been called "dead orthodoxy", and while there may be some who deny that it is possible to be both orthodox and dead at the same time, I am afraid experience proves that it is.

Revivals, as they have appeared at various times among the churches of the past, have been essentially a quickening of the spiritual life of persons already orthodox. The revivalist, as long as he exercised his ministry as a revivalist, did not try to teach doctrine. His one object was to bring about a quickening of the churches which, while orthodox in creed, were devoid of spiritual life. When he went beyond this, he was something else than a revivalist. Revival can come only to those who know truth. When the inner meaning of familiar doctrines suddenly flashes in upon the heart of a Christian, the revival for him has already begun. It may go on to be much more than this, but it can never be less.

A. W. TOZER

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FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

IT was rather exciting and most interesting to find myself far away in Toronto, Canada, but really my heart was not there. It was back in Forest Hill, London. Yet when a suggestion was made that we should go to see the great Niagara Falls on the border between Canada and the United States, I was glad to go. I had heard so much about Niagara, but when we drove up in the sunshine and saw the lawns, the flowers, the people, and, of course, the water, I could hardly believe that it was true.

I kept thinking: what lessons can I learn from this? I saw the terrific outpouring of the waters and felt something of them, too, for the clouds of mist were so blown over on to the road as to make it seem to be raining. There were many other objects of interest, including the boat called *The Maid of the Mist* which takes people clothed in oil-skins as near as possible to the mists of spray, and there were signs of the way in which the water power was being used to drive great generators of electricity.

There was also a high tower, with yellow elevators crawling up its outside to take people up to the rotating platform at the top. There were people everywhere, people taking photographs and films, people going over the international bridge, and even people going down to a special tunnel under the falling water. I heard many foreign languages, and I heard English being spoken with Canadian and American accents. This did not cure my homesickness, but only made me feel farther away than ever from London.

And then I saw it! Or did I? Was I dreaming? In this land of single-decker buses was it really possible? I almost rubbed my eyes with astonishment, for there, as large and as red as life, was a London Transport bus. What a reminder of London! And while I looked again to see if it were true, I saw something even more unbelievable. It was going to FOREST HILL! Yes, there were the letters clear for all to read, and the fact that Catford and Camberwell were also included showed that it really was *my* Forest Hill and not some American place of the same name.

If you had been longing for home what would you have done? Would you have run to catch it and asked the conductor for a ticket to Forest Hill? I very nearly did! It would have been marvellous to have jumped off at Horniman's Museum and

walked up the road home. But I let the bus drive on. No Forest Hill for me that day, for I knew that although it looked genuine it was really only there as a curiosity. It would never see Forest Hill again.

It wasn't just a joke. It really was a London bus. It must have been, for they do not make them like that in Canada. It had once been on the Forest Hill route, but that was a thing of the past. I am glad to say that as I write this I am at Forest Hill once more and that I had a safe journey over, but it was not on that bus. For in a sense the bus was a sham. It was only going round and round for people to admire and was not getting anywhere, least of all to the place which was marked as its destination.

This gave me my lesson, and in a sense it was a sad one. It reminded me of how easy it is for us to call ourselves Christians and give others the impression that we are moving on towards God's home in heaven when we are doing nothing of the kind. We may perhaps go to Church, to Sunday School or to Bible class, and there we may sing hymns about a home with our heavenly Father and our expectation of one day being there with Him. Yet it may all the time be just empty words, just an appearance of movement upwards while really we are going round aimlessly with no certain destination. We were intended to live with God in His home of glory and we are meant to be moving steadily onwards towards that place of love and life, but are we? The bus was not going where it said it was. Are you?

Perhaps you have never started out on that spiritual journey. My red bus had done so originally but had given it up now. In the past it moved along the road and the label FOREST HILL was a true one. You could rely on its reaching the right destination. Now, however, it just went round in circles, far from its real home, and could neither go to Forest Hill nor help me to get there.

If you have given up the journey and no longer have in your heart the hope of one day living in God's heavenly home of light, will you stop to consider how sad your condition is? And will you pray the psalmist's prayer: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any way of grief in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm cxxxix. 24)?

H. F.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

THE ULTIMATE TEST AS REPRESENTED IN TWO MEN

*(Message given at the conference in Switzerland by Mr. DeVern Fromke)**Reading: Exodus xxxii*

I WANT this afternoon to see how two men react under pressure. First we will look at Moses, and then we will see how Aaron reacts; but we will just have a bit of background before we look into this operation itself.

Under Moses God has brought the people out of Egypt, and now they are encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai. It is hard to believe that a people who have seen the miracles at the Red Sea should so soon forget! As our operation opens, Moses has gone up into the mount, and we read in the first six verses of Exodus xxxii:

"And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf; and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play."

Is it not something to notice that a people who had been brought out of slavery in Egypt were more interested in being brought from their slavery than unto the thing God wanted? Did they really want God for Himself, or just to use Him for themselves? This has been my burden in my country for more than twenty years. We have so many who want deliverance from, but have no concern for the purpose or the will of God.

And so we see Israel at this moment speaking to Aaron and saying: 'Make us a god.' But while this is going on Moses is up in the Mount—we say: "While the cat is away the mice have been playing"! Now let us see what God says to Moses:

"Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation" (Exodus xxxii. 7-10).

This is a very crucial moment of testing for Moses. Under pressure Aaron has given in to the wishes of the people, but it is Moses who seems to identify himself with the heart of God. There are so many times when I would have felt like saying, if I had been Moses: 'Lord, I have had trouble with them. Consume them!' After all, who would not want to be a founder of a people? Moses instead of Abraham! But here we learn a very wonderful lesson—that sometimes we can ever have a deaf ear to God. If there is something in the flesh of Moses this will sound good to him. 'Yes, Lord, I would like to be a founder of a new nation and of a people. Blot them out!' But Moses has no desire of a personal nature, and no private ambition moves him. He turns, with a heart that is concerned for the purpose of God, the integrity of His Name, and His honour among the heathen, and says:

"Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?" (verse 11).

Let me ask you a question. In verse 7, when God speaks to Moses, He says: "Thy people", but in verse 11, when Moses speaks to God, he says: "Thy people". Whose people are they? Doesn't anybody want them? Let us see. In verses 12 to 14 we read:

"Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst

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unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people."

I have always loved this, where Moses turns as if to say: 'O God, not my purpose, but Thy purpose.' You see, the problem with so many Christians today is that they are the centre, and they want to move God and everything else around them. But Moses refuses to be the centre, for he is wholly related to God for what *He* wants. 'Lord, it was You who brought these people out of Egypt, not I. What will the Egyptians think if you consume them out here in the wilderness? Remember, You made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and Your honour, Your integrity are at stake among the nations.' But we are not like Moses. We want to move God over to our side, around us, and to our centre. Let me illustrate this in a very practical way.

I remember a Christian mother who had a very wayward son, and for many years she had prayed and groaned over this boy. Then one night when she was praying, God spoke to her like this: 'Too long you have been a mother hen, with your wings outspread over your little chick, and you have almost tried to protect him from anything I might need to do to bring him to Myself.' And as she prayed that night it seemed as though she moved from the centre of herself to identifying herself with God in *His* centre. As she moved over to stand with God it seemed as though a scissor was cutting all the ties of a mother with a son. No longer would she pray with a protective wing: 'Lord, spare my boy from harm', but now it would be: 'O God, what ever it may take, get him for Yourself.' She knew something had changed in her position. The next night, when the young boy was to go out and run with his crowd of friends, she met him at the door and said: 'Son, I want you to know that Mother loves you in a very new way, and some things have changed. I have taken a new stand with God and I am no longer asking Him merely to protect you when you run wild with the boys.' In his typical, youthful way he shrugged his shoulders, as if to say: 'It doesn't matter!' but it did matter. He could not get away from the Spirit's word to his heart: 'Mother isn't praying for protection any more.' He could not ignore the word to his inner heart, and it kept gnawing when he tried to run away from the call of God. Well, I can shorten this story by simply saying that it was only about three months before the boy came running to his mother. He had found the Lord, and today he is serving in the mission field.

What made the difference? Before, when the mother prayed out of natural mother ties, she was almost standing against—it would seem—what God wanted to do. Now she was standing with God for His purpose and what He wanted at any cost. It seemed as though the Lord were almost saying to her: 'Would you be willing, even if he must become an invalid and you nurse him for the rest of your life?' You see, she realized that in all her earlier praying she was not so much concerned for God for Himself as for herself.

O, beloved, the Cross has a wonderful way of cutting all the natural ties! And until we have taken this move out of our little centre over to find *Him* as our centre, we are always wanting just to use God for our own ends.

So here is the test, even with Moses. He was related to God for His larger programme, and not something of a private nature or ambition. How often have I sensed the same testing, as if the Lord would say: 'My son, these are not your people. They are *My* people. Don't try to use them for your own ends, or for your own kingdom-building.' Beloved, I do believe that this is a testing as to whether we have moved into the stream of God's purpose, or whether we want to relate God to our own purposes. Moses passes the test, and stands identified wholly with God.

Now Moses comes down out of the Mount. God has told him all that has happened, but he goes to meet the people, and in his hand he takes the tables of stone. It seems that Joshua must have been waiting for him at the foot of the Mount, and as they walk into the camp it is Joshua who has an ear to say: 'It sounds like war.' But how much more sensitive is the ear of Moses! He says: 'No, it is not the voice of those who have won a battle, nor been defeated in battle, but the noise of them that sing do I hear.' Is it not something wonderful that the discerning ear can tell when people are just singing, dancing and making merry? There are so many religious groups, and when you have an ear to hear the undertone in their life you sense that they know little of real war or victory.

When Moses meets Aaron he says: "*What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?*" Is it not strange how Aaron turns to say: 'Oh, but, it is the people?' 'It is the people's fault, you see. I am just the victim of circumstances.' But did you ever notice that when you point a finger and say: 'It is my wife', or 'my preacher', or someone else, three fingers point right back home? Notice now how Aaron answers Moses:

"For they said unto me, Make us gods. which

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shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there jumped out this calf." But Aaron was allowing his mind to play a trick. The calf did not just jump out, for it says in verse 4: "And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool." How many of you know where your fashioning-room is? How easy it is to see our side out of coloured glasses! Do you know where your fashioning-room is? I think I need not go into that any more! Ever since Adam turned and said: 'It was Eve', we have all been guilty of the same thing.

Well, I guess this is Aaron when he stands before Moses to excuse himself for making the golden calf. He tells Moses one thing, but I believe that deep within he knows better. Have you ever had to stand with God against yourself? 'My natural reasoning says one thing, but, O God, I stand with You against it.'

Now we come to the one lesson we want to learn this afternoon. Moses has already determined that he is standing with God for all His purpose, and so he goes to the gate of the camp and says: 'Who is on the Lord's side? Come over and stand here by me.' I wonder if, like me, you have so often tried to move God over to your side! So often in earlier years did I fill out the paper with all my plans of what I thought God wanted and sent it up to ask Him to approve it; but that is not God's way. He sends all *His* plans down on a sheet of paper for me to give approval to them. Can I somehow explain to you how I feel that so many of the Lord's people try to move God over to their scene when they pray?

This is a very significant moment in Israel's history. We read that all the sons of Levi moved over to stand with Moses with God. Why is this so important a moment? God had wanted the whole nation of Israel to be a priestly people unto Him, to be a mediator between the nations and Himself, but now these people need a special group as a go-between. And so you know that in due time the Levites became, as it were, the thirteenth tribe in Israel. When we read these next verses we see what it means to stand wholly with God. Notice what the Lord says to the Levites:

"Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of

Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men."

How could they go and slay their own brethren? We must see that he who is wholly identified with God in His purpose hates unrighteousness as much as he loves holiness. We must see that it is like two opposite spokes in a wheel. Do I really love righteousness? Then I will have an equal hatred of all that is unrighteous. These who were standing with the holy God here at the gate will be willing to go out against all that is at enmity with God. I often wondered what it was that helped these to know who should be slain and who could be spared, but I think it will help us to remember that with idolatry and this kind of pleasure-dancing, there is always looseness and perhaps nakedness.

How deeply has the Cross, like a sword, cut in the life! You see, it is like a two-edged sword—the sword that cuts outwards also cuts deep within. Unless I have personally experienced the cutting work in my life I will never let it cut or kill anyone else. I have noticed so often, in dealing with my little boy, that where I am soft in myself, I go soft or easy toward him. We can almost say that these Levites were dead men on furlough—dead to their own feelings, but alive to God.

Now, in closing, we come to see how deep was this identification that Moses had with God. Listen to what he says when he goes back up into the mountain to speak with God:

"Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written."

Let me ask you: Is Moses concerned for what he gets out of all of this? He is praying: 'O God, is there any way that I could help to reconcile them back to Thyself?' Of course, we know that there is only One who could ever reconcile them to God, but, beloved, you cannot get so very close to His heart but what you, too, have a Calvary heart. Only the death of the Lord Jesus could ever have any value before God, but here in Moses we sense the Calvary heart and the Calvary spirit. The one who wholly stands with God comes to share the same passion and purpose that is in the heart of God. I wonder if we have every groaned, or been so concerned for someone as to say: 'Lord, if it would help, blot me out of Thy book.' This is the man of the Old Testament who reveals this identification, but there is also one in the New Testament.

You remember in Romans ix, where Paul the Apostle opens his heart to us:

"I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were ac-

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cursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh' (verses 2 and 3).

Only men who are more concerned for God than for themselves will ever talk like this. Have you ever noticed how many people want to move into the victorious eighth chapter of Romans? Beloved, this is the outgrowth of the life in the spirit, willing to give instead of to get.

And so we say: Either we learn to stand wholly

with God, or we are the centre of our little universe and we want to move God into orbit around us. I know it hardly seems possible, but I believe that in my own country there are still so many born-again people who only want to use God for themselves, but I have confidence that you have been through so many things through the years that God has already moved you into His centre.

DEV. F.

DISCIPLINE UNTO PRAYER

"And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before" (Job xlii. 10).

THERE is a very striking sequence about the arrangement of many of the books in the Bible; though chronologically it is all wrong to take the order: Nehemiah, Esther, Job; spiritually it is all right. Each of these books centres around, or emphasizes at least, this matter of intercession. Nehemiah is the work of prayer. Prayer is everywhere in Nehemiah; prayer at all times, long prayers, short prayers, but it is all prayer with the work, and work with the prayer. "In everything by prayer and supplication" (Philippians iv. 6)—I think that is Nehemiah. In Esther we strike a deeper note: it is the prayer of love, sacrificial love, in the one great moment of intercession of Esther's life. And in the case of Job I think we go deeper still, including, of course, those other two. Here we have not somebody who is marked by what they do so much as somebody whose doing comes out of what they are, the *life* of prayer.

What Job went through! This verse seems to me a kind of peak and climax of his experience, as well as a turning point for him personally. He prayed for his friends. What a prayer! What a need! And what a man to pray it! We must not regard prayer as one of those lesser activities of life. It seems with Job that this is the culmination of all his life. Now he can pray! You may say: 'Now he is rich.' That is true. 'Now he is prosperous.' That is true. But I would say, when we have got through to chapter xlii: *Now he can pray*. Not that he had not prayed before, but something had been done in the man himself which gave a quality to his prayer. We remember that in the case of our Lord Jesus the fruit of His conflict with Satan, the culmination of all His experience, is this very thing—that now He lives to intercede. This is not just the fact that we can pray,

and the wonder that God answers prayer, or that "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of", or that sort of thing; but something far deeper. "He ever liveth to make intercession" (Hebrews vii. 25). How much we owe to His praying! But how much His prayers owe to what He is! The quality of the prayer comes from Him, of course, as the Son of God, the perfect One; but also, as Hebrews tells us, it comes out of a deep experience of discipline and suffering which have made Him an able intercessor.

"The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends." You must put the 'friends' in inverted commas. It is very easy to pray for your friends when they are friends, but I think it is not straining this story to say that when Job prayed, he was praying for his enemies. I fail to see anything more that they could have done to make life impossible for him than what they did. The only thing they could have done was to leave him alone, and he begged them to, but they would not. It was not out of affection—that sort of feeling we have for our friends that makes us want to pray for them. It was the men who had caused him so much pain and grief, but who so needed prayer. I wonder if we can see that! Here are men: they know all about God. Some of the precious things that are said about God in the hook of Job are said, not by Job, but by his friends. Job's friends said some of the passages you love. They were right, they knew all about Him, and yet they were utterly different from Him—hard, censorious, ungracious. That is a challenge to us. You may know all about God, but be very unlike Him.

It is very interesting that Job's experiences were taken by the Lord to bring to the surface and disclose, not only his own state and need, but the state and need of his friends. How much may circle round your experience, and mine, for other people as well as for us! It was all coming to the surface;

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not only what Job was, but what they were, and how harsh and critical and unkind they were to him personally. I may be wrong, but I always feel that when Job began to curse his day, that was really caused by his friends. When all the sufferings came, he blessed the Lord and was patient. But these men came to commiserate with him, and for seven days they sat there and did not say anything; but seven days of a critical atmosphere, seven days of eyes upon you, and you know what they are thinking. It was too much for Job, and it is often too much for us. And then they began to open their mouths, and the second phase of their so-called friendliness came in. What a painful experience it was for Job to have the barbed arrows of their unjust interpretation of his experience, their wrong judgments, all thrust into his quivering, suffering flesh. *They* were the people that needed prayer. You do not think of them like that. You think they need something else, but they need prayer. When God revealed Himself, not only was Job abashed, but these men were stricken. It is a new light upon the harsh, hard, critical people that make life more painful than it is. It is true that when Job saw everything in the light of God's presence, he saw himself, but he also saw the need of those poor men. They needed prayer. Well, they were new men in that sense; but what a new man Job was when he prayed for them.

NEW POWER IN PRAYER

As we have said, he already, before these experiences, served in a priestly capacity. You read about it in the first chapter. He interceded for his family. Job could pray, and he did pray, but this is a new Job, and there is new power in his prayer. What is there that is new about it?

(a) A NEW SENSE OF SIN

First of all, strangely enough, there is a new sense of sin. You would not think that that would make you pray better, but that is just what is needed. According to God, Job had said the things that were right; but Job, according to Elihu (and he seems to have spoken for God) was the man who justified himself instead of God. Job was the man who said: "My righteousness I hold fast" (Job xxvii. 6). He was self-righteous, and it was to disclose that fact that the devil was allowed to do what he did to him. Self-righteousness is a great hindrance to prayer. So the Lord brought Job to the place where every shred of self-opinion was utterly forsaken and repudiated. He had a new sense of sin. You know how the Letter to the Romans makes

the discrimination between sins and sin, and it was something like that that was borne home upon Job's heart. His friends were all the time saying: 'You must have committed sins'; and Job said: 'I have not!' But they said: 'You must have done', and he maintained: 'I have not'. When he saw God he did not remember, after all, certain sins that he had committed. Something much deeper came upon him—a conviction that, though he could face his fellow men and hold fast his integrity, when he came into the presence of the Lord it was not so much that he had committed sins, but he was a sinner; his very being was unclean before God. If Job's friends had prayed for him instead of talking to him, they might have helped a little bit, but I expect they would have prayed very much as they talked: 'Now, Job must have done this. Show him he has done it.' If Job had been on that level—and he might have been!—when the Lord said, 'Pray for your friends', he would have fallen into exactly the same trap. 'Lord, so-and-so said this, and Bildad said that, and someone else something else.' But he came into a realm where he was not looking at particular faults of people, but was overwhelmed with the sense of the holiness of God, and the deep, deep unholiness of man. "I abhor myself." 'Well,' you say, 'the man that is down in the dust abhorring himself will not be much good for prayer.' He *is* the man! We are not much good for prayer because we are not down. This sense of personal unworthiness and sin that humbles us before God, if it does its work in us, brings us to a place where we are able to pray as we never could when we were strong and self-confident. You notice that Job did not offer himself to pray for them. God said to Job: 'Now, you are the man to pray.' 'What me, Lord? But I am horrible! I lay my hand on my mouth, I am unclean, I am a sinner, I abhor myself.' The Lord said: 'You are the one to pray, for you are the only one that can pray the kind of prayer that I mean.'

(b) A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF SUFFERING

A new understanding of suffering. Job now knows, and we need to know, what God means by suffering. "My servant, Job." How these men must have opened their mouths and been surprised! The Lord says—and you notice how often He says it—"My servant, Job". If He had said: 'The man who used to be My servant', they could have understood, but He says: 'He *is* My servant.' But what has he been doing? He has been suffering. Is that all? Yes, suffering. He suffered under the hand of God, suffered in the will of God, and in that way he has been serving God. He was God's servant be-

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fore. God said to Satan: "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" But there is a sense, it seems to me, in which the end of this book just concentrates on the fact that God says: "This is the man that is serving. Not these preachers who are going around telling people what is right and what is wrong, what they ought to do, and all the theories of God's dealings with men, but the man who has been through the fire. He has been serving Me." Everybody despised him. 'He used to be a servant of God, but look at him now, stripped of everything! He has nothing at all.' The children mock him, and everybody despises him. God says: "My servant", and the very people that mocked him and despised him had cause to thank God from the bottom of their hearts that Job was God's servant, for it would have been a bad day for them if he had not been.

Then Job found much more about suffering: how suffering brings you close to the Lord if it is taken in the right spirit. How much nearer to God Job was, and how much nearer to Job God was at the end of the book! And all he had done was to suffer. Suffering under God's hand brought that nearness, and it made Job a different man. That was one of the things Elihu said: "Who is a teacher like unto him?" (xxxvi. 22). God had been teaching Job, and it is out of such a background that he could pray.

(c) A NEW CONCEPTION OF GOD

But I think that most of all it was out of a new conception of God that Job prayed like this. That was the value of his experience. He had known God before, and he had prayed before, but now he had a new conception of God altogether. He had been apt to treat God on equal terms. That comes out more than once, and he is charged with it—with considering God as though He were a man instead of realizing the utter transcendence of the Lord: "Behold, I will answer thee, in this thou art not just; for God is greater than man" (xxxiii. 12). You would not think that a man like Job needed to be told that, but he did. The Lord took him and said: 'Now, Job, you have got on wrong terms with Me. I want intimacy, yes, but not familiarity.' And that is the danger with us all. We mistake familiarity for intimacy. So the Lord suddenly turns on Job and says: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (xxxviii. 4). That is a question. But Job had been treating God as if he had been there. That is one of the dangers. I know prayer has its realms—realms of executive prayer, realms of fellowship with God, but they are dangerous realms unless we realize, and have brought home to us in ever fresh power, how transcendent God is. This is the man who

prayed: the man who sees how great God is. When he used to pray he treated God as though he were more or less equal, telling Him what He had done and what He ought to do. Now he can only bow in utter worship and wonder. That is the kind of man who can pray. He knows how omnipotent God is. "I know," he says at the end, "that thou canst do all things" (xlii. 2). In a sense, he is answering all his own questions. It seems to me as though God deliberately baffled Job. You see, if you know everything that God is doing, somehow it has a bad effect on you. So God took hold of His choicest servant and took him through experiences that so baffled and perplexed him that in the end he did not know anything. "Oh, that I knew . . ." (xxiii. 3). His friends, of course, knew it all—or thought they did. Poor Job says: 'I do not know; oh, that I did know!' And God has done that on purpose because Job, by all this, comes to realize the supreme power and wisdom of God. If we knew all about Him, He would not be any greater than ourselves. But we see just the hem of His garment, the fringes of His ways, and the vast realms of His Divine counsels and His sovereign power we only glimpse here and there, and we say: 'How wonderful the Lord is! I do not know what He is doing, but I know He can do everything; I do not know why He is doing it this way, but I am sure He knows.' That is the man who can pray, the man with a new sense of God in all His greatness, His transcendence, His power, and, above all, His grace.

(d) A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF THE GRACE OF GOD

I suppose we are apt to think of Job as reinstated, for he has everything back and more than he ever had, and feeling rather good and magnanimous, so he says to his friends: 'Do not say anything more about it.' Nothing of the sort! Job had nothing at this stage. This was the turning point. He was still as stripped, as poor, as low as ever he had been. What had he got, then, that made him pray, and able to pray like this? He had a new understanding of the grace of God, and that is the richest thing you can have. He knew how gracious God is. He could not have prayed for his friends properly if he had not known. He knew how gracious God is in terms of personal experience. God was gracious to him, and God had been merciful to him. Oh, the things that he had said and thought about God, and all the time love was planning and grace was being poured out upon him, so out of a new heart-overflowing sense of the wonderful grace of God, he could pray.

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All this is surely for us, too, for if, as a people, we feel we have one thing more than another which is our essential ministry, surely it is prayer. The Lord calls us to prayer again and again. Perhaps the Lord is dealing with us so that we can pray. That is what He did with Job—and see what happened when Job prayed! His friends were delivered from their danger and their need, and the prayer was answered. But the whole point of the verse is, not that the prayer was answered, but that Job came into new fullness because he prayed. “The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends.” So often we feel that if we could come out and be strong and prosperous, we could pray. But the Lord says: ‘If you will pray, I will bring you out.’ It is not, of course, a sort of catch arrangement that we make with the Lord—‘I will not pray for myself. I will pray for others and then You will help me.’ It was not that. Job, I am sure, was not thinking of himself, but, out of this new sense of God, and of sin, and of the command to pray for these poor needy men who had been so hard to him, but who, he now realized, were in such a parlous state themselves, he prayed for them. We must be content to pray for the Lord’s will far beyond our own interests and our own borders. We must make our supreme prayer

for the needy among the Lord’s people and among mankind everywhere. Let Him fit us in where He will to the meeting of that need, but our first thing is to pray for the need.

That is just what Job did. He did not say: ‘Make me a great man again so that I can serve you.’ He said: ‘Lord, have mercy upon these men, who ought to be thy servants, but who are in need and have been revealed in all the nakedness of their spurious profession of spirituality. Have mercy upon them!’ When Job began to pray for them like that the Lord gave him double.

Some of us may be seeking fullness and not finding it because we are critical of the Lord’s people, because we are watching, because we have summed them up, because, like Job’s friends, we can tell them where they are wrong. Perhaps we do not dare to, but we could if we had the chance. We are finding our emptiness, our leanness along that line, and we shall! Job found his fullness when, out of a deep sense of the grace of God, he prayed for his friends.

May the Lord make us those who have such an experience with Him that we are constituted able intercessors! Then we shall find our fullness; the Lord will give us double. H. F.

“THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM”

7. “A WALL GREAT AND HIGH”

“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and shewed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal: having a wall great and high; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east were three gates; and on the north three gates; and on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb . . . And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. And the building of the wall thereof was jasper” (Revelation xxi. 10–14, 17, 18).

WE remember that this city, and all connected with it, is a symbolic representation of Jesus Christ

and His redeemed Church. Everything here is a representation of the spiritual characteristics of Jesus Christ, and of those characteristics to be expressed in the Church; and here we are in the presence of the foreshadowed fullness of the realization of that.

WHY A WALL?

We now come to the wall of the city: “Having a wall great and high.” The measurement of the wall is given—one hundred and forty-four cubits, or twelve by twelve. Just keep that in mind for a minute. I suppose one hundred and forty-four cubits does not mean much to you, but if I tell you that the height of this wall is seventy-two metres (216 feet), you will realize that it is a pretty high wall, and the fact that this city should require such a high wall has a very real meaning. I said that it was twelve multiplied by twelve, and in the Bible symbolism of numbers twelve represents govern-

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ment. We are going to come upon the number twelve quite a lot of times in this connection.

So when we contemplate this wall we are contemplating that which governs everything. It is what this wall represents that governs what can come inside and be a part of the city. Why do you put up a wall? Why do you have walls to your houses and around your ground?

A BOUNDARY

The answer is that a wall represents a boundary. It demarcates an area. People may come toward your house, but your wall will limit their progress. The wall says 'So far, and no farther. What is outside may be yours, but what is inside is mine.' So it is with the wall of this city. It determines what is of God and what is not of God. Presently you will be told what is outside the city, and if you look at those things you will see that they are all things which are not at all acceptable to God. In our last chapter we spoke about the lie, and it is said that that which makes a lie cannot come into the city. So, in the first place, the wall is a boundary between what is of God and what is not of God; and when you examine this wall and see what its foundations are—"all manner of precious stones"—then you are seeing, in a symbolic way, the character of God in its many aspects.

So the wall is a testimony of God; firstly, the testimony to what God is like, and then the testimony that only that which is like God can come into this Church.

PROTECTION FROM EVIL

Then the wall is "great and high". Like the city, it is very substantial, and you are not going to get through, or over, this very easily. If you try to get into *this* Church of God in a way that is contrary to Him, you are going to meet God. We are told in this connection that this is where God dwells. The tabernacle of God is here, and it says: "He shall dwell with them" (xxi. 3). Therefore, anything that tries to get in where God is has to meet God.

I think we are too careless in our language about going to heaven. If you ask anyone if he, or she, is going to heaven, they will say: 'Well, yes, I hope so.' You all hope to get to heaven, but there is a great and high wall round heaven and we have to get through that wall to get in where God is in order to dwell with Him. Again I say: it is a "great and high wall". This wall is not an easy thing to negotiate.

The wall is nothing other than the nature of God.

That is why I mentioned twelve times twelve. It is government twelve times repeated, and it is the government of the very nature of God.

So we come to the second thing about a wall: A wall is for protection, to keep out all things that are harmful and dangerous. That is what the nature of God is—a defence and protection against everything evil.

HOW DO WE GET THROUGH?

Now I am coming to something very practical in this. You know, men put up walls around the Church. They have put up thousands of walls around it. There is the wall of denominationalism, which men have put up, and the wall of certain men's names, such as Lutheranism and Wesleyism, and I could go on with a lot of other names that you know, and if you want to come into the Church you have to come in under one of these names. Sometimes it is the wall of a particular kind of teaching, and if you do not accept that teaching you cannot come into the Church. Sometimes it is a technical system of 'how it is done', and if you do not conform to this particular way of doing things, you cannot come into the Church. Well, I could go on like that. The walls that men have put up are so many, but I have studied these verses about the wall and I don't think I have made a mistake—I cannot find what is of man as defining this boundary.

What can I find on this wall? All I can find is the nature of God manifested in Jesus Christ, and that is the only exclusiveness that God recognizes. You will get in here without any trouble if the nature of Jesus Christ is in you. There are twelve angels at the twelve gates, and when you come to a gate no angel will ask you: 'What denomination do you belong to? What particular line of teaching do you hold?' The angel will look at you and at me, and everyone who wants to get in, and angels do not have to ask questions. They know at once without asking any questions, for the only thing they want to know is: 'Is Jesus Christ in your life? How much are you like Him? How much of Jesus Christ is there in you?' That is the only standard of judgment for being where God is. Have you received the Lord Jesus Christ into your life? Since you did that have you been allowing Him to possess you more and more fully? Has there been a continual increase of Christ in your life? That is the basis of Judgment, and that is the thing which determines whether we can come in or whether we stay out.

Do you think that that is mystical and abstract? Well, let us be very practical. When you travel about this world, as I do, you meet many people.

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Then one day you meet a certain person. It may be that he or she gets into a train where you are, or it may be in some other place. There are other people there, but there is something about this person that makes you say to yourself: 'He is a Christian, I am sure', or 'I am quite sure that she is a Christian.' No word has been spoken, and up to that point you have not said anything, but presently you begin to ask questions, and it is not long before you discover that you are right. This is another child of God! You say: 'I knew you were!' 'Oh, how did you know I was a Christian? I never told you I was.' 'You did not have to tell me. There is something about you that tells me that you belong to the Lord, something quite different from the other people.'

Now that is very simple, but is it true? Why, you can tell in a meeting like this who are really the Lord's people, and anyone who is not the Lord's. That will be what the angels look for at the gates.

Of course, that is only an illustrative way of putting it. We are speaking about dwelling with God in time and in eternity, but it is only possible to dwell with Him if His nature is in us.

I just want to repeat one sentence: That is the only exclusiveness that God recognizes. We are in, or we are out, according to the measure of Christ in us.

VALUING JESUS CHRIST AS THE LAMB OF GOD

That leads us to one other thing before we close. We are told that this wall rests upon the foundation of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. It does not say that the twelve apostles are the foundation, but the foundation is the foundation of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The apostles were the 'sent ones' by the Lord, and when they were sent out into the world what did they preach? What was the foundation of all their preaching? It is all gathered into this one word: the Lamb. You know that when the Apostle John, who wrote this book, wrote his Gospel he very soon wrote: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" (John i. 29), and in different ways all the Apostles who preached Jesus Christ preached the Gospel of the Lamb of God. In this book of the Revelation the words 'the Lamb' occur twenty-six times.

To begin with, the Lamb means the taking away of sin. That is the very beginning of everything which is going to come into God's presence—the taking away of our sin. That is the foundation of this wall.

Then, not only the Lamb of God which takes away sin, but in this book another phrase is used: The marriage of the Lamb. Of course, that is

strange language, but what does it mean? What is a marriage? It is a covenant made between two parties, a covenant of love, and the marriage of the Lamb just means that, by the blood of the Lamb, a covenant is made which unites us with the Lord Jesus. It is the covenant of His eternal love for us, and our covenant with Him, because of His sacrifice, to love Him for ever. The marriage of the Lamb is a covenant of love between Christ and His Church for ever, and it is only those who have entered into that covenant who will be found abiding in God for ever.

And when you come to the end of this book it is: The Lamb's book of life. What is that? Again it is only a figure. I do not think that when we get to heaven they are going to open a literal book. Of course, we have hymns which say that, such as our little children's hymn:

"Is my name written there
In the book grand and fair?"

In the First World War I was out in the Mediterranean with the troops, and on Sunday nights we had a great gathering of soldiers for a service. There were twelve hundred men who had come back, wounded or sick. We used to say: 'Now, boys, what shall we sing?' Do you know what they chose every time as the first hymn? "When the Roll is called up yonder, I'll be there"! Well, the idea is all right, but the Lamb's Book of Life just means the record of those who have received that eternal life by faith in Jesus Christ.

Now that again is very practical. There was a day, when the Lord Jesus was here on earth, that a great crowd gathered around Him, and in it was a poor woman who had had an infirmity for twelve years. She had spent all her living on physicians and no one had been able to help her. She stood on the outside of this great crowd and began to wedge her way through the people. She was pushing this way and that way, and the man who wrote the Gospel tells us that she was saying to herself: "If I do but touch his garment, I shall be made whole" (Matthew ix. 21). At last, after a lot of trouble she got behind Him, reached out her hand and just touched the edge of His garment. Immediately she was made whole. But Jesus turned round and said: "Who touched Me?" The disciples said: "Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" But Jesus said: "Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me" (Luke viii. 46, A.V.). 'Virtue' is another word for 'life', and life had gone out of Him into that woman. The woman saw that she could not hide herself, indeed, this new life meant so much to

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her that she came forward and fell on her face before the Lord and confessed. Jesus said: "Daughter, thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (R.V. margin).

Being in the Lamb's Book of Life just means that life has come out from Him into us by faith in Him. You know, the Lord Jesus knows when life has gone out from Himself into someone else. He knows when anyone has touched Him in faith and received His Divine life. He said: "I came that they might have life" (John x. 10). And when, by faith in Him, we reach out to Him and receive His life, that is recorded in heaven.

When the disciples came back to the Lord Jesus from a mission they said: "Master, even the demons are subject unto us." But He said: 'Don't rejoice in that. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.' The greatest thing is to have our names

written in heaven, and that depends upon our having received the life of the Lord Jesus as the Lamb of God who gave His life for us. I hope that everybody here has his or her name written in the Lamb's Book of Life! There are no physicians who can heal you of the disease of sin, but the gesture of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can do it, and it is those who have made it who are in the Lamb's Book of Life.

This is what determines whether we belong to the Church and to Jesus Christ, and, in this pictorial language, it is this that decides whether we can enter through those gates and into the city—it is just how much we value Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God. That is why we sang:

" 'Tis the Church triumphant singing
Worthy the Lamb!"

(To be continued)

BEING JOINED TO THE LORD

A brief message given on the first Lord's Day morning at the conference in Switzerland

"He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (I Corinthians vi. 17).

"For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body" (I Corinthians xii. 13).

NOW, dear friends, as we come to partake at the Lord's Table, it is well that we are reminded of its wonderful meaning. When the Lord appointed that His people should so gather at His Table, He knew all the fullness of meaning that is gathered into His Table. This is the one divinely-appointed way in which all the great values of Christianity are gathered together, and there is no other way in which everything that Christianity means is expressed.

This Table brings before us all that our Lord Jesus is, and has done. It tells us why He was 'found in fashion as a man', why He, the Son of God, took the form of a man, and it therefore tells us of the perfection of His life. It tells us that there was One, and only One, amongst all mankind who was without sin. It tells us of His death and the atonement for our sins which He made in His death. It tells us that He, who was without sin, was made sin for us. He offered Himself to God for our sins, and His great atoning sacrifice is set forth in this Table. It tells us of His resurrection. We are made partakers, not of a dead Christ, but of a living Christ, and this

loaf and this cup speak to us of this life which He came to give. It tells us that by His death and His resurrection He has overcome death, and in Him, that great enemy of all mankind, death, has been conquered. This Table tells us that He is coming again. ". . . till He come", and so, as we partake, we say we are looking for His coming and are waiting for that wonderful day. What a wonderful sermon this Table is!

But there is one thing at the heart of this Table which includes everything else, and that one thing is the inclusive meaning of Christianity. It is that which is found in the Scriptures we have read: "Joined to the Lord." In so few words you have everything that Christianity means. "Joined unto the Lord . . . one spirit." "Baptized in one Spirit into one body", which is the body of Christ.

This wonderful truth of union with Christ has exhausted every kind of relationship. Without preaching a sermon on every one, may I mention just nine of them:

(a) We are members of Christ. That is what the Word says.

(b) We are members of His body, of which He is the Head.

(c) We are branches of the vine, and He is the vine.

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- (d) He is the Bridegroom, and we are the bride.
- (e) He is the Husband, the Church is His wife.
- (f) We are the temple, and He is the chief cornerstone.
- (g) We are the family, and He is the Elder Brother.
- (h) We are a new race, and He is the new Adam.
- (i) We are the hungry pilgrims, and He is the heavenly food.

Every one of those could have an hour to itself! How full, then, is this union with Christ! He that is joined to the Lord is all that, and that is not all that the New Testament has to say as to the meaning of being joined to the Lord. But all that is centred in the Lord's Table. This Table tells us that those who are the Lord's are joined to Him in all those wonderful meanings.

That is a great blessing, but if you look at the context of I Corinthians vi. 17, you will see that there is a challenge, for this wonderful statement is placed in a very unhappy setting. This is what it says: If we commit ourselves to anyone, we belong

to them. On that very unhappy side, the Apostle says that if you commit your body to a harlot, you belong to the harlot, so that, if you give yourself to the harlot you are one with the harlot. But then the Apostle takes that principle and brings it to us: He who commits himself to Christ belongs to Christ—"He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit".

So this Table challenges us. If we partake of these symbols of Christ's body and blood, we are saying that we have committed ourselves to the Lord Jesus; we are one body and one spirit with Christ. The Apostle is saying that we have given ourselves away. We no longer belong to Satan, or to this world, or even to ourselves. We partake, and in so doing we say: 'I am the Lord's. Spirit, soul and body, for time and eternity, I am joined to the Lord Jesus.'

This is *the* meaning of Christianity and this testimony is right at the heart of Christianity.

I need not tell you how great the Lord Jesus is, and therefore how great it is to be joined to Him. As we come to this Table let us rejoice in the greatness of the meaning of being "joined to the Lord . . . one spirit"!

THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

13. THE TRAVAIL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

WE are going to spend a little more time in the seventh chapter of the Book of Joshua. As you know, this chapter tells the story of a tragic defeat in the life of the people of God. There had been a wonderful experience of victory at Jericho, and that victory shows that it was God's will for His people to go on from victory to victory. We have seen that Jericho represented a complete victory over all the enemies in the land, and it set the standard for all the future, so when we look at Jericho and the great victory there we see what God intended to be the history of His people. But at the very next city they met with defeat—the victory was turned into defeat.

We have already seen the main factor in that defeat: the people had left the real ground of victory. Spiritually they had gone back on to the old ground on the other side of the Jordan. We spent a lot of time on that, but it was not the only reason for this defeat. We touched upon another factor, and it is that upon which we are going to dwell more fully now.

First, there are one or two things connected with that which we must notice.

The two most prominent factors in this story are the ark of the testimony and Joshua. We have seen that the ark is a type of the Lord Jesus and all that God has made Him to be as a testimony for His people, so that it represents the greatness and the glory of Jesus Christ. We need not stay longer with the ark just now, and we will pass on to Joshua.

After the death of Moses Joshua is always seen to be associated with the ark. Now, we must understand what Joshua represents. The ark represents the greatness and glory of Jesus Christ, and Joshua represents the energy of the Holy Spirit. He is not a type of the Holy Spirit, but he represents the *energy* of the Holy Spirit. You remember that when the people had crossed the Jordan Joshua lifted up his eyes and saw a man. He went up to this man, who had his sword drawn, and said: "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come" (Joshua v. 13, 14). So far as the Church is con-

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cerned, the Holy Spirit is the man with the drawn sword. The Apostle Paul speaks of "the sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians vi. 17), and the Holy Spirit is the one with the sword, and the one who is the Captain of the hosts of the Lord. On another occasion Paul said: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (II Corinthians iii. 17). It is the sovereignty and lordship of the Holy Spirit in relation to the people of God.

"And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?" (Joshua v. 14). Joshua, therefore, absolutely submitted himself to the Holy Spirit, and was under His dominion for all that lay ahead. Thus he becomes a representation of the Holy Spirit's energy.

One characteristic of Joshua as representing the energy of the Holy Spirit was that he was always forward-looking in relation to the testimony of Jesus, and the attitude of the Holy Spirit is one of always looking onward, anxious to go on with the testimony of Jesus. If you study the history of Joshua you will see that that was true of him all his life. When the twelve men went out from the wilderness to spy out the land, ten of them brought back an evil report and discouraged the people from going forward, but Joshua and Caleb said: "Let us go up at once" (Numbers xiii. 30). It was Joshua who went over, and here we find him still looking forward. He never looked back, for it was contrary to his very disposition. He could not accept defeat.

Another characteristic of Joshua was that he was always a man for a fight, for a battle. He had led the battle in the wilderness, when Amalek came out against the Lord's people, and here he is in the land leading in the battle.

In these two ways Joshua represents the energy of the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit has His way in our lives we will always be going forward, and we shall neither look back nor shall we stand still. Joshua was like an old war-horse. I remember reading about one once. It was in the days when men went to war on horses, and this one had been in many battles. He came to understand the meaning of the sound of the bugle, and whenever it sounded the Advance he put his ears back and stood erect, ready for the battle. The time came when that old horse was too old to fight any more, and so he was turned out into a field, to spend the rest of his life quietly at rest. One day, after he had been there some time, a coach came along the road by the field, and sitting at the back of the coach was a man with a long trumpet. As the coach passed that field the man put up his trumpet and blew a long blast. The old horse put up his ears and made

a rush right across the field to the road. He was ready for the battle again! But the coach went past, and after a little while the old horse put down his head and his ears, turned round, and walked away. He was very sad! I think Joshua was very much like that—or shall I put it the other way? I think the Holy Spirit is like that: always in the spirit of the battle.

Joshua had never been defeated in battle until he came to Ai. That was the first time in his life that he had been defeated in battle, and we can understand, therefore, why he was so distressed. It says: "And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord" (Joshua vii. 6). He cried unto the Lord and said: 'Oh, Lord, why have You allowed this? All Your enemies who hear of it will say that You have been defeated. Lord, what will You do for Your great name?' And the Lord said: 'Why are you calling to Me? Israel has sinned. They have taken of the forbidden thing.' Then it says that Joshua arose early the next morning and set to work to find out what the sin was. That is the thing with which we have already dealt, and we now come to the other thing.

You see, the Holy Spirit was grieved at Ai, and the energy of the Holy Spirit could not go on while He was grieved. I must remind you that here in the land over the Jordan the people were in a new position altogether. I have said that they were in the position of the Letter to the Ephesians, and in the Letter to the Ephesians (so-called) we have the key to this defeat at Ai. There everything is set in the realm of spiritual conflict. Three things comprise victory or defeat. The three things are: 1. Separation from the ground of the authority of darkness, the prince of this world. 2. The unity of the people of God. 3. The absolute dependence upon God, and no presumption.

When the Lord said to Joshua that "Israel hath sinned"—not Achan, you notice—He first of all meant that a link had been made, by Achan, between all the people and the ground of this world where Satan has his kingdom. It was the disastrous effect of a sinister and subtle return, in principle, to the old Egypt and wilderness ground, from which both the Red Sea and Jordan had meant redemption by Divine power. This opens up the immense matter of the Church's weakness and helplessness before "the world rulers of this darkness" because of a 'world' ground in the Church. The effect is weakness, defeat, and shame. The first step toward recovery has to be a heart-quest to know where and how the devil has found his occasion.

Then in "Ephesians" the unity and solidarity of the Church are an essential basis for ascendancy.

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Israel's responsible men had said that—Ai being so much less than Jericho—only 'some' of the fighters need go up against it. Thus the principle of oneness was violated or ignored. They lost sight of the fact that the prince of this world is the same in a local and particular situation as he is in the greater and more universal, and that the Divine principles are the same however 'small' the situation may appear to be. It was proved and demonstrated at Ai that we cannot have great universal ideas of the Church and its principles, big conceptions and teachings about the Church, and then neglect to observe them in local and—what we might think to be—lesser situations. Achan may have been just a local matter, but he could not be isolated from the general spiritual laws of all Israel. God does not so regard it! "The body is one", and what applies to the whole applies to each and every member, whether individual or corporately local. Achan's family was an affecting factor. Parents, or a parent, may raise serious "Church" issues if they have not—at least—been very clear, definite, and firm as to the home and family situation, so far as Divine principles are concerned. They may fear to lose something by such a course, but there comes a point where faithfulness to God involves God in faithfulness, sooner or later. Yes, sooner or later, failure in spiritual principles will find us out and

disqualify us before God; in the meantime detrimentally affecting the body corporate. Ai says that God's eyes are watching.

Then, this attitude of Israel's soldiers was presumption. It was an attitude of 'We can do it'. That was the essence of Satan's temptation of Adam and the defeat of humanity. It is the very terrible snare of any humanism. We are as much dependent upon Almighty God in a 'minor' issue as in a major, and failure to recognize this may make a very major issue of what we thought was minor.

Now note: Joshua entered into a great travail over this matter. Shall I put that in another way? The grief of the Holy Spirit was registered in Joshua's heart, and until things were put right for the Holy Spirit the people could not go on.

I am putting my finger upon something very important as to the people of God. There is nothing more important in this universe than the honour of the Name of the Lord, and that became the focal point of Joshua's distress. It was no less a matter than the honour of the Name of the Lord: "Lord . . . what wilt thou do for thy great name?" Joshua was afraid that the Name of the Lord would be dishonoured because of this defeat, and the causes of defeat were those we have mentioned. The Holy Spirit is very sensitive to spiritual principles.

(To be continued)

PORTENTS OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

WHILE students of prophecy are occupied with historical signs of the approaching advent of Christ, there are three spiritual portents that should be carefully taken note of.

1. A phenomenal world-encirclement of the Gospel. Never before has there been such a *sovereign* movement of God to see that "every nation" has had the Sound of salvation in Jesus Christ registered in it "for a testimony". By persons, radio, and literature this outreach and "Sound" is a mark of our time which just cannot be mistaken for its range. It may only be the essential fact of salvation in and by Jesus Christ, but again "their voice is gone into all the earth". Jesus said that it would be so of necessity, "and then shall the end come".

2. The filling up of the cup of iniquity.

It is a question whether, in so short a time, there has ever been such a landslide of iniquity. Iniquity is now legalized in those countries which have the greatest history and tradition of the evangelical faith. Israel's release from Egypt synchronized with the "iniquity of the Amorite" being full. May it not be so for the Church?

3. A deep and largely hidden spiritual movement on the part of a "Remnant" for something more real in the knowledge of Christ.

Disillusionment and spiritual hunger are making many seek food and reality with the result that—as Billy Graham has said—many circles of hungry Christians are seeking spiritual fullness *outside* of organized Christianity.

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