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A
WITNESS
AND A
TESTIMONY

“My Servant shall . . . be Exalted
and Lifted up . . . very High”

ISAIAH. 52. 13.

“Wherefore - God Highly
Exalted Him, and gave unto Him
**THE NAME WHICH IS
ABOVE EVERY NAME**”

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" A Witness and A Testimony "

EDITORIAL

BELIEVED OF THE LORD,

Those of you who have become familiar with the form which the WITNESS AND TESTIMONY has taken until now will see that a change has taken place in this issue. We have separated the "news" items from the main part of the paper and are issuing these in a supplement apart. This needs a little explanation, and we trust that what we say in this connection will meet with the appreciation of our many friends. As we may not again cover this ground, it will be best for us to go back and take things up from early days.

It will be known by many that we were formerly associated with the "Baptist Denomination." During those years we sought to make the ministry such as would be spiritually helpful to all who were hungry for spiritual food. This ministry found its expression in a small way in what was then the little local church magazine. But through deep and crisis experiences inwardly and outwardly the Lord led us more and more to see, not only the truth, but the practical meaning and implications of the truth of the universality of Christ, and the heavenly nature and vocation of "the Church, which is His Body."

The main issue of this revelation was that, for us—seeing as we did see—denominationalism, sectarianism, and all divisions which are of earth were a contradiction to, and inconsistent with, what we had been shown. Thus we found that the Lord was leading us out from such and calling us into the spiritual, universal, heavenly ministry of His Son in relation to the *whole* Body as here on the earth.

In the meantime the little paper had been sought by many beyond the local and was itself leading out to the universal. Then the crisis was reached and by a series of movements which bore the marks of the Lord's sovereign hand and the devil's bitter antagonism we found ourselves in the place where we now assemble at Honor Oak.

We called it a "Christian Fellowship Centre," purely and only because we wanted it to be a place in which ALL the children of God of all

connections who needed spiritual food and fellowship might gather. It never was our thought or desire that this should be a centre of a new organised movement or a new "sect." To this we most strongly adhere to this day, and always shall do so. We have many enemies, mostly amongst the Lord's people, and they seem to think that to say the opposite of what we have just said will injure us most. However, we stand there most strongly, and we want to make clear to our *friends* just what the position is.

We feel that the Lord has given us a ministry to all His people, and that this ministry has something—at least—to do with the recovering of His full testimony at the end-time. We feel that the Lord's way is pre-eminently with the assembly as the local representation and expression of the whole "Body." We cannot and do not deny that the Lord has blessed and used other means; missions, societies, etc., and we rejoice in everything which means something for Him. But we see that the New Testament way was in the assembly—ordered according to God's pattern—as the training school, testing ground, and channel or instrument of sending forth to the nations to gather out of them the "people for His name." This constituting of such assemblies is the work of the Holy Spirit and not ours. Therefore no initiative with a scheme is taken by us. Everything must be marked by that life and spontaneity which characterises the Holy Spirit's movements.

It is in this way that things have grown with us. The WITNESS AND TESTIMONY, without any advertisement or propaganda now goes by demand into almost every nation of the earth with every issue.

Out of it has sprung a considerable and growing literature. From the local assembly at Honor Oak a number of the tested and proved children of God have gone to distant and nearer lands, and there are as many or more awaiting the Lord's moment for going. Then spontaneously in many places there has arisen a desire and request for spiritual ministry, and as the Lord has enabled, these have been and are being met, so that regular gatherings are held in various parts. All this looks like a movement, and it is, but please do not put quotation marks over the word or regard it as an *organised* or man-projected movement. This it emphatically is not!

Now, inasmuch as we see the Lord's hand in
(Continued on page 24.)

The Blood, the Cross and the Name of the Lord Jesus

READINGS :—

Series I.—Luke xxii. 17, 18, 20. John vi. 54, 55. Col. i. 20. Hebrews ix. 12-14, 20, 22; x. 19; xi. 28; xii. 24. 1 Peter i. 2. 1 John i. 7. Rev. v. 9, 10; vii. 14-15.

Series II.—Acts ii. 38; iii. 6; iv. 7, 12, 17, 30; viii. 12; xvi. 18; xix. 13-15. 1 Cor. v. 4; vi. 11. Eph. i. 21, 22. Philip ii. 9-11. Rom. vi. 3-8.

BELOVED of God, we have read a good many passages of the Word, and you will have noticed that there are three distinct matters brought into view by them. They are divided into three and refer to three different things, and I have it on my heart to spend just a little time in considering these three matters: namely, the Blood, the Cross, and the Name of the Lord Jesus.

They are important matters in themselves, each one of them. I trust that we shall see something of that importance; but there is another thing related to them which is also very important, especially for the Lord's people, and that is, to discriminate between them, for there is a good deal of indiscriminate use of these words and terms, and I think that confusion or misuse very often means weakness and failure in getting through to the desired end. It is important when we go into war to know what weapons we need, and to be able to choose and intelligently use those weapons; for to be in a warfare using a certain kind of weapon which we discover is not the one that effects the end is a very embarrassing situation. And so it is important for the Lord's people to be able to understand the peculiar value and meaning of these different things which have so close a relationship to their spiritual victory. It is also very important for unsaved men and women to know the meaning of these terms, these words which are so frequently upon Christian lips: "the Blood of Jesus Christ," "the Cross of the Lord Jesus," "the Name of Jesus." We have no thought of covering the whole of that ground in this short space, we can merely introduce it and touch upon it and as the Lord leads at some future time to enter more fully into it.

The Blood.

We begin, then, with the Blood of Christ, about which we have read so much in the Word, and yet with all a bare fragment of what there is in the Word concerning it: and we may immediately point out that the Blood of the Lord Jesus has specifically and primarily to do with sin, and redemption unto life. I would that you would just take that statement and go to the Word of the Lord with it and investigate and enquire much more fully than we can do now, and you will see how truly that is borne out. The Blood has to do with cleansing and with redemption unto life, that is, it relates to sin and to all Satanic legal ground. When we speak of Satanic legal ground we mean this, that by nature, according to the Word of God, and according to the spiritual experience and knowledge of those who have come to the Lord Jesus, all the creation is in bondage to the Devil. You may dispute that because you do not know it experimentally and personally. I would suggest that you come to the Lord Jesus and you will soon discover how much you are in bondage to the Devil, for it is only a prisoner who tries to escape who discovers that he is really a prisoner. But the Word of God tells us what is true, and the spiritual experience of all who have really come to Christ proves the Word of God to be true: that the whole of the race, and of creation, by nature is now in bondage to the Devil; but the power, the authority of Satan rests upon a condition, and that condition is sin, and he has legal ground for maintaining his hold where sin is, his hold upon the race is through sin. He grips, and holds, and maintains his hold through sin. You may say that sin is the chain by which the whole race is in the power of Satan, and sin therefore is his legal ground; in so far as he has legal rights to his position, those legal rights are constituted by the condition into which man has fallen by his own sin: sin against God and obedience to Satan. The Blood, therefore, relates to sin and to all Satanic legal ground, and the words which perhaps best represent that ground, are condemnation and death. It is with those

words that the Apostle sums up his matchless argument through the first three chapters of his letter to the Romans, where, tracing the course of the ages, and running through all realms of life, testing and examining according to the Divine standard, he at length concludes all under sin: "There is none righteous, no, not one," and he pronounces by the Spirit, the verdict, all are under condemnation and therefore all are under death; and condemnation and death are the words which represent the legal ground of Satan in holding the race in bondage.

The First Need of the Sinner

The initial need and appeal of the unsaved sinner is to the Blood of the Lord Jesus. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." The unsaved sinner, consciously or unconsciously, knowing it or not knowing it, is truly in bondage to the Devil, imprisoned by Satan. The Blood of Jesus Christ relates to condemnation and death, and redemption from condemnation and death unto life: and what the unsaved sinner has to come to as the very first ground of hope is a recognition of the meaning and value of the Blood of Jesus Christ. We shall never get through to God apart from that. We may struggle to break through, to break a way, we may adopt Christian practices and Christian ideals, we may associate ourselves with Christians, we may pass off as Christians amongst them, and perhaps before the world, but this one thing is settled beyond any question or doubt or shakeableness, that in the sight of God no one ever comes out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of the Son of God's love only by way of the shed Blood of Jesus Christ. To ignore that, to overlook that, to fail to see, recognise, accept that means, whatever else may follow, in the sight of God the thing has not been done which makes us a child of God and delivers us from the kingdom of Satan. Oh, it is so necessary, my beloved friends, forgive the strength of emphasis, it is so necessary that we should not be deceived, that we should be in a true position, that we should have no assumption about this, that ours should not be an assumed relationship to God, but that it should be upon God's foundation, God's basis, for only as it is so are we accepted in the Beloved One, the Lord Jesus, and are brought into fellowship with God. The initial need and appeal of the unsaved sinner is to the Blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, as shed for the remis-

sion of sins, by which our redemption has been made, has been secured for us.

"Redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus, Nothing else could ever save our souls." Now that is simple Gospel. It is where everything begins in relationship to God.

The Believer's conflict with the Accuser

And then the conflict of the saved sinner necessitates the Blood, because the conflict of the saved sinner is so very truly with Satan; not now as their master, their lord; not now as the one to whom they are in captivity, but now as the one who would get them back into captivity: he must therefore get them back on to a ground where for them the basis of their escape has been overlooked, forfeited, let go. I mean this: that the conflict of the saved sinner is very largely with Satan as the Accuser. He is called "the Accuser of the brethren."—"For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuseth them before our God, day and night." He watches their movements, he seeks to cause them to move in some way that is not wholly according to the will and the mind of the Lord, to prompt a wrong movement, to provoke a wrong word, to stir up a wrong feeling:

"Christian, dost thou feel them,
How they work within,
Striving, tempting, luring,
Goading into sin?"

and then when you slip, you make the mistake, you stumble in the way, he immediately pounces upon you to accuse you of sin and to bring you under condemnation, to bring upon you a sense of condemnation, to smother you with it and make you feel you have grieved the Lord and the Lord has forsaken you, the Lord has withdrawn from you, to make you conscious of being out of fellowship with God. And so as the Accuser he is trying to make us sin and then pounce upon us with condemnation to drag us back into his grip: and the saved sinner needs the precious Blood of the Lord Jesus as an instrument with which to meet the enemy as the Accuser. Don't you ever believe beloved, that if you slip, if you make a mistake, if you stumble in the way, if you grieve the Lord, that that necessarily severs you from God, that that necessarily means that the Lord forsakes you. What might be the consequence of your wilfully, consciously being in the way of sin, violating the will of God, I would not care to follow out; there is no doubt that you

would get into darkness, very much into the power of Satan, you would lose the joy of your salvation, whether you would lose your salvation ultimately or not is not a question for us at this moment, but you would lose all the joy and delight and pleasure of your salvation by persisting in sin. But I am not dealing with persistent sin, I am dealing with the slip, the mistake, the fault, the failure which the enemy immediately having himself brought about, quickly snaps up, takes advantage of, and makes the occasion of accusing us, seeking to bring us under condemnation.

The means to deal with that is the Blood of the Lord Jesus, and the Blood of the Lord Jesus can deal with that instantly. The argument to take to Satan is not: "I am not a sinner; I have not made a mistake; I have not gone wrong." We know we have. The answer is, that in that precious Blood, as we turn to the Lord and confess our failure, humbly, repentantly, acknowledge our mistake before the Lord and grieve in exercise of heart that we should have so failed, the Blood of Jesus Christ goes on in its mighty efficacy cleansing from all sin. It stands us in stead to take that ground from the enemy immediately, but remember, you have got to use your weapon. You have got to know your weapon, and you have got to have faith in your weapon; faith in that precious Blood. And that faith in the precious Blood of the Lord Jesus is our shield which receives the fiery darts of the Wicked One, and is impervious to them. Oh, the inflamed darts of the Wicked One are so often the darts of accusation and condemnation, and we have a shield of faith given to us by God, but it is faith in the virtue and efficacy of the precious Blood of Jesus, even when we have stumbled and slipped. Victory over the enemy, having been given initially through the Blood, is now maintained by reason of faith in that Blood in the hour of accusation. And so the saved sinner's conflict is very largely with the Accuser who is seeking to bring back on to the old ground of condemnation and death, and deliverance continuously from him, as initially, is by that justification which we have through His Blood; no condemnation; faith in the Blood of the Lord Jesus. It is in this sense that the Blood is a weapon. You see in Rev. xii. 11 we are told that: "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb." Now the revised version being more accurate should be noted in its peculiar value. The authorised

version reads: "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." The suggestion is of using the Blood of the Lamb as a kind of weapon with which you slay the enemy; it is a sort of objective thing with which you meet the enemy. If you look more closely you have two things. Firstly, the enemy in Rev. xii. as the Accuser: "The accuser of our brethren is cast down." The Accuser of the brethren is there, it is the enemy in that form. The other thing is: "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb." That does not necessarily mean they took up the Blood of the Lamb as some kind of weapon with which to smite him, but they stood upon the ground of that Blood, and the Accuser lost his power. The Blood has to do with sin all the time, and what the enemy is out to do is to bring us under a sense of sin, and this to defeat and destroy us; but if we are standing on the value and meaning of the precious Blood, and refuse to forsake that ground, the Accuser is cast down from his high place, he is overcome, and we overcome not by some objective conflict, with the Blood, but that we in our hearts stand and refuse to move from the ground of justification through His Blood. "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb."

Now a further step. The Blood is one with the Life. We know that quite well. In the Old Testament from Lev. xvii. we gather very implicitly that "the life is in the blood and the blood is the life," and from John vi. which we have read that same thing comes in: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life." So that the Blood is one with the Life, and that means that initially, through the Blood—our faith in the Blood of the Lord Jesus, our acceptance of its meaning and value in relation to our sin, the Life is given. The Divine Life, Eternal Life, is given through the Blood of the Lord Jesus. Now both the Blood and the Life, speak of the holiness of the Lord, and therefore of cleansing from sin. If sin is fallen into and not instantly repented of, confessed before the Lord and put right, there is an arrest upon the Life, that Life; the Life receives a check, and if the Life and the Blood and the Blood and the Life go together, that means that sin allowed, sin not confessed and repented of, checks the Life and the Blood is suspended in its operation of cleansing and we stand touched, spotted, blemished. And so John, in the passage read says: "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have

fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." There the tense in Greek is: "keeps on cleansing," but there is an "if": "If we walk." What is it to walk? To go on. If we go on in the light; yes, there may be some dark thing touch us, we may touch a dark thing, we may fail, we may slip, go wrong, but that can be put instantly right before the Lord, and we can go on by putting it right away, we can go on in the light and the Blood of Jesus Christ God's Son goes on cleansing. You arrest the operation of the Life and the operation of the Blood if you wilfully harbour sin. If the Holy Spirit shows you wrong and you do not confess it and put it right, if you do not bring it back to the Blood, you have arrested the Divine operation, and you stand there. "If we walk....." So that in failure, confession is necessary, confession is necessary to the Lord, and a putting right away is necessary if the Life is to flow. And the Life cannot flow, only as we recognise that that Life is a holy Life, and it cannot go on in its course alongside of sin. The holy Life of the Lord as represented by His incorruptible Blood cannot go hand in hand with known sin: it cannot! Well, we many of us know that in experience.

The Cross.

Then the Cross. Of course it was in the cross that the Blood was shed, and the Blood is related to the cross and the cross to the the Blood, but doctrinally in the New Testament the cross has its own specific meaning, and as we have seen from the passage read in Romans vi., to which others could be added such as Colossians ii. and elsewhere, the cross has to do with the flesh and the natural man; and the position to which the cross brings us is this; not only our sins have been dealt with, but we have been dealt with, and that we have been crucified together with Christ. Now you can have contradictions if you are not careful—and there are plenty of contradictions about in this way; that there has been constant failure and breakdown and going wrong, and seeking of forgiveness and cleansing, and then not getting very much beyond that; that repeating itself again and again and life becoming a matter of failing and regretting, sinning and repenting, going wrong and being sorry for it, and thus stretched out through all your days; up and down, one day in victory, the next day in defeat; and so it goes on until in many cases the thing comes to an acute crisis

where the individual says: "Well the Christian life is a tremendously strenuous business; it seems nothing but coming to the Lord and asking to be forgiven, going wrong and repenting; very little victory in it." That is not as the Lord would have it, and the secret is very largely here, that we have never recognised that in the Cross of the Lord Jesus we have been set aside by nature, and accepted that position with all that it means; all its implications, all its content, that from that time onward it is no longer I. "I have been crucified with Christ," said the Apostle, "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." It is not to choose our own way, have our own way, our own will, our own desire, to make our own programme for life, to project our own schemes for the future; but to have nothing whatever out from ourselves of any kind, will, mind, desire; but that everything now is from the Lord. When we have come to accept that position, that in Christ's crucifixion we were crucified, in His burial we were buried, then raised together with Him, we receive into our hearts the Holy Spirit of Christ for the purpose and object of governing our lives, directing our course, choosing our way. "No longer I." "One died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again," and that in the power and energy of the indwelling Spirit. Now that is a very utter, comprehensive, thorough-going thing, and the cross means that. It does not mean that after that we shall not fail; we may make mistakes, but there the Blood applies, but what so many of us have had to learn, and so many more have yet to learn is that the cross has its own peculiar value. The Cross does not cleanse from sin, the Cross crucifies the flesh.

Now you can have a great deal of phraseology about the Blood, and be always talking about the Blood, and know little of the Cross. The flesh may be there very much in evidence while all the time speaking about the Blood. The basic thing is necessary, the Cross. "Our old man was crucified with Christ." Do you see the difference? What is the good of you going out to meet the Devil with the Blood if your flesh has not been dealt with by the Cross? He will come in the back door and with all your phraseology about the Blood, he will beat you every time if you have not come to that deep work of the Cross where the natural man has been dealt with. So many are

preaching the Blood, have much phraseology of the Blood, and yet the flesh is rampant in their lives; the "I" is very much in evidence, You may preach the Blood and still be a very self-assertive person with pride, arrogance, ambition and all that kind of thing. Well, the cross deals with the man; the Blood with the sin.

The Name.

Now one word about the Name, and here there is a good deal of confusion. Many people plead the Blood when they ought to use the Name. It is the Name which is the mighty thing against the enemy for the believer mainly in the matter of service. The Name goes beyond the Blood, in this sense (do not misunderstand that), that the Name has to do with the authority of Christ over the enemy. The Blood takes the enemy's ground away from accusation and condemnation. The Name of the Lord Jesus is the mighty thing by which the authority of Satan in every realm is dealt with by those in whom sin and the flesh have been dealt with. Oh, you want something more than to have sin put out of the way. You need to be in a position of authority over the works of the enemy, not merely in your own life but all around in situations, as he comes up everywhere on this earth. And so it is in the Name that that power is found. The Name represents the authority of Christ — and *in* Christ — over the enemy. Acts xvi. is a classic instance. What you have there, as you will recall, is Paul, who stood in all the virtue of the precious Blood in relation to sin in his own life; Paul, who stood in the fulness of the meaning of the Cross as to having nothing of himself, but all of Christ—oh, he was in a strong position, a well crucified man, standing by faith on "no condemnation" ground through the Blood—and now finding the enemy busy at work outside, looking to the Lord for His moment, His time for dealing with the situation, not rushing in from himself, but after "many days," waiting for the Lord's time, then in the Name of Jesus Christ commanding this Satanic work to cease. Paul stood in a position by the Cross and the Blood and the Name, this three-fold strength, but he dealt with the thing in the Name, he did not plead the Blood for it. We sometimes see the work of the Devil objectively and we begin to plead the Blood. That has got to be appropriated, we have to see that that has been applied to our own hearts or else he will turn

upon us. Paul did not plead the Blood against the enemy, he came in the Name. There were others, sons of Sceva who did not stand on the ground of the Cross, who were not standing in the virtue of the Blood, but held a mere formula, saying: "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth," and the demons turned round upon these presumptuous men and answered: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" and these sons of Sceva had the scare of their lives. They discovered that there is nothing in a mere formula, but there is something, there is everything in standing on the ground of the Cross, in the virtue of the Blood, bringing us into the authority of the Name. And the Name has that objective value of authority over the enemy. "God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow," etc. "He raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenlies, far above all rule and authority and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." The Name represents the exaltation of the Lord Jesus. And so the Blood cuts us off from sin, the Cross cuts us off from ourselves, the Name brings us into union with an exalted, enthroned, authoritative Lord.

Now I trust that without saying any more we have got some of our difficulties straightened out, at any rate, we are seeing a little more clearly the peculiar value of each of these things and we shall not confuse them; and we shall see how that mighty and precious Name carries with it all the honour and glory of our Christ, and that if He is to be honoured and glorified in us it must be that sin is dealt with, we are set aside, and Christ is pre-eminent, enthroned, predominant in all things for us.

T. A.-S.

"A Witness and a Testimony"

A BI-MONTHLY PAPER OF SPIRITUAL
FOOD AND INSTRUCTION FOR
THE LORD'S PEOPLE

No Subscription, but maintained by the
gifts of those who are helped

The Cross, in Relation to Service and Fellowship

READING : Psalm cxvi.

THE Lord has laid upon my heart an emphasis relating to the 15th verse of this psalm : "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Let me hasten to say that we are not turning this into a funeral service. These words are frequently applied on such occasions. The whole point is this. Here is a man who was in great distress and the Lord has delivered him. The Psalmist's whole cry is one of gratitude to God Who has delivered him from the pains of death, and then he says : "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." There is no contradiction in this. What is being stressed here is not death unto death but death unto life, and here is the abiding principle of the cross of Calvary as the way out from death. The way by which this man found deliverance from his fears and his problems, from all the things which threatened him with death, was by means of the cross of Christ. He has been delivered out of death. Look at the Psalm still a little more closely. It begins by praising the Lord Who has heard him, and then he recounts his experience. "The cords of death compassed me.....Then called I upon the name of the Lord ; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul," and then again he bursts out with a note of praise. Then in verse 11 he writes : "I said in my haste, all men are liars." That word translated "liars" has the sense of failure. It is the same original word as "fail" in Isaiah lviii. 11 : "Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." That is the man who is blest of the Lord : the waters do not fail, the waters that ought to be there fulfilling a specific purpose are present and effectual. And the psalmist says in our psalm that men, who in the intention of God were created to have dominion, are "liars"—they have failed of the very thing for which they were created ; men who ought to be deliverers, disappoint. It is of no use looking anywhere for a man to deliver him from the forces that are against him. He said

that "in haste." And then in verses 12-13 comes another burst of praise as from one who after all has found deliverance. The point is this. He said all men are failures, but he found a man Who was not a failure, Who was not a sham, a lie. In the words of Luther's hymn, he found a "Proper Man." And then he says : "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Precious in the sight of the Lord is the blotting out of all other men—failures, every one of them—and the bringing into view of this one Proper Man, Who can and does deliver.

All Preciousness is in Christ only

Now do let us get rid at once of the funeral service atmosphere. We are not thinking about the interment of a dead body, saying precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of this one, because his soul has gone to the Lord and there is something precious about this to the Lord. God forbid that I should take anything away from that application of the word, but we pass on to something more. It would be of very little present help to you and me to know that after we had ceased to be here and death had carried us away, there was something precious to the Lord. No, the preciousness the Lord sees in the death of the saint is while the saint is still very active on the earth, praising God out of a heart that is very much alive. What is the death of the saints to which the psalmist refers ? I think it is simply this. God created man that He might have pleasure in him, in the whole race of men ; but because of man's failure through sin God has pleasure in One Man only, and that Man is Jesus Christ our Lord, His spotless, holy, well-beloved Son ; and if you read anywhere in God's Word that something is precious to Him, you can take it that somewhere in that is Jesus Christ, for nothing else is precious to God the Father except Jesus Christ His Son. The word precious means honourable. The same word is used of precious stones, jewels : things of great worth, things that a man sets great store upon. God sets no store upon

sinful things; God gives no honour to things which are through and through infected with the venom of Satan's hatred against Himself. God sets no honour upon the rest of men, all of whom have become polluted with the serpent's sting; there is nothing precious to the Lord in you and me as men. (I am not saying that God does not love us with an infinite love and long for our souls' salvation: He surely does.) But there is a Man Who is infinitely precious; and it says here "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." It brings before us this fact, that somewhere bound up with this death of the saints is the Person of Jesus Christ. And what is it that is precious here? It is the cross, it is the death, the resurrection of Christ. That brings us immediately to the whole question of Calvary and its significance. In a word I want to state something of what the cross of Christ stands for.

Death with Christ essential to Service

The cross of Christ stands, on the side of death, for the blotting out by God of the whole old creation realm, which includes the whole race of men, you and me; the blotting out of the whole human race from the presence of God as a thing worthless, base, impossible to Him. I want to stay with that. You and I as men and women, by the very fact that we all have a sinful nature by birth, are incapacitated from being in ourselves precious, valuable, serviceable instruments to God, and the cross of the Lord Jesus has once and for all ruled us out. Now our text refers to "saints," not "sinners," and I am thinking particularly at this point of those who are in the special sense the Lord's servants. There may be some here to-night who have not come as servants of the Lord to realise that they must die before they become of value to God. As servants of God, naturally endowed with human ability, religiously disposed, we may think "The Lord is good to me, He has given me a spiritual tendency and I am working as hard as I know for Him." All that we are in the realm of our natural man is ruled out by the cross of Christ, and if anything that is precious in the sight of God is to be found identified with us it is on this basis alone, that we are in ourselves brought into fellowship with the death of Jesus Christ, and ruled out utterly in our service to Him. You and I cannot serve Him. That is a very categorical statement, but it needs emphasising again and again. There is not a man or

woman here who can serve God as a merely natural being. Not all that we are with our human attainments, though the best that man has, can satisfy—we have to come to the place where it can be said of us: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of these saints." It is good to the Lord when it can be said concerning His servants: "That minister of the Gospel has died; that Sunday school teacher has died; that person who is so glad the Lord gives him an opportunity of witnessing in his office, praise God he has died." The Lord can look down and say: "Precious.....is the death." It is just this: we have realised as men and women, there is nothing in us that can serve the Lord, and we have accepted the meaning of His cross in the ruling of us out and we have taken our place in His death once and for all. We have died as the Lord's servants, we have said "I cannot." Let us stress yet again that our text mentions saints, not sinners, and it applies to every saint. When you and I come to the place where we accept the fact that God has ruled us out, we become identified with something in which God sees His beloved Son; now we are in something worth while, honourable, precious to God. You say: "Was not all my former service precious to Him?" Your love and devotion were, being the expression of His Son's Spirit in you; but not so the activities of your natural mind and life, however much zeal and energy you displayed. Far more precious was it to Him when you came to the place where you said "Lord, I cannot." You there came into the sphere of the work and person of Him Who is precious to God, and, believing into the death of Christ, you entered into a death that is precious. "For you that believe is the preciousness" (1 Peter ii. 7). The whole preciousness of Christ in the eyes of His Father is made over to those who accept their identification with Christ in His cross. Have you in your own sphere of service ever come to that place where you realized that in the death of Christ you were put out of the way, that the mercy of God was there ruling out your sin-marred self? And this, not simply for the negative reason that He could not receive the service of such an one, but for the blessed and positive reason that He desired that there might come in through you the activity of that one Proper Man who can and does bring satisfaction to the Father's heart. Oh, if you would but die the death of the saint, come into

fellowship with Christ in the death of His cross, become one of those of whom it could be said: "Precious is your death," that Christ living in you might make you the channel of the Holy Ghost's activity, that every act, thought, word, through you might be precious! God does not desire this death of any saint as an end in itself. He desires that we should take our place in the fellowship of Christ's death that the life also of Jesus might be manifest in us. It is a striking thing that the words of verse 10 of this psalm—"I believed, therefore have I spoken"—are quoted in 2 Cor. iv. 13 and the words surrounding them are these: "For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us but life in you. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken: we also believe and therefore speak: knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." Thus the words from psalm cxvi. are quoted in the midst of this section which is explaining the effect of the cross experimentally applied to the Lord's children—that the death of the cross is essential to the natural man, even in the realm of the mortal body, in order that the life of Jesus may be manifested. God desires that every man and woman of us should come to an end of our natural selves, in order that the spiritual power, life and grace of His Own Son might be manifested through us. I ask my own heart, and you, whether we have come into fellowship with Jesus Christ in His death, and whether we have stepped through by faith into fellowship with Him in His resurrection. It is that that is precious to God.

Christ Himself the Equipment for Service

We have been often reminded that when everything of time is finished, the ages rolled up, eternity ushered in, God will have a creation in which everything will be an expression of Christ: whatever you hear, wherever you look, will speak of Christ. He is longing for that day, and the Holy Spirit has no other objective in His activity. He is working in the saints so that more and more there shall be only Christ, the one Proper Man, expressing Himself through them. Are you and I in line with Him in His working? If we ask ourselves in the presence of God, has everything for which we have been responsible this week been the

expression of Christ? Surely if we know our own hearts we shall have to confess that it has not been so. Here you find the answer to the problem of those who seek to attain unto a place where they become holy once and for all, or attain to a certain measure of fitness in themselves which makes them "good enough" to serve the Lord. Beloved, goodness and holiness are only in Christ, and we never shall be in ourselves fit for His service. But as in Christ we lay hold by faith on what He is, accepting the fact that the very best of us are not accepted, are ruled out by the cross, and only as Christ expresses Himself through us does God get value, that is the way to attain to the place we want to come to. A constant faith attitude, laying hold of Him, counting as filthy rags our own righteousnesses; in Him strong and serviceable: hold fast your position by faith and He will use you. Do not wait until you attain somehow to a high water mark of merit and only then go out to serve Him. Not your own personal capacities, but the merit and power and glory of Christ resting upon you are your equipment. In actual experience, though we lay hold by faith and with all our might say: "Lord, I will to live by Thee," we do fail sometimes, we do fail to walk in the light; but I beseech you, lay hold in fresh faith to-night upon that one Proper Man and let the Lord by His Spirit work through you, you being but a vessel, counting yourself to be not precious or usable until you have accepted your place in the death of Christ. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Then you rise up by faith in the power of His resurrection and become a channel through which He can do His own mighty works. And you will know the power of a holy life just as long as you maintain your faith hold upon the Lord. So much for service.

True Fellowship only at the Cross

I want to come back to the matter of fellowship, which our theme touches in the most vital manner. Herein lies the secret of the beginning and the end and the continuance of spiritual fellowship. The necessity for this among ourselves as individuals is the crying need of God in every place. Fellowship between the Lord's people is founded upon the fact that everyone of them has died in and with the Lord Jesus Christ, and until that fact is recognised by all, true fellowship in the Holy Ghost is impaired. The breach of fellowship between you and another child of God is due to the fact

that you have known one another after the flesh, and you are not knowing this experience of death. Sift your position and you always come to this fact, that you and that other one are not living in fellowship in the death of the Lord Jesus: the death of the saint is not a present reality in one or both of you. If the one Proper Man, who one day will fill everything with Himself, were alone expressing Himself through you, in thought, word and deed—if the response you made to the other child of God, the attitude you adopted when he treated you hurtfully, the manner in which you conducted yourself, your looks—if all were the expression of Jesus Christ, and it were equally so in the other one, therein would be the basis of Christian fellowship. Fellowship is Christian fellowship in the measure in which it is that—the expression of Christ. It is in another world altogether from mere companionship—being on good terms with your friends. It is the mingling of Christ through you with Christ through another, and you are meeting in the throne, and in the one Man, Jesus Christ, you are finding union. Is it not true that when you come and look up into His face and your whole being is going out to Him, and another at your side is doing the same, any differences you may have had between yourselves are lost sight of, you are occupied only with the Lord? Those things about the other which irritate you, you forget: you are both occupied with one Man up there in the glory and you have fellowship one with another. “If we walk in the light as he is in the light”—the light of His presence, the light of His face shining into our hearts—“we have fellowship one with another” (1 John i. 7). Each of us is knowing *Him*, and we have fellowship. Take your own experience with another child of God this week. You came together and you began to be frank with one another, and said in effect: “You are in the wrong and my position is a right one, and until you come to see it we cannot go on.” Your eyes were fixed upon that one and yourself, taking into account all the circumstances, deciding on the basis of reasonable judgment who is right and who is wrong on this point and on that, coming to a conclusion on balance that you are in the right, and you cannot give way because it would be compromise of righteousness to do so. You have been knowing that other one after the flesh all the time—knowing *them*, not knowing *Him*, taking note of their rough points, not the glory of

Christ; looking at the outer man, not the inner man. You have got to look at the One within. If you and I look at one another we shall rub one another the wrong way; and if you let that about me which you do not like occupy your mind, it will tinge all your outlook with impurity—if we know one another after the flesh that will be the effect.

Death with Christ solves the Problem

I emphasise my sense that this is a timely word. I know nothing among the Lord's people more urgent than this in the realm of relationships—knowing one another after the flesh. I beg you, I exhort my own heart, go to God on the matter; where you and another are living in a relationship which does not honour the Lord, so that if worldly people knew they would say: “A fine state of affairs.” Take it to God. It does not make any difference who is right or wrong. In Col. iii. 13, we are bidden to forgive each other if any have a complaint against another, even as the Lord forgave us. The question of right or wrong does not arise—all the wrong was on our side and all the right on the Lord's, yet He sought us in His love, that He might win us to Himself. “So also do ye.” You may be a hundred per cent. in the right, it does not make any difference; you must not know the other person after the flesh, nor stand on the ground of your superior rights and refuse to know him in Christ until he apologises and puts things right. You must know him as a fellow-member in Christ and love the Christ in him. You say it is impossible? It is, until you know the fellowship of Christ's death; but when you and I have taken the grace to go and be indented with Christ in His cross we shall be able to do it. How often we see these cases of unhappy relationships among the Lord's people; and though you who may be involved are wholly in the right so far as the merits of the case are concerned, in the sight of God you are responsible for the whole position continuing unless and until you take your place in Christ's death and accept the meaning of it for the ruling out of the flesh. And when you do this, this blessed result follows—all the indignation which you felt, the sense of hurt and injustice, the wounded dignity, the fretted spirit—all ceases from you and you come into a new liberty and joy in the Lord. Let me urge you to come there, and trust the Lord to bring the other person there too. “But,” you say, “if I do that and do not stand up for

my rights they will assume they have been right all the time and matters will be worse than ever." Trust the Lord to apply the cross to the flesh in the other as He has done it in you. How do you know but that they are adopting just the same attitude as yourself? There might be two here to-night estranged in spirit and He is saying the same thing to both of you. You have to take your place in identification with Christ: "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh." If there are two here to-night who are in any measure estranged, it is as though you were each alone responsible for the situation. Take your place in Christ in the fellowship of His death. Let His death work in you in the ruling out of your knowledge of the other one after the flesh. You will go away finding love flowing out of your heart; your problem solved when you have fellowship with Christ in His death. How did Jew and Gentile become fellows? The Lord ruled them both out by His cross and made of the twain one new man. And having come to the Lord, how miserable a time must the Jew have had who refused to recognise fellowship with a Gentile believer, until he took from the Lord grace to die as a Jew and recognise in Christ there was one new man, one new creation, "where there cannot be Greek and Jew." (Col. iii. 11.)

Our Responsibility for His Coming

What you and I need and what God needs is the death of the saints, and when He sees the death of the saints He says: "This is precious." It is a grander day for you and for God, the day of your death thus, than the day of your natural birth (Eccles. vii. 1). A far more precious thing to Him when you thus die than when you came into this world born in iniquity. The day you see your death with Christ in His cross and stand into it and say: "I no longer live but Christ liveth in me," is a far better day than the day when you were born in sin without Christ, because it is the day when the Son of God is liberated in you. Jesus Christ the Son of God incarnate, takes up His abode in your heart and becomes by the consent of your surrendered will the very life of your whole being. Although you die, you live in the power of another life. That is the foundation of Christian fellowship—the grace of Christ. A message like this calls for definite seeking of the Lord, definite going to God to ask Him how far the thing does apply to us in any relationship of ours. The issue with which we

are dealing is not just that of getting on more comfortably with one another than we have been, the issue is the facilitating of God's great eternal purpose of making Christ Jesus His Son to be all and in all; and as long as you and I remain as ourselves, apart from the surrender of our being to Him to possess, in that measure we are contributing to the arrest of God's eternal purpose. That Christ might be all and in all is His purpose. If I allow a strain to continue in my relationship to you it is deliberately arresting the purpose of God, holding back the coming of the Lord Jesus, perpetuating the agony of this world. Your taking offence at some unkind remark, your harbouring a grievance with someone—you are delaying the coming of the Lord Jesus. If you are allowing a strained relationship to exist, to continue—it may have gone on for 20 years but from this night God holds you responsible and by the grace of God, though it costs you humbling, take your place in His death and let that one Proper Man express His own love, His own life, His own grace, through you. I want to lay this as solemnly as I know how upon you. God charges us to-night in the Name of the Lord Jesus with the responsibility of delaying His Son's coming in glory just in the measure that we are allowing an unsatisfactory relationship with another child of God to be outstanding. There is only one way for you to deal with it and that is to go back to the place where you died in Christ and to take by His grace the spirit of humility, to humble yourself, to go down and serve that other one who, it may be, is still in the wrong, to serve them in Christ's Name. Not to harbour offence. A child of God is Christ's representative. He that touches a child of God, though he be the least, touches Him. You see, if you treat a child of God in a spirit of stand-off-ishness you are treating Christ like that. That is terribly solemn. When Christ drank the cup He drank a cup of bitterness; He invites us to have fellowship in the cup of salvation (see verse 13 of our psalm). One ingredient in that cup is fellowship in His death. How can I let my life be poured out in return for all His benefits? Accept my fellowship with Him in His death. You will hasten the coming of the Lord by that way more than any other. It is precious to God because it brings Christ in, and as He sees His Son in all of us, a company of people all filled with His Son, presenting His Son to Him, that is worship

and therein is fellowship. Would to God that every assembly of His people were thus! Would to God that Christ filled every heart in every assembly! It is our responsibility to see that He fills us. Is He filling you? Is Christ filling you through and through? He will only do it as you consent to your death as a saint, as a servant of God, just as much as a sinner.

As you consent, yield your members a living sacrifice unto Him for Him to fill, to use. God waits, longs, yearns for it, and Christ drank that cup to make it possible. I call upon you in His Name to see to it that you do not frustrate the grace of God. Will you seek His grace for it?

G. P.

The Testimony and its vessel unto the time of the end

The abiding message of the book of Daniel

In this introductory word it will be necessary for us to take a broad view of what is before us and to be occupied mainly in a general outline. The more specific spiritual application will remain for subsequent consideration and you will understand that the peculiar nature of this present time is just in preparation for what may follow.

We shall have to take what this book ('Daniel') brings into view along a two-fold line, in the main. Firstly the historical and prophetic; and then secondly, the typical and spiritual. But I would like here immediately to say that it is not in one's thought or intention to deal with the book of Daniel in any way exhaustively along prophetic lines, that is, it is not just prophecy as contained in this book which will occupy us, although that will be latent and sometimes patent all the way through.

We are aware that prophecy by itself need not be spiritually helpful or enriching or building up. It may be very interesting, very fascinating, very educational, but it does not always have a spiritual effect, and I do not think the Lord ever intended His people just to study prophecy as a subject, but to recognise that everything in His thought is intended to reach down into the life and to make very radical changes there, and in order for prophecy to do that, you have to do a great deal more than study dates, times, seasons and signs. There has to be a spiritual interpretation and application, and it is that which we have especially in mind here. But for the present moment we just take some more or less broad view of what is here brought before us.

2,500 Years of this World's History

We know that the Book of Daniel covers and outlines that part of this world's history which was designated by the Lord Jesus Himself as "the times of the Gentiles." You will remember that He said (it is recorded in Luke xxi. 24): "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," and this Book of Daniel covers, and outlines, that period; roughly a period of some 2,500 years. It commenced when the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were entirely overthrown and Gentile powers took possession of their land; in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar introduced the times of the Gentiles, the Gentile world-powers; and never since that time has there been a king of Israel or Judah. Now the outline of this period is given to us largely in the second, seventh, eighth and ninth chapters of this book.

... In the second chapter we have the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and the seventh and the eighth chapters are enlargements of the second, that is, a fuller account of what is contained in the image of that dream. I am not going to attempt to deal with all the details of that, but just to remind you of that image and what it pointed to.

As you will remember, the image had a head of gold, and interpreting the dream to Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel said: "Thou art this head of gold," which of course was Nebuchadnezzar and his empire, the Babylonian empire. And then the image had its chest and arms of silver; you will notice that that is inferior to gold and portrayed an inferior kingdom which would follow that of the

Babylonian. It pointed on to the Medo-Persian empire. Then the trunk and thighs were of brass, a still more inferior empire following that, which was fulfilled in the great Macedonian empire. Then the legs of iron and the feet part of iron and part of clay, pointed on to a still more inferior empire, namely, the Roman, the two legs representing the eastern section and the western section of the Roman empire. The feet, the iron speaking of the monarchical aspect of that empire, that government, and the clay speaking of the democratic aspect. Over the territory covered by that fourth empire to-day there are monarchies and republics, a literal fulfilment in our own day and for many years past of that which was foreshadowed 500 years B.C. Then another thing is said concerning that fourth empire, that in the midst of those kings the God of heaven would set up a kingdom which should never be destroyed, and which would never be in the hands of another people; a stone cut without hands should break those kingdoms in pieces. We have seen a very large fulfilment of that; the God of heaven has set up His kingdom in the midst of the kingdoms of that fourth world-empire, the Roman empire. Against that kingdom of the God of the heavens no world power has yet been able to prevail, although they have wielded the full weight of their might against the saints of the Most High: butchered and massacred them and determined with a diabolical determination to wipe them out; it is those kingdoms that have gone to pieces, the stone cut without hands has broken them and the kingdoms which have set themselves against the Lord and His Christ are fast becoming stories in history books of glories of past days, and the kingdom of the God of heaven goes on never to be destroyed, and never to be entrusted to the hands of any mere world-power, it is in the hands of the saints of the Most High. There will yet be a greater fulfilment of this; a literal one, and not only a spiritual one. Well, that is the second chapter in brief, so far as Daniel's image is concerned, and then as we said, chapters 7 and 8 are an enlargement of that. In chapter 7 you have the four beasts coming up out of the sea. The sea, as we here know, represents the unorganised mass of mankind. Coming up out of the sea are these four beasts. The first was like a lion and that again represents Babylon. You remember Jeremiah, in prophesying the overthrow of Israel and Judah, and the coming

captivity, spoke in typical language about the one who would come up and carry them away and destroy them. He said: "The lion is come up," and here is the lion coming up out of the sea, Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian empire.

The second was the bear, and that again points to the Medo-Persian empire. On its side, (you notice the detail) meaning that Persia was its strong element. It had three ribs in its mouth, speaking of three great provinces of that empire, Syria, Lydia and Asia Minor.

The third beast, the leopard, speaking of the Greco-Macedonian empire. This leopard had four wings typical of its rapid advance, fulfilled so clearly in the conquests of Alexander the Great, sweeping advances in all directions. It had four heads which pointed to the parting of the empire into its four territories of Syria, Egypt, Macedonia and Asia Minor.

Then the fourth beast, the great nondescript beast, pointing to the Roman empire. Ten horns, speaking of ten provinces, and then one small horn destroying the three; the eyes of a man, a mouth speaking great swelling things. Much of this yet awaits fulfilment.

Now we, of course, could go on with that historic, prophetic side, but a hurried look at Chapter 8 will complete all that we intend in this connection for the time being. In Chapter 8 you have the Medo-Persian empire, firstly as a ram with two horns, indicating the Medes and the Persians, the Persians the last and the stronger side, conquered in three directions, and those three directions are the three ribs of Chapter 7.

Secondly, the Greco-Macedonian empire is a he-goat; swift, that is, as the leopard kingdom of Chapter 7, with one horn, that is Alexander the Great. It is most important to realise this was all written some hundred years before Alexander the Great was born, and you see these conquests of that monarch as he leaped across the Hellespont and fought successful battles, and then moved on up the banks of the Indus and Nile and then to Shushan, the battle of the Granicus, and then the battle of Issus, and then his great battle of Arbella. He stamped the Persian to the ground and soon Syria, Phœnicia, Cyprus, Tyre, Gaza, Egypt and Babylon were all conquered. After this he conquered Bactria and defeated the Scythians. Thus he stamped upon the ram.

"But when the he-goat had waxed very

great, the great horn was broken." The early death of Alexander was thus predicted. He died a drunkard at the age of thirty-two years.

Now you may be wondering what all that has to do with us at this present time, but as we said at the outset, there is a spiritual side to this. There is, of course, its value of seeing the Word of God fulfilled so minutely, and the Spirit of God being vindicated along all these detailed lines, but there is a very great deal more than that in it and we want to come to the main spiritual features of this particular age as indicated by this Book of Daniel, and we can gather those up briefly.

The Spiritual Features of this History

Firstly, we are impressed by this book with the fact that the government of the world on the human side is seen to be for this long period in the hands of Gentile rulers. That carries with it a very great deal more than is apparent on the surface, and we shall see something of what that includes as we go along.

Then in the second place, in a special and distinctive way the kingdom of God of the heavens is seen to be operating. Now put those two things together and you have something of tremendous significance. On the one hand, the fact that for some 2,500 years of this world's history, on the human side, its government is in the hands of Gentile rulers, and on the other hand, the fact that with the introduction of that *regime* there is so much said about the rule, the government of the God of the heavens. I do not know whether you have been impressed with that phrase, and similar phrases, in the Book of Daniel. If you care to make a note and look it up I will just give you some of the places in which that phrase and like phrases are used. Five times in Chapter 2: ii. 18, 19, 28, 37, 44. Five times in Chapter 4: iv. 13, 26, 31, 35, 37: then in v. 23: vi. 27; vii. 13, 27.

Now that has a two-fold force. It has that general force which we have mentioned, that while Gentile powers, on the human side, have the government of this world in their hands, the heavens do rule. There is a specific emphasis laid upon the government of the heavens, and the God of the heavens. We shall come back to that later on, but there is another thing which goes along with that, which carries its own significance. Daniel was a Jew, probably of the seed royal, and if not of the seed royal one of dignity in the Hebrew race. If you read in Chapter 1 you will see

that those that Nebuchadnezzar required to come in to his court were to be taken from the seed royal or those outstanding in dignity, and Daniel and his friends were chosen on that ground. Now Daniel evidently held an important place in the Hebrew race and the Book makes it quite clear that Daniel had a special concern for Jerusalem, and the Lord's interest in Jerusalem, and the Lord's people the Jews. His windows were up toward Jerusalem three times a day, and he carried his own people as a great burden upon his heart, and yet withal he never speaks of the Lord as the God of the Jews, or of Israel, but always the God of the heavens. That is a Gentile age feature, and it brings in God's specific purpose in the age, which is not the Jews as such, though included in the purpose. It brings in a heavenly calling, not an earthly one. "Partakers of a heavenly calling." It brings the heavens in with something which specifically relates to the heavens as differing from the Jewish kingdom on the earth, and shows that in this age the heavens are interested in *that*; that is the thing in which the heavens are concerned, this heavenly object. The God of the heavens is always seen here; it is the heavens ruling, and we shall see in what connection more specifically as we go on.

A Person, A Testimony, An Instrument

This rule of the heavens, therefore, is related to a Person, a Testimony and an Instrument. That person is the One here called "The Son of Man." Everything is pointing towards that Person, and the issue of this book is found in that Person, everything here is moving on toward the day when that Person shall be the one pre-eminent Person. The heavens are ruling and over-ruling the world-kingdoms towards that end. Toward a Person, a Testimony; that is, the Testimony of Jesus. That is the spirit of prophecy, we are told: "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The heavens are ruling and over-ruling in relation to the testimony of Jesus. And then in relation to an instrument, that instrument is the Church, and it came in with the Gentile period. That Church is represented typically and spiritually by Daniel and his three friends. It is typified by the remnant which was the issue of the testimony of these four. Now I hope you may be able to grasp that. It will leave a general impression upon you if you cannot grasp the details.

Thus, then, there are three things clearly

in view in the main. One, the set course of the age, by Divine planning, heading up to Christ. That is very clear in the book of Daniel. The set course of the age—all these Gentile powers with all that was bad and wrong in them, nevertheless by Divine appointment (not bad by Divine appointment, but the power, the rule by Divine appointment) it is in the Divine plan, and in spite of the Divine planning being taken hold of by evil men and all the wrong that they introduce, God is carrying on toward His purpose and causing these things to head up to His Son; that is the rule of the heavens. It ought to come to us with fresh emphasis—(I know very well how I am covering very old ground for many of you, for myself this is very old ground indeed, but there are perhaps younger servants of the Lord who have not been taken through the prophetic school very thoroughly, and for whom, perhaps, the barest outline of things may be helpful to a closer study)—that these world empires, these Gentile empires with all the wrong and the evil and the wickedness and the antagonism to God, are nevertheless in the hands and in the plan of God, and that God has got them not only in His plan but in His authority. They may work against Him but He is compelling their very working against Him to work for Him, and it is all heading up to Christ, the Person.

Secondly, an instrument in the earth is in view which is inseparably bound up with the purpose of the age. Again, that should carry much more weight with us than it does, and if we are going on with the Lord we are going to come to that fact spiritually, perhaps along very violent lines. You and I will, if we come right into God's specific object for the age, come right in it spiritually and vitally. We are going to discover that we are people who count for something. That is not said on the natural level, that is said in that realm where we are going to discover that heaven and hell are involved in this matter of securing this instrument, and heaven will be moved to its centre and hell will be moved to its depths because of that object, that instrument, that Church, or that remnant. It is inseparably bound up with the age purpose and all the kingdoms of the earth are related to it. It touches all the nations in a spiritual way, so that two mighty spiritual hierarchies are drawn in, so to speak, as to the issue, the issue of the government of those nations, and that is being

determined in and by the Church. Have you ever recognised that? That the Church is the instrument for the determining of the government of the nations, because it is the instrument of the testimony of Jesus, that He is Lord; and that is the challenge. The Church stands on the side of heaven, and heaven stands on the side of the Church, the Body of Christ, and heaven and the Church confront hell and all its forces with a challenge of government for the nations in all the ages to come. And so as that instrument is inseparably bound up with the purpose of the age, this third thing comes in, that heaven and hell are actively in operation concerning that instrument. That is of immense significance. You may be a professing Christian engaged in much of the organised work of Christianity, but if you come by the Holy Ghost into God's immediate age purpose spiritually, livingly, and range yourself with Christ as Lord, to be a witness unto Him and His Lordship in this earth, you range yourself against hell and hell at once takes account of you and you become an object of significance and importance.

Now all that comes into view in the Book of Daniel because that is represented and typified by Daniel and his fellows, and the remnant which issued from their testimony.

SIMILARITY BETWEEN ENDS AND BEGINNINGS

I. The Word of God Despised

The next thing is that conditions at the beginning are particularly true of the end. Look at the beginning of this period, this age-period of the Gentile world powers as we have it in the Book of Daniel and in the other prophecies which circle around the beginning. You have Jehoiakim and his apostasy. We will have more to say about it, but remember that all that took place here in the Book of Daniel took place in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim. Who was he? He was a son of Josiah. That makes things exceedingly serious, for Josiah was one of those good kings of the latter days of Israel, through whom a very blessed revival took place in Israel; who recovered things for God, who was true to God in a day of terrible declension and idolatry, and one of the most glorious fragments of those latter years of Israel's history was that under Josiah. And Jehoiakim was a son of Josiah, and Jehoiakim son of Josiah cut the Word of God to pieces and burnt it. He despised the

Word of God. He knew that upon which God had set His blessing, His approval, he knew of days of Divine blessing and the ground upon which that blessing was given, he knew that of which God approved, history was before him in close relationships, he had a godly heritage, but he apostatised, he despised the Word of God. He let go his godly heritage. That was the beginning. He did more than that. He had a brother and he had seen his brother captivated, the King of Egypt deposed his brother and put him in his place and changed his name. He had seen the downfall of his brother because God was against the way that he was taking, and that ought to have been a warning to him. He had seen the blessing of God upon his father and the judgment of God upon his brother. That is how it was at the beginning, and I have said that the conditions at the beginning are repeated very closely at the end of a dispensation. The Word of God is despised to-day. There is a godly heritage, there is a history; it is clear to all who want to see where the Lord's blessing rests and upon what it rests. We have not to look back upon our history very far to see where the Lord comes in in blessing—faithfulness to the Word of God; —and yet to-day that which officially represents Christendom as Jehoiakim officially represented Israel, in the main, despises the Word of God, sets it aside, ignores its history, takes no account of its godly heritage, and things are in a state of declension, largely apostasy, to-day. Yes, as it was then so it is now.

II. Mixture

A further feature was mixture in the things of God. Why, these prophecies pointing on to the captivity of Israel are just full of that, it is mountainous. You open Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the whole plaintive cry is about an awful mixture in the things of God. Take a chapter like Isaiah lxvi. "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." But this is how things are: "He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man, he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck: he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's

blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations." What mixture! No discrimination, no spiritual discernment, perception, sensitiveness about holy things, but mixed up, confused. Are we not truly able to say that in our day at the end of the age there is a terrible mixture in the things of God? Yes, indeed, in the things of God all sorts of things contrary to God have been brought in. Sometimes it is literally appalling. As you know, I travel through the country a good bit by road, and in the course of these many journeys we pass the doors of numerous places of worship—great blazing notices of whist-drives, concerts, concert parties by the most outrageously worldly names and titles. These are the programmes of these "places of worship" (?) and as you take account of Christendom, you shudder sometimes and wonder where the testimony of the Lord is. Awful mixture; so that even honest and sincere people very often do not know their right hand from their left in spiritual matters; what is of God and what is not, and you find very often genuinely sincere Christian people find it possible to do things and go to places and engage in this and that without any conscience whatever as to what the Lord approves of; things are so mixed, the whole background of their life has become so confused that they have entered into an inheritance of mixture and they do not know: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Mixture at the end as at the beginning, and much idolatry.

God requires ultimate Conformity to Original Light

One very brief word in this general outline again. Light is given at the beginning and light is recovered at the end, but with this extra emphasis, that light given at the beginning and recovered at the end is with the special object of that light being conformed to. I want you to get that, because these are abiding features of ages. The beginning of an age is marked by light always. The end of an age is always marked by that same light being brought into view, but an added emphasis of demand for conformity to the original light. Do you get that? In the Book of Daniel, isn't it marvellous, does it not strike you with great force, that the bringing in of Gentile world powers in a man like Nebuchadnezzar should be so marked by light. Nebuchadnezzar, what

was he in himself? Not much as a man, and yet to that man the God of heaven gave the most remarkable and wonderful fulness of unveiling of world-history, successive dominions of this world. Nebuchadnezzar searched out all his wise men, and his magicians to give him light, to help him in an hour when he was defeated, baffled, and not one of them could give a ray of light upon his perplexity, and he ordered them all to be destroyed. Daniel heard of it and said: "Why is the decree so hasty from the king?" Then Daniel went in to the king and desired that he would give him time and he would show the king the interpretation. "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets." Every confidence in the Lord. And a season was appointed, the order of execution was stayed for a period, and Daniel called a prayer meeting, they went to the Lord. In a night vision the thing was revealed to Daniel and then Daniel praised the God of heaven and went in unto the king. By direct revelation 2,500 years of history were given to a Babylonian king when none of all the wise men of the earth could give him a ray of light. The God of heaven came in. Is not that impressive? Yes, light at the beginning. Light is always a feature of the beginning of a dispensation, but as that dispensation closes that light is brought into view anew with God's double emphasis for conformity to the original light. That carries us a long way. If we are in the end, God is going to recover, and is seeking to recover for His saints the original light for His Church, but He is going to demand that the saints conform to that light, and if at an end time we come into touch with the true light, God is going to take great pains to

see that we do not just handle this thing as so much truth and teaching, but He will deal with us in such a way as to bring us into living fellowship with the light.

This is just where we should finish, is it not? Light was given at the beginning: much light came in fully through the Apostle Paul. Most of it has been lost, or it has been lost in the main for the people of God through the ages, but God has been slowly recovering it, bringing it back bit by bit. And does it not strike you as significant that the Lord has so mightily recovered the testimony to the truth of the Coming Again of the Lord Jesus, and then brought in on top of that, and is bringing in on top of that, His emphasis about the Church the Body of Christ? Those two things go together. The remnant is related to the Advent.

Well, now, we just close here for the present on this. The Lord is out to perfect that instrument of and in the testimony as to the Coming Sovereign One, and to bring that instrument, as he brought the instrument in the book of Daniel, into a living and experimental relationship to Himself for the age-purpose. How practical things were with Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego—very practical. The Lord wrought the testimony in them and through them by deep, deep experiences. That is a foreshadowing, making the testimony a matter of life and death. And that is where we are. God is seeking to bring about a conformity to the light at the end.

May the Lord give you hearts that are able to hold all that is in His thought important for this time. This has only been surveying a very broad outlook in order that we may have something to work to after. T. A.-S.

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Communion

A Solemn Meditation on

1 Corinthians x, 16; Psalms 22, 69, and 88; and other Scriptures.

1. O cup of blessing which we bless,
From Christ's own hand received,
Therein we taste His preciousness
On Whom we have believed.
2. Therein we hold communion sweet
With God about His Son,
And Spirit-led to Jesus' feet
Behold what He has done.
3. O cup of blessing which we drink
With lips that breathe His Name,
Well may our hearts bow down to think
Of His full cup of shame. Psa. lxix. 7. Isa. l. 6.
4. His awful cup of wrath and woe,
For us so freely drained ;
The bitterness we ne'er can know,
The terrors He sustained. John xviii. 11.
Psa. lxxxviii. 15, 16.
5. Fierce anger 'gainst our sin He bore—
He was cut off by it :
Like one of whom God thinks no more,
" Laid in the lowest pit." Lam. i. 12. Psa. lxxxviii. 16.
Psa. lxxxviii. 16.
Psa. lxxxviii. 5.
Psa. lxxxviii. 6.
6. O hark to what the Scripture saith—
" Cast off among the dead,"
He sank in all the depths of death,
It's floods o'erflowed His head. Psa. lxxxviii. 5. R.V.
Psa. lxix. 2.
Psa. xlii. 7.
7. Forsaken, curst, accounted sin,
Beset by satan's host
The deepest darkness closed Him in
Till He gave up the Ghost. Psa. xxii. 1. Matt. xxvii. 46.
Gal iii. 13. 2 Cor. v. 21.
Psa. xxii. 12. Heb. ii. 11.
Psa. lxxxviii. 6. 18.
8. And thus we taste of life and peace,
And thus are we brought nigh,
In worship that shall never cease,
Beholding Jesus die.
9. O Lord, what can Thy servants say ?
We caused Thy grief and pain :
Yet Thou didst love us all the way,
And for us rose again. Isa. liii. 4, 5, 6.
Rom. iv. 25. Heb. vii. 25.
10. In heart we follow Thee through all :
We see Thy glory break,
And in Thy shining Presence fall,
Glad vassels for Thy sake. Luke xxiv. 24, 26.
Heb. ii. 9. 1 Peter i. 11.
2. Cor. v. 14, 15.

C. E. RENNIX.

Rooted and Grounded

The Lord's Object with the "Overcomer"

READING : Isaiah xxxvi. 1-22 : xxxvii. 31.

Matt. iii. 10 ; xv. 13, 14, xiii. 6.

You will have noticed that in all these passages there is reference to roots, and roots are very important things. A very great deal depends upon roots ; for a tree almost everything depends upon the roots. And in the same way, beloved, our roots and our rooting are very important things in the matter of our eternal destiny.

I want to say a little in a general way at the outset before we come to something more specific in this connection. You will notice that the passages which we read (and others could be added to them on the same subject) are divided. Some refer to the sound rooting which will take the strain, which will prove adequate. The others refer to rootings which are not adequate and which will not abide. We might just say a word or two about that second class, to begin with. Through the Word of the Lord there are various kinds and classes of those whose roots and whose rooting is not adequate. Some have been mentioned. The one in Matthew iii. 10 : " And even now is the axe laid unto the root of the trees " ; a word in the ministry of John the Baptist, representing a time of crises when a long period of probation and opportunity had been given by the Lord, and there had been every provision made by Him to secure a sound and abiding rooting on the part of Israel, but now the testing time had come when roots were going to be subjected to a severe trial and testing. The result of that testing, as we know, was that once again Israel was rooted up. Not so many years after this they were rooted up from their land and were carried away in the great hurricane of Divine judgment through the Roman Legions and scattered to various parts of the earth, and they have never since been planted again. The axe was laid to the roots of the tree.

Then two others came in in that class. In Matthew xiii. the sower had sowed his seed and some had fallen in rocky places. It had sprung up ; when the sun was up it withered, died, having no root. And that, we are given to understand, illustrates those people who hear

the Word of the Lord superficially ; hear it and in a way receive it, on the face of things respond to it, but in whom it is found eventually there is not the root of the matter. Their kind of receiving, their kind of responding, their kind of association with the Word of the Lord cannot bear the heat, the blaze of the sun, it is something which lies on the outside, it is not that which reaches down into the very depths of their being.

The third, Matthew xv., was a word concerning the Pharisees. The disciples reported that the Pharisees took a certain attitude toward things. The Lord's Word was : " Every planting (literally) which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone : they be blind leaders of the blind."

The Danger of Living on the Past

Now these three cases of roots which do not stand, bring different aspects before us. In the first case, in Matthew iii., you have an historical and traditional thing which has occupied the place of that which claims to represent the Lord and has had much in its history which was of the Lord, in blessing and in use and service ; with which much of the Lord has been associated, and which has been associated with much of the Lord in His purpose and His ways ; but which has come to a time when it is no more than a past history, a reputation without present life. Something that belongs to a by-gone day : whose life, whose vitality and energy and spiritual progress is not up-to-date and abreast of its present claims. A time of testing comes in the sovereign ordering of God for all such, and it is found by reason of its present root-dryness, lack of vitality, of energy, of up-to-dateness of life that it cannot go through the testing, it is rooted out. A simple word that, and yet a challenging word which shows us two things : that God, in His sovereignty, does most definitely appoint a time in which He will test the state of everything and everyone which makes a claim to be related to Him. He will do that, and then no amount of past history, good history, Divine history, will stand that thing in stead for the day of His testing. Or

to put it another way, God tests to find out just exactly how up-to-date spiritual life and spiritual experience is. There are quite a lot of people who have had a very sound, thoroughly genuine conversion, but who live back on their conversion of ten, twenty, or forty years ago; and while it is true the history was quite sound, it is something of the past, its vitality has not been continuous, it is not up-to-date, and such people will find that when the winds of God begin to blow they are lacking, they are wanting, and they will be carried away, not necessarily to be eternally lost, any more than Israel is, but to very great loss.

The Danger of an Assumed Relationship to God

And then the Lord also tests most definitely, every kind of profession, every kind of response, every kind of attitude or relationship, to discover whether that is a thing which is on the surface, on the face, superficial; or whether it is a thing which has gone right down deeply into the life, burying its roots in the very sub-soil of experience. Here, again, a simple word, but it may be that there is someone here who is attaching themselves to something, attaching themselves to a place, to a company of people; attaching themselves in an outward way to that which represents the Lord, in hymns and addresses and prayers and services and such like; associating themselves and, in a way, making some kind of answer or response to the things of the Lord.

Have you seen a self-grown forest in a mountain district after a gale? We have a good deal of that sort of thing in Scotland where the seeds have been carried by the wind and have sown themselves in the very thin soil of a mountain slope, a rocky district. They have grown very tall, lanky thin trees, firs or pines: their roots have spread out and covered a great area, and then—a gale—and as you go along after a gale there are those lanky, thin, gaunt trees lying with their roots right up in the air. You wonder how in all the earth they have managed to cling to the shallow soil. There they are everywhere, rooted up because self-grown, and that is Matthew xiii. Something which has made its own kind of response, given its own response, answer, with reservations perhaps, not going too far, not going to be "extreme," not going to be "singular," not going to be "fanatical," just going to be "perfectly balanced" and "sane" and make their *own* response to the Lord. All right, God has appointed the hour for a gale. Yes, there will

be a blazing sun, it will be discovered whether God did that planting, whether that was a work of God in the heart or whether it was just some kind of human attachment or association. It may just be that here there may be one or more attaching themselves from the outside to that which is of the Lord, but they are not right in, buried, rooted, grounded, not in the thing in the Lord. Are you attaching yourself to something religious, or are you buried with your roots in Christ? Rooted in Him?

The Danger of Position without Possession

The third word in Matthew xv. relating to the Pharisees of course has to do with those who assumed the roll of teachers, spiritual leaders. The Pharisees were those who took upon themselves to guide others in matters of religion. The Lord said of them: "Every planting (literally) which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." In other words it was just this: Everyone who dares to take the responsibility of giving guidance to others, who has not been commissioned of the Lord, with the Lord's message, will be rooted up. They are self-planted teachers and leaders.

Now while within the compass of this gathering that may have a very limited application it is something for us to remember in these days. The absolute necessity that those who lead us in spiritual things should themselves be men who have a mandate from God, men with a message, men with a revelation, men in whom the root of the matter is and not just teachers. I am saying all this in the light of the end-time because I believe we are entering more and more into that phase of things when everything is going to be subjected to testing in the sovereignty of God. Everything of tradition, everything of profession, of vocation; all are going to be tested by the winds of God. Oh, such winds! Yes, winds of deception. God may not send deception but God will not prevent it. False teachers, false doctrine: severe trial and testing: deep, deep searching experiences, we are all coming into it and it is going to be discovered under the sovereign direction of God just how deep our roots are. Beloved, testing will do one of two things, it will either carry us away or drive us deeper. There is going to be in the end nothing that will not stand the test. The Lord make us those who have our roots downward and our fruit upward.

Now just a little more specific word especially in connection with Isaiah xxxvii. 11. Isaiah

has much to say about the remnant, and there is a remnant of Israel, and as we know quite well there is a remnant of Christianity. The remnant of Christianity is found in the first three chapters of Revelation. It is represented by the oft-repeated words "To him that overcometh": that is the remnant. You see quite clearly that it is but a remnant in those Churches in Asia. The main thing has gone wrong, a remnant of overcomers is seen there and that remnant of Christianity is very much in view in the Word of the Lord.

Now a remnant feature is roots downward. A feature of a remnant is that it takes root downward. And the Lord does it, the Lord causes it to be so. The Lord so acts in His sovereignty and in His providence to see to it that a remnant is marked by roots which have got such a grip that nothing in hell or on earth can pluck it out. The Lord must, for His own glory, have something like that which can stand all the challenges of the powers of hell and all the challenges of the circumstances of life. The Lord must have something which cannot be carried away, which cannot be removed cannot be shaken, and certainly something which cannot be rooted up. That is His remnant. That, He must have for His own glory, and, that being so, He will take every measure with His remnant to have them after that kind, with roots downward. Of course, unto fruit upward. We speak much about the upward side of things, life in the heavenlies, sitting in the heavenlies, and our warfare and work—the fruitfulness of our life in union with the Lord. That is only possible as our roots are downward. In order that that might be so we have to get into a place of unshakeableness where the roots have got such a grip that nothing can overthrow. And I believe that explains a very great deal of what the Lord is doing with His own spiritual people in these days.

It is true that the true children of God are going through a time of intense trial and testing spiritually in these days; everywhere it is so. Why? Because the Lord must have something against which hell is impotent and by which He demonstrates to the universe that strength of His might which causes to stand and withstand and having done all to stand. If one were asked what the last issue for the Church in this age is, I would say that it stands, and that is saying a tremendous thing. Oh, you say, that is surely limiting things, are you not

expecting much more than that? Progress, advance, sweeping movements? The Church will have all its work cut out in the end to stand, but its standing will be its victory. Just to be able, through testing, trial, when everything is blowing round you like a blizzard; when everything is dark, mysterious, and even God seems far away and unreal, and faith is tested and you are being assailed on the right hand and on the left, and there is every reason outwardly for your moving, giving up, falling down, surrendering, lowering your standard, just to stand and not be moved in your faith is the greatest possible victory.

The Remnant a Testimony to the Lord's Power

Now I come to Isaiah xxxvi. and xxxvii. You notice that that passage about the remnant taking root is an issue. Chapter xxxvi. we have heard read this evening, about Rabshakeh and Sennacherib with his boasting, flaunting, high-faluting utterances, challenging not just Hezekiah and the Jews but their God. Vaunting himself against Jehovah, saying that there has been no god of any of the peoples of the earth who has been able to stand before his master, and certainly the God of the Jews will not be able to stand; and there they are outside the gates of Jerusalem with all this; why did the Lord allow it? The Lord saw the first movement in far away Assyria, toward Jerusalem; why didn't He stop them, intervene for the sake of His own, and circumvent? Why did He not raise up circumstances that would hinder? Why did He allow them actually to encamp round and lay siege to Jerusalem, and then allow them to say these things? It is all in the sovereignty of God. God has allowed this. God has permitted this thing to come right up to this present point. Hezekiah received the letter and rent his clothes, put on sackcloth, and went and spread the letter before the Lord. They were surely in straits. The Lord has allowed, we might even say drawn out, Sennacherib and the mighty hosts of the Assyrians, drawn them out literally, drawn them out materially, drawn them out mentally, drawn them out verbally, extended them, allowed them to inflate themselves to bursting point: they are exalted to the very heavens in their own eyes. All right, the Lord has drawn them out. A remnant comes into view and the remnant shall take root. When the Assyrian and Sennacherib have gone just as far as it is possible for them to go, have become as inflated as it is possible for them to be, when they have

swelled to the very heavens, the Lord for His remnant's sake sent one angel! Surely, the Lord wants a mighty host to deal with this situation--" And the angel of the Lord went forth." Do you see, beloved, a New Testament factor in this? The adversary would impress the weak saints of the Lord with his importance, with his greatness. There is one thing the enemy is always trying to do as a strategic thing and that is to put fear in the heart of a child of God. Fear. There is nothing so weakening, so devastating as fear. If the enemy can get fear into our hearts he has got the city and he will make a great display and vaunt himself and try to impress upon us how mighty he is. It is never for us to under-estimate the power of the enemy, but we have always got to keep the balance of comparison between our God and the enemy. The Lord's weakness is more than a match for all the power of Satan. And it comes to this, the remnant puts its faith in the Lord over against all the fury of the oppressor, all the vaunting of the oppressor, and then the Lord proves He only allowed the oppressor to come out in that extreme way to show that the remnant cannot be destroyed, for the remnant takes root in the presence of Sennacherib, in the presence of the Assyrians. "And the remnant.....shall again take root." You see that is the ultimate issue. This was looking on to a coming day, it is true, but it is remarkable that these two things come together, that the Assyrians come into view with all their power and they are only allowed eventually to destroy that which is not counting for God, but God gets, in spite of everything, a remnant with roots.

Rooted in the Cross, and Immovable

Now note, you who know the conflict, you who know the fury of the oppressor, the bitterness of the animus of the devil, remember that the Lord allows him to go a long way in order that there might be this double issue. Firstly, an entering into the knowledge of the exceeding greatness of God's power—but how exceeding great must be God's power if against the mighty host of Assyria one angel alone is all that is necessary! To discover the exceeding greatness of God's power on the one hand, and on the other hand, through the work of the enemy himself, to drive the roots down. *The Lord uses the adversary in his own hatred and bitterness to get our roots in, and to make us impervious to the Devil. He uses the adver-

sary against himself in our trials. Roots downward, fruit upward. I am sure that is what the Lord is doing.

We are passing through deep experiences, the enemy is doing it and the Lord is not preventing him, but we are coming to a fuller knowledge of the power of our God and a deeper rooting beyond all previous shakeableness; and the Lord is seeking to have a people who cannot be shaken, against whom hell with all its demonstration of arrogance, pride, is impotent. "And the remnant.....shall again take root downward." That is what the Lord needs.

May I remind you that the nature of this planting is just that with which we are so familiar. "Planted together in the likeness of his death." That is the word of the Apostle. "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." The enemy is the instrument so often, of planting us more deeply into the death of Christ. His assaults, his attacks, his accusations, everything--yes. The Lord is not the source of evil but the Lord allows it. So often our hearts cry out: "Why did the Lord ever allow that in our lives?" That thing which has meant such a deep, dark passage. Why did the Lord allow it? He could have prevented it. Well, we were planted by it into the death of the Lord Jesus. We were brought more than ever to an end of ourselves. Yes, and therefore, to know the Lord in a larger measure than we have ever known Him, and to be brought to a place where it will not be so easy for the Devil to shake us next time. That is the sovereign way of God in deeper death experiences. "Planted together in the likeness of his death." Have you been planted there initially? Have you been planted in Christ crucified? Or are you one of those attachments to something? Are you planted? And when a deeper planting comes remember it is the roots being driven downwards, and the issue is going to be most surely endurance, stability, ability to stand; but, oh, there is going to be greater fruitfulness.

We are in the Lord's hands not in the Devil's hands. We are in the Lord's hands, and being in His hands we are in the hands of a Potter Who knows what He is after. We were saying this afternoon that first of all the vessel is in the potter, and then eventually the potter is in the vessel. What we mean is this. That before ever the potter starts, the vessel is in his

*impervious
from within*

→ Rom
8:29

mind, in his heart very clearly. The pattern is not something objective, the vessel is already a complete thing in him: and then he gets to work upon it and when he is finished, he is in the vessel he has wrought. What was in *Him* has come out in it. We say of people's work: "I can see who made that, it is just like them." "That is just like so and so to make a thing like that." Yes, He is in His work, He is in the vessel that He makes, and that is just what He is doing. Sometimes that clay has to be pressed down to a shapeless mass, broken. It is not showing all that He intended it to show, there are defects and flaws, and so He crushes it down to shapelessness. A mass without shape. But it is to start again to get something more perfect than has been before, in which He Himself is.

May He give us grace to endure whatever the trial may be, along whatever line of metaphor, the wind, the blaze, supreme heat, or pressure of His hand, all of which is to get us into a place where we cannot be moved, where hell cannot shake us, where His power is made manifest as triumphant over all the power of the enemy.

T. A.-S.

(Continued from page 2.)

blessing and increasing, and we have a most sincere desire that the spiritual ministry and message should be kept free from anything that would or could bear upon it and give it a weight not its own; that is, that no one should be influenced by the work rather than the truth, and to keep us as free from the semblance of advertisement and propaganda as possible, we are henceforth giving all information about these things in a separate leaflet. This is only done in prayer interest. We should like only to send the "supplement" to those who are truly in prayer-fellowship, but we do not know who they are. Friends who pass on the WITNESS AND TESTIMONY to new readers are asked to retain the supplement. We realise that what we have here said needs a good deal more explanation, but we trust it to the Lord for all unprejudiced children of His, and for the rest—well—we must just go on with Him and share His reproach.

We have very, very much to encourage, and perhaps we should take more comfort from opposition than we sometimes do.

All Editorial matters in relation to this paper should be addressed to MR. AUSTIN-SPARKS, 13 Honor Oak Road, Leaden, S.E.23.

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The Testimony and its Vessel unto the Time of the End

The Abiding Message of Daniel

No. II.

HAVING covered the ground in general survey and main outline we are now able to begin to work more closely on the spiritual aspect of those things. We want to come into closer touch with our title in its meaning, that is, "The testimony and its vessel unto the time of the end."

I want to just touch one or two fragments of this book before we go on. Daniel i. 21: "And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus." Try and keep that in mind, for it is a very important statement. Daniel vii. 9-11.: "I beheld till thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days did sit: his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool: his throne was fiery flames, and the wheels thereof burning fire," etc., vii. 13-14, 22: ".....and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." vii. 18: "But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom....." vii. 27: "..... and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High....." x. 1. xii. 13: "But go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and shalt stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

We have been saying that this book reveals that throughout an extended period of this world's history, known as the "Times of the Gentiles," the heavens are in operation in relation to a vessel of the testimony of the Lord, and that inasmuch as the heavens are in operation in that connection, hell is also stirred up and is tremendously active in the same direction.

The Mighty Significance of the Insignificant.

Now what we have to see is not only that vessel, but how it fulfills its ministry in relation to the Lord's testimony in this time. And that vessel, we have said, is represented in this book by Daniel and his three companions. There are these two things; the world, under Divine planning, governed by Gentile powers,

for the most part hostile to the Lord, antagonistic to the Lord's purposes, but in the midst thereof that which is related to the Lord and His purpose, and joined to the heavens—through which the heavens are ruling in the midst of the kingdoms of men; and what comes out in this book of Daniel very clearly is, that while the Gentile power is operating, and operating strongly, in opposition to God, God is imminent in His instrument and that instrument is really ruling in the midst of the world-powers and bringing in that which speaks of the superior and transcendent government of the heavens. Now that is a very simple statement, but it has bound up with it tremendous things for us and for the people of God. It is no small thing to see that right there in the heart of the great dominating world system, the organised systems of this world governing the earth, there is a small thing, out of proportion to that system in its natural constitution, which so represents the supremacy of the heavens over the earth that although that world system goes just as far as it can, and the spiritual forces back of it, to bring to an end that apparently small and insignificant thing at its centre, it is said of that, firstly, that it continued unto the reign of Cyrus, King of Persia, continued unto then; then there is seen that testimony right at the end of everything, the last thing when the pageant of the empires has passed, mighty empires rising, having their day, dominating, waning, passing; and they have all come and they have all gone and they have spent themselves to the full, the instrument of that testimony stands at the end of the day: "Thou.....shalt stand in thy lot at the end of the days." And then withal the kingdom handed to the saints of the Most High and they take the government. That instrument, that vessel, is no insignificant thing; it may appear to be to the natural eye, comparatively from human standpoints it may be a mere nothing, but it is the instrument of

heaven's rule and government and it is something which is greater than all the world-powers with all the satanic forces behind them.

Now that is saying immense things, beloved, immense things. Do you catch something of the application of that yourself? Do you realise and recognise that you in all the weakness, the feebleness, the poverty, the insignificance of your own personal life, your own human constitution, your position, if vitally, truly spiritually linked in with God's eternal purpose in and concerning His Son Jesus Christ, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, called by grace and having responded to that call, a partaker of the heavenly calling, you are moving with God in the Holy Ghost, if that is true of you then you are a part of that vessel through which the government of the heavens is being made manifest in the unseen, and vitally related to the course of this world's history, giving significance to all the happenings of the course of this world; that you are spiritually what Daniel and his three companions were in Babylon. What was that? The vehicle, vessel, instrument, for showing that God and the kingdom of the God of the heavens is a mightier thing than all the force and power of men and devils combined. That is no small calling for you or for me, we are in that, and mark you, that involves this—if my interpretation of the Scripture is right (and there is a great deal more than the book of Daniel with which to support it)—it involves this, that when the Devil has done all that he can do, and men have done all that they can do against us, that testimony which we represent is going to abide to the end and we are going to stand upon the wreck and ruin of all the world empires triumphant in that testimony in Christ, indestructible. Let them kindle the fires seven times, let them starve their lions! Now this is not romancing, this is the meaning of the issue of the testimony in the power of Christ's resurrection. That is the thing you and I are called unto, the power of His resurrection, which is to have its final manifestation in a company who have conquered death, and the authority of death, or in whom the Son of God has conquered death. That is the meaning of the fire and the Son of God in the midst.

Oh, that something of that might just dawn upon you, for we are here to-day in no small thing. Tremendous things have gathered us here at this time and there is a very great deal of history back of our being here.

Daniel continued unto the first year of king Cyrus. When was that? Open your book of Ezra and how does Ezra begin? "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia." What did he do? Gave command for the return of the Jews to their land, opened the way and facilitated the return of the remnant, the recovery of the testimony. Daniel continued unto then. He must have been an old man, but that very fact is a declaration which spites hell, for Babylon sought to engulf Daniel.

Hell's Hatred of the Vessel of Testimony.

The powers of evil back of Babylon marked Daniel out for destruction. Oh, you can see it. Nebuchadnezzar dreamed a dream, sent for all his wise men to interpret—no one could, impulsively he commanded that they all should be destroyed, and it says: "And they sought Daniel and his companions to be slain." That means Daniel was a marked man by those who had this power in their hands. Why does it say: "And they sought Daniel and his companions to be slain." Well, he was not one of the Chaldean or Babylonian wise men or magicians, but they included him and his friends. They had not asked him if he could interpret the dream, they had not given him a chance, but they sought to kill him. You see the impulsiveness of hell back of that, to get four men who had not been given a chance, to kill them, to sweep them in, to stampede this whole thing in order to get those four men. That is what Herod did; he swept in all the babes in order to get one. That is what Pharaoh did. This is hell's method, just to get one, to engulf the vessel of the testimony. We know the fiery furnace and the den of lions. We know from this book of the *animos* in the hearts of men toward these. How they were scheming and designing so that they could entrap them, catch them, get rid of them. How they gloated over the signing of that command by the king which could not be cancelled and had to go through when Daniel was caught. How they gloated over it. "Now we have got him." Well, that is there coming from the spiritual background, but: "Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus." Why is that added just there? Why is that put in? Is that only just a little bit of historic information thrown in for narrative? No, the Holy Spirit is saying something tremendous.

Daniel continued. Then when all this is passed, they have done their worst: ".....and shalt stand in thy lot, at the end of the days." The vessel of the testimony will be there when all else is spent. It continues unto the end; it is indestructible, it is of the nature of the permanence of heaven. It does not mean we may not die, although we may not be executed,—but never was a vessel of the testimony more alive than the Apostle Paul to-day. He was executed. He will stand in his lot at the end. This is a spiritual principle, a spiritual truth, and the point that I am seeking to get at is this, beloved; 'there has got to be something in our relationship to heaven and God's specific purpose which makes possible the manifestation of that mighty, devil-conquering life in us. We have got to know the power of His resurrection. That is essential to the vessel of the testimony at the end time, unto the end, to get through to the end: it means that we must be that in which the power of His resurrection is manifested. That is not merely an obligation, that is a privilege. It is a costly privilege, but that is what the Lord needs.

I am always so glad of that correspondence between Paul and his Lord, that when the Lord Jesus came to die He said: "I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from my Father." When the Apostle Paul came to the end he did not say: "Now I am going to be taken hold of and they are going to kill me, and I shall not be able to help myself." He quietly, serenely announced: "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." There is no surrendering to fate in that. There is no capitulating to the hands of men in that. There is, as it were, a quiet, deliberate walking out in the recognition that the Lord's time had come and not man's. Now there is a correspondence between Paul and his Master, but note, Paul is in representation the vessel of the testimony in this age. The testimony of Jesus was peculiarly placed within that vessel in a representative way. We have often said Paul personally embodied all the special revelation which was entrusted to him, he became a personal sign of that revelation. The truth which was committed to him from heaven had a specific outworking in his own life and experience because he had got to

represent the Church in this age in himself as the vessel of its unveiling, and the issue of the Church in this age is the expression in fulness, of the power of Christ's resurrection as triumphant over death in translation, not by the grave but by the air.

"Oh, joy! oh, delight! should we go without dying:

No sickness, no sadness, no dread, and no crying"

We have sung that: that is the prospect for the Church, that is the glorious possibility, No! that is the certainty, as the final issue. But that represents that death is robbed finally of its power, that the power of His resurrection is manifested in eluding the grave and depriving death of its object. That is Enoch. But Paul represented that, and his last utterances are: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection"; yes, true: "and the fellowship of his sufferings," that is Daniel and the others. "The power of his resurrection" not as something just at the beginning of his Christian life and walk, but something at the end. And not as something merely to deliver him with all others in a general resurrection from the grave, but in a specific out-resurrection from among the dead. That is the testimony of the Church, a vessel for that. Paul represented that specific thing for the Church in this age. Daniel continued and Daniel stands in his lot at the end. Have you grasped the principle that is implied in that? A wonderful thing. But beloved, you and I are called even now—though we may die, we may go by the grave—yet now, at this end time, you and I are called to be a part of that vessel in which the power of His resurrection is manifested, that the murderous plottings of hell are eluded, are overcome, and that the murderer who comes out to destroy before the Lord's purposes are accomplished shall be baffled by the power of His resurrection in us. When we ought to have been dead a dozen times we are still alive. Yes, the Lord wants an adequate vessel for that, not one, two, or three scattered here and there, but an adequate vessel for that; and He is seeking that. In relation to that we are here. You and I must not accept death until the Lord tells us the time has come. If we do we open the door for the enemy to triumph. (Many of you do not understand that. If you do not, do not worry about it, but ask the Lord to give you the essential thing of what we are saying.)

Now that all comes out of that statement: "Daniel continued." Daniel stands at the end. The vessel is there when all has been done to see that the vessel should not be there. The testimony is there—goes on unto the end. But we have to see something more about such a vessel.

The Nature of the Vessel's Present Ascendency.

We have to see the nature of the ascendency of that vessel. In this present age it is true that the vessel is called to be in a state of ascendency, in a place of government, now, a place of dominion if you like, ruling. But its government, its ruling, its dominion in this age is not the same as it will be in the age to come. It is going to rule. There is another sense in which the kingdom will be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, then it will be literal government, literal dominion, it will be recognized and acknowledged, it will be universally manifested, the accepted order. It is not that now, that hardly needs saying; and yet the principle is to be just as true now as it will be then. But the nature of the government now is not literal, but moral. Now I explain what I mean by that by illustrating from this book of Daniel.

Nebuchadnezzar is that head of gold. God had given him a kingdom, the greatest of all those world's kingdoms; every other dominion that followed was a step of deterioration. Silver, brass, iron, clay. A drop in value all the way through; but Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian empire was the most glorious of all empires, and God had given it to him. Daniel and his three companions are in the centre of that, and I ask you, who rules, Nebuchadnezzar or Daniel? When no one could help the king out of his difficulty over his dream and eventually Daniel came in, it says: "Then Daniel answered before the king." Why? Because he had already been before the King of kings. If you follow him in before Nebuchadnezzar you are moving in an atmosphere of dignity, quiet confidence and assurance. From the very first step, as we pointed out before, when Daniel heard that all the wise men were to be destroyed, he confidently announced that there was a God in heaven who revealeth secrets and He would give an answer to the king. There was not any hesitation and saying: "Well, I will ask the Lord and see if He will give an answer." Absolute assurance, absolute confidence, serenity, kept him per-

fectly steady. He never lost his head. He called his three companions and they prayed, and the Lord revealed the thing to Daniel in the night season. "Daniel answered before the king." It is moral authority, ascendency, he is governing morally and again and again things were, so to speak, put into his hands. He became the moral ruler of the situation again and again. He ruled even from the den of lions, he was on top, he was on top of the king. The king morally grovelled to this man more than once. And those three, where were they morally? Well, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us.....and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." What is the result of that? Not that they are delivered from the fiery furnace—keep that in mind—not that God comes in and opens a way of escape for them, but the Son of God associates Himself with them in the fire, and the result is that everything goes down before them morally and they come out as kings, they reign morally. You see the ascendency is a moral thing in the midst of this world-system, and government from the heavens morally. What is the secret of that ascendency which, in the sovereignty of the God of the heavens, brings the power into our hands? Go back to the first chapter of the book and you have the secret, the foundation secret: "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's dainties, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." It says: "But Daniel purposed in his heart"; it only says that about Daniel, but before you get through the chapter you find the other three are in the same position. It does not say they purposed, but it says Daniel purposed, and it is clear that Daniel's moral lead, moral stand, moral ascendency, brought his brethren alongside of him in fellowship in that testimony. Now there are two things there. I will mention the second first.

Beloved, you never know what you are going to effect for God in securing others to a position of definite, strong standing for the Lord, by taking a strong, though costly stand yourself. Sometimes you personally have to take a stand alone at great cost, which may involve you in a good deal of suffering. You never know what that is going to mean for the

Lord by others being morally brought into a strong place. The Lord needs "Daniels" in this sense; the men and women who will take a personal stand, at any cost, upon what they know to be according to the mind of God. It is not a question, in the first place, of whether others do it or not, or whether others will follow suit or not; it is what God requires, what is according to God. The question is not, What will it cost me? What will others think of it? Will others agree with me? It is, Will the Lord require that? If so, that is the only ground for me to act upon. And acting like that very often means that moral stamina comes into others and the Lord gains by a personal, lonely stand for Him, a mighty increase of reinforcement in His testimony.

Now that may be a word that touches someone who is being faced with a course which is costly, and a price has to be paid, and as far as they know there is not another one who will take that step; but if you do you may discover there are several others whom the Lord will meet if you go on in faithful devotion, if you go on in what you know to be the will of God for you. Daniel purposed he would not defile himself. This brings in a whole new world. Wherein lay the defilement? You read of Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem. You will find he took away the vessels of the House of the Lord and put them into the house of his gods. Nebuchadnezzar had gods, and it was not the Lord. There was another spiritual system back of Babylon. It was not just Babylon, just some earthly system, not just men, it was that spiritual thing back of men and the system of the world-ruler. Yes, something spiritual behind; that comes out so much in this book. Back of Babylon was the prince of this world, the god of this age. He was moving things in Babylon and moving things against Daniel and his companions, because of the testimony and the Lord, the testimony of the God of heaven. That was behind; and Daniel knew that to voluntarily partake of those things from the king's table was to involve himself in the moral and spiritual background of things, and that would be defilement, and that kind of thing would rob him of power with God as well as with men. So he calculatingly and deliberately purposed he would not defile himself, he would not allow any kind of voluntary link between himself and that spiritual system back of this world order. If only people recognised the things of

which they say: "Well, there is no harm in it," the things of this world, even the religious things of this world with which they have voluntary connections, in which they dabble and indulge; if only they recognised that back of those "harmless" things there is the working of a sinister force, to entrap them, to spoil them, to rob them of spiritual power! And you know as well as I do, that any professing child of God who has some compromising thing in their life, something that forms a link, be it never so small, between them and the spiritual system back of this world, they are robbed of power with God and with men and it is not until that thing is dealt with and thoroughly put away that they have any kind of spiritual or moral ascendancy. Until that thing is repudiated from the heart God cannot come in and communicate Himself to them. No compromise with the Devil through any kind of means or form of his government. I said that introduces a whole new world; now let it open up.

The World Dominion Gathered Up in One Man.

Do you notice that in this second chapter the image of Daniel brings all the world-empires from the beginning of the Babylonian empire to the end of the Roman empire and its ten provinces, into the form of one personality, one image, the image of a man? Has the significance of that struck you? All the world-empires, all the "Times of the Gentiles" gathered up in the figure of one man. I ask you if the final issue of this dispensation, of this world-government on the human side, is not going to be gathered up in one personality, the antichrist? There is no doubt about it that the Word of God makes it clear that that principle will be carried out, that the government of this world will be headed up into one personality, the antichrist. There is in Daniel one man, and all is gathered up into the figure of one personality, one corporate body. That is set right over against the Son of Man. The Christ, and the antichrist; they both come out in Daniel.

Now what is the dominion of the Son of man over the antichrist in the Church, the vessel? It is the absolute distinctiveness of that vessel, separation, holiness; its complete break with the whole system of the Evil One at every point, and not allowing one touch of defilement with that system. Have you not in your spiritual experience seen, recognised more than once, that in order to destroy your spiritual

power and strength and your moral ascendancy or effectiveness, the enemy in some way or another must make a contact between you and his kingdom? He will put a temptation in your way, he will put a suggestion into your mind, he will make suggestions to you, put thoughts into you. In thousands of different ways he puts out a gangway, and he wants you to cross that gangway, to accept that gangway, a link between you and his system. There is no wrong in temptation, beloved, most believers know what it is to have evil thoughts suggested to their minds. It does not mean they have sinned because an evil thought has been suggested, but at the point where they entertain that, respond to that, allow that, they have sinned and made a link with the enemy, and before long that very link is the means of their undoing, their weakness, breakdown, and not until they get back to the Lord and say: "I allowed that to linger, I added another to it." or in some way the enemy put out and we took on, and that has been completely dealt with, wiped out by the Blood, we do not get back our position. The rule of the heavens through the instrument in overthrowing the power of evil demands no defilement, no contact. Oh, sometimes it will come along the line of discouragement, sometimes through depression, doubt; sometimes through an overwhelming sense of weakness, and the enemy strikes a blow and sends a fiery dart of questioning the Lord, His love, His wisdom. We can never exhaust the ways in which it comes, but it is not just the fact that it comes, but the fact that we accept it, we take it on, we allow the enemy to lodge his gangway and we go across; we are undone. Mark you, the principle, the basic principle of spiritual and moral ascendancy, of dominion, of overthrowing the power of the enemy, of having authority over all the power of the Devil is not in our language, our phraseology, is not the volume of our voice, the forcefulness of our effort, our manner, it is the moral purity of our lives; or, in other words, the fact that we give the enemy no ground anywhere. Oh, how deeply and wonderfully clear that principle is in Daniel, the first chapter. The whole history lies ahead and it is a history of the combat between heaven and hell as fought out here on the earth. The world-rulers of this darkness, the principalities and powers on the one hand, heaven on the other, but the instrument by which the issue is decided is that small thing right in the heart of it, and whether it is

the testimony's maintenance in victory and administration of victory, or whether so far as that instrument is concerned it is going to be defeat and the enemy getting the advantage, depends upon whether there is a link between us and the enemy system at any point. We have a way of saying: "Do not take it on." You understand what I mean. So often a very plausible thing can be offered by the enemy, so often the thing seems so true, really above argument, beyond contention. Well, prove all things. Beware! The enemy is out all the time to form a link between you and his dominion. If he gets it the testimony will go. The vessel of the testimony must purpose in its heart that it will not defile itself. And the dainties from the king's table and the wine may speak to us, young men and women especially, of those advantages, advances, facilitations of progress and improvement which the enemy offers under cover of: "Well, do not be too extreme, do not be singular, do not be fanatical; just be perfectly level and balanced, do not be a stickler." Yes, you may have some dainties from the king's table if only you will lower your standard a little in business. But the testimony means that up to the hilt there must be no compromise on moral principles; you may stand to suffer, it may be a den of lions. Ah yes, but stand, and in the end you will stand and the other things will have gone, but you will be there. Heaven is on your side; you may lose for the time being, but heaven is on your side and the kingdoms of this world will pass, but the kingdom of the God of heavens is an everlasting kingdom, and it is a kingdom to be given to you if you will stand. You see where this vessel begins? Just there, "Daniel purposed in his heart."

I would like to say this, just to round that off. It does not mean, beloved, that because you and I take a faithful, obedient, whole-hearted, consecrated stand for the Lord, that we are going to be delivered from the lions' den or the fiery furnace, and that the Lord is coming in to smooth our way and cause us to escape such. No, the sovereignty of the heavens does not always work by delivering us out of the trouble. It comes in through the trouble. It is through the trouble that the heavens come in. God gets more by it than by delivering us from it.

May the Lord draw us into His purpose, constitute us a part of that vessel for His testimony, show us how very much is bound

up with this conflict in which we are; help us to see why it is that He is dealing with us as He is. It is to bring us to a place where there is nothing in ourselves. He may take up the

weak things and by them through them, bring to nought the things that are, and bring us morally to govern, which shall fit us to govern literally later on.
T. A.-S.

Maturity

The Lord's Desire for his People

Message as Spoken.

READINGS : Hebrews v. 14—vi. 1, 2 ; xii. 11, 12 ;
ii. 10 ; iii. 8.

IT is almost a commonplace with us, that the great feature of the dispensation in which we live is the gathering out from the nations of the members of the Body of Christ, and then the bringing of them on to as full a measure of maturity as is possible. It is not only the salvation of souls, and it is not only the collecting of believers into a spiritual Body. It is afterward, their coming to full growth, which represents the supreme interest and concern of the Lord in this dispensation. I think that is perfectly clear as being a great feature of this time; that maturity is the desire of the Lord for His people, full growth, completeness. Surely this is unmistakable when you read the word of the Lord along that line. That immaturity is widespread is also, I think, unmistakable. That the Lord is moving in the midst of His own people to bring as many as will go on with Him to fulness, into that fulness, is also a thing which I think is patent. Many questions will arise, but those we must, for the moment, set aside. We know the widespread immaturity, we know that there are multitudes of saved ones who are the Lord's people living in the shadows of immaturity, who will not pay the price and go on with the Lord, and we might be tempted like one of old to say "What shall this man do?" and the Lord would say, "What is that to thee?" in other words, "It is not for you to make the immaturity of other people your standard, but *what I desire* is to be the thing which governs your own thought and occupies you entirely." So this being the purpose of the will of God, completeness and fulness, we recognise the meaning of all that the Lord is doing. But before touching that more fully may I come back to one or two simple, basic realities, to remind you of these things. That the child of God, the believer, is a new creation.

That the believer has an entirely new set of faculties which are spiritual faculties. That man by nature, in his natural state at its best, has no standing whatever in the realm of the things of God. That the believer is not one who has come to change an attitude and become full of Christian interests of which he or she was devoid formerly, and now all other interests, rather than being personal or worldly are Christian interests and activities. That is not the believer. The believer is one who has become possessed of an entirely new set of spiritual faculties and is a new spiritual entity. A different species of being; an entirely different creature, and that these spiritual faculties by which alone the things of God can be known and entered into, have to be developed have to grow, have to come to a place of spiritual efficiency, just as in the natural child who has its faculties in birth and there has to be steadily a development of those natural faculties.

The faculties of sight, hearing, have to come under control, and every sense of the child has to be developed and brought to as high a state of perfection as possible. Its understanding, observation, and so on. So the believer, being born from above, a new creation, is born with an entirely new and different set of faculties from that with which we came into this world by nature, and it is those spiritual faculties and senses which have to be developed to make us full grown, spiritually efficient in the Lord.

That is very simple and elementary, and yet it is discriminating in a way that many need to have discrimination made, and it is to these saints that the Apostle Paul writes when he says "to those who have their senses exercised," and he says that to these strong meat is the right kind of provision. He is deploring that after years they are still unable to have strong meat because their senses and faculties have not

been developed. If the Lord is really bent upon—as one of His supreme objectives in this age—bringing believers, the saints, to full growth, to spiritual maturity) then He will consider nothing too great a price to reach His end, and that will explain all the mystery of His ways with His children, and all the strange things which happen which sometimes seem to be God working against His own interests, and to us, very often it looks as though the Lord were working against our interests and doing everything quite wrong. But the Lord is prepared to take risks. I am just putting it that way—risks, even with Himself in the mind of poor finite people whose understanding is so limited, and involving Himself in a good deal of misunderstanding, if only thereby He can reach His end. He dwells in eternity, not in time. He can afford to ignore the misunderstanding of poor man knowing that He has the end in view, and eternity before Him, and that it is worth while using a brief moment of time, even though in that moment He may be entirely misunderstood, so long as He reaches an end which is eternal and justifies Him to the hilt. What did the Lord again and again tell His people of old under the hands of their enemies and His enemies? Those against whom He stood, against whom He had taken an attitude which was beyond reconciliation; yet He delivered His people into their hands, and for years His own were under the tyranny of God's own sworn enemies.

Looking at it from one standpoint you would say this is a contradiction, and surely these enemies of the Lord and all others looking on who hated the Lord would say, "You see the Lord could not do what He wanted with them so He has washed His hands of them—the Lord was unable to get His own and so He has abandoned them." That is what Moses brought to the Lord on one occasion. He, the Lord, took that risk. He let the heathen laugh and jeer and look on and sneer at Him and say He has proved a failure, unworthy of trust, while He let His people remain in the hands of the enemies again and again. Jerusalem trodden under foot and every one passing by saying, this is the result of their trust in Jehovah. The Lord reproached by what He did, and yet He considered it worth while that all that should be in order to get His ends.

The ways of the Lord are past finding out and they must never be judged according to our human standards; and the Lord allows cata-

strophe to overtake, but with an end in view something which when it comes will justify Him up to the hilt, and you will see what we thought was the weakness of God, has proved His strength; the breakdown has proved His supremacy; the foolishness of God has proved His wisdom, so He will be justified in the end. So in this question of growth by exercise you have that whole principle involved. This exercise is not introspective self-analysis. Some people think that when they have turned their eyes inside and become self-conscious, self-analytical, and studied their inside a great deal, circling round their souls, asking questions about themselves—that that is exercise. That is not spiritual exercise. That is what we have said it is—it is all self-consciousness, and all self-consciousness leads to paralysis, bondage, weakness and defeat.

If you look at this word where the exercise is referred to, you will find that this exercise is that which comes upon us in experiences which God produces. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord.....no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." By what? By the chastening which God takes up with them. God deals with you as with sons if you suffer chastening. As sons He brings you to maturity. The way the Lord handles you; that is the exercise. The Lord may get you off activities and shut you up to inactivity, and you go through an awful time and say the Lord has forsaken you, all has gone wrong. What really is it? Why, it is growing pains! Has it not proved to be growing pains? In the long run it was not all wrong, it was all right. You came to know the Lord whereas before your whole life was taken up with *things*. You have been shut up and you came to know the Lord inwardly and you have come to a state of spiritual efficiency which is so much greater that you can now meet the external situation. He has been misunderstood, but He was working unto your efficiency, exercising us unto efficiency. These, the growing pains, are terrible. You cannot help anyone who is suffering from growing pains, and you must stand aside and see them going through.

So through numerous and various directions this growth takes place by the painful exercise produced by the way the Lord is dealing with you. Chastening—a poor English word. Child-

training or discipline. Take the word disciple ; one who comes into association with someone in order to learn, and the Disciples were chosen that they might be with Him in order to learn. That is discipline, learning. We do learn through suffering. Even the Lord Jesus was made "full grown" in this sense, complete through suffering. We take the same way unto full growth. It is child training, discipline, learning by way of experience. That is chastening. Making us sons out of children, full grown men out of infants. I feel that we want to have more faith in the dealings of God with us along this line. It is painful, sometimes anguish. What is the Lord doing ? Why is it there is so little space between one thing and another ? It does seem that the Lord is pressing to get us quickly to full growth, to get us to the place where we learn something.

The right attitude to take towards every trial which the Lord allows to come upon us, every fresh and difficult thing, is—what is it that the Lord has in view for us to attain to by this experience ? It is not to destroy but to build up. Not to take from, but to increase. Not to restrict but to enlarge. Down in the deep place is some treasure of the Lord to be discovered. Some of us can say "Yes, we have found it like that." We have gone into deep places, found fulness there and come to know the Lord. Do you see the one thing that is in view in this passage on exercise ? "to discern" ; it is spiritual intelligence that the Lord has in view. There is a spiritual history going on for some which is the counterpart of that illustrated in the days of the Lord in His flesh. The Disciples with the Lord as their Head are gathered out a little company to Himself. In fellowship to learn. Then He gave to them, conferred upon them official authority, jurisdiction, to go out and exercise His Headship in the creation. To fulfil His government ; to administer His government in the world. There you have, in brief, the whole of the meaning of this dispensation. The only real thing was that the Lord was Head, but as for them, everything was merely official, not spiritual. They broke down on that point, but it seems the Lord has set up an illustration of what was to come spiritually afterward—the Church which is His Body—and a spiritual training by discipline, chastisement, to know Him in order that by that maturity and spiritual intelligence He might form for Himself an administrative instrument by which he will govern the universe in the ages to come. And

beloved, the believer is not just a machine that is going to be taken hold of by the Lord and made to do things. People seem to think it is the height of humility to say you are just a cog in the machine. What does it do ? A cog goes when everyone else goes, and has to do what the rest do. You are not a cog in a machine. We are chosen individuals to make us individually the centres of His own spiritual intelligence, to know Him for ourselves ; not detached from one another, but it does mean we know the Lord, and if we are all governed by the same Spirit we shall not work at variance, we shall work together with one mind if the one Spirit is triumphant in all of us. But He wants His children to be individually the centres of His own spiritual knowledge, spiritual intelligence, and then bringing us together in the one Spirit, working the one work, thinking the one thing, He will get for Himself an instrument to govern the nations in the ages to come : an intelligent instrument which has come to know the Lord's heart by experience.

For that, the faculty of spiritual perception, understanding is necessary. The natural man cannot know these things, only the Spirit discerns. This faculty of spiritual intelligence, spiritual knowledge, the inwardness of everything, has to be developed so that we know the Lord within. Every experience deeper than the last is that we are out of our depth, we have not the resource in ourselves to meet the situation and therefore, in the deep experience, we come to receive the more that is in Christ and having received it by sheer necessity of the situation we have grown that much.

Exercise can produce growth or hardness—the forty years in the wilderness were forty years of exercise. "When they tried me," etc. God brought them under discipline. a regime of child-training, into situations where no human resource could meet the need and everything had to be out from Himself, and a great opportunity of discovering the Lord, and so therefore a greater administration of the Lord in meeting the situation which men could not meet. All that which was intended to develop in their case worked out a hardening. Their attitude was, "these difficulties prove you are cruel and unkind, everything but that You are dealing with us in love." And so they hardened their heart under the exercise that was to prove them. You cannot come into a large place unless you have capacity. We can pass through deep experiences which the Lord

(Continued on page 42.)

Elijah, the Testimony, and the Latter Times

EVEN the most casual reading of the ninth chapter of Luke's gospel will impress the reader with the prominence given to Elijah—either in the actual use of his name or in the narration of incidents which bring him to mind. The feeding of the multitude from a very little supply; the restoring to normal life of an only son at the urgent cry of a parent; the thought of calling down fire from heaven upon those who opposed themselves; the bidding of farewell to those at home and the reference to the plough, reminiscent of the calling of Elisha by Elijah; all these combine to invest this chapter with a strong suggestion of the days when, in the midst of a wayward and God-forsaking people, there appeared upon the scene that strong and faithful servant of the Lord through whom the testimony of Jehovah was restored so that the cry was wrung from unwilling lips "Jehovah, He is God; Jehovah, He is God." We must believe, therefore, that the Holy Spirit purposes by this chapter to draw our attention strongly to Elijah. But there is one incident in the chapter which plainly overshadows all the rest and around which all else gathers—that of the transfiguration scene upon the mountain top, when in the presence of three of His disciples Jesus became resplendent with an outshining of glory such as they had never seen before. Here is set this scene of wonder and glory, and mingled with it and ranged on either side of it in the narrative is the oft-repeated reminder of Elijah. Surely the Holy Spirit would have us find in the one central incident the explanation of that which is grouped so strikingly around it.

The Old Testament closes with a reference to Elijah, and the New Testament opens (so far as the sequence of events is concerned) with taking up the last prophetic word from the Old and showing us its fulfilment: and yet clearly only a partial fulfilment. In Mal. iv. 5 and 6, we read "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." The next event, historically, in the Bible record concerns the birth of John the Baptist, to whom the very words of Malachi are applied (Luke i. 17), and it is added of him "He shall go before his

face.....to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (The Lord Jesus Himself by His own words as recounted in Matthew xi. 14 and xvi. 9-13 made it perfectly clear that John the Baptist was the Elijah whose coming had been prophesied—"If ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come"—and yet we have this seemingly strange contradiction, that when he was himself asked "Art thou Elias?" (John i. 21) John the Baptist replied with the utmost directness "I am not." How could he be Elias and yet not be Elias? The explanation clearly lies in the words of Luke i. 17—"He shall go.....*in the spirit and power of Elias.....*" John was not Elias personally, but he was one through whom there was expressed the same spirit and power that marked Elijah, and the most elementary consideration of the two men will confirm this statement. But the principle of interpretation revealed by this conclusion is of great importance, for Malachi's prophecy, though evidently fulfilled in a measure in John, points forward to "the great and dreadful day of the Lord"—a day which in John's time had clearly not arrived, and which is equally clearly still future. Just as the more familiar prophecies relating to the coming of the Messiah Himself, though undiscerned by most of those who read them, were to have a dual fulfilment first in the coming of the Lord Jesus at Bethlehem and then—in a day yet future—at the coming of the Lord in glory; so does the prophecy concerning the coming of Elijah require a dual fulfilment—one now already past and one yet to be. We therefore reach this conclusion—that before the coming of the Lord in glory He will raise up an Elijah—that is, not Elijah personally but an instrument endued with the spirit and power that was manifest in him; and the purpose of such an instrument will be to make ready a people prepared for His coming.

If, therefore, it is true that the Lord's coming is now imminent—and who of the spiritually minded people of God can doubt this?—we may surely conclude that at this very time the Holy Spirit is occupied in preparing that instrument, and necessity is upon us all to know whether we are individually in-

volved in its preparation, and if so, how.

A consideration of the characteristic features of Elijah himself will help us. We know from James v. 17 that he was a man of like nature with ourselves and we therefore need not feel that we are occupied with one who of himself was outside our realm or who had available to him other resources than we have. What he was, he was by reason of God Who was with him, and what we may be is on the same basis—in New Testament language “Not I, but Christ.” Let us, therefore, in considering Elijah recognise all the time our own candidature for a spiritual experience of equal power, though it may perhaps be expressed along other lines, provided we fulfil the necessary conditions that are foundational to all service in the Lord.

Separation by the Cross.

Let us then note that :

I. Elijah was a man utterly and uncompromisingly separate from that which was merely traditional in its worship of Jehovah, or positively opposed to Him.

No fact stands out more clearly in his life story, and nothing is more striking than the complete separation between himself and that which was officially represented by Ahab. Utter loyalty to Jehovah involved for him complete apartness from that which had ceased to be a true testimony to Jehovah. From his place apart with the Lord he appears again and again upon the scene to testify against that which had failed the Lord. It was a costly and a lonely way for him, involving persecution and reproach not from the world but from God's own people ; but this has ever been a common experience of all who dared to stand utterly for that which was of God, and it will ever be so. To be an Elijah therefore involves utterness to God and—a cross to be borne therein.

Everything Out from God.

II. Elijah was a man whose whole resource was in God.

It is a significant fact that in the Bible record we never once read of Elijah being sustained by purely natural means. He must, of course, normally have lived physically as other men did, but the Holy Spirit carefully omits all reference to such, and speaks only of his obtaining supplies by special divine provision : the ravens at Cherith, the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil at Zarephath, and the provision twice provided by the angel of the Lord during the prophet's flight to Horeb. His very energies of body were supernaturally provided, for we

read of his outrunning the chariot of Ahab “ by the hand of the Lord upon him,” and of his going in the strength of the divine provision forty days and forty nights to Horeb. Moreover his protection was from God, for when the armed forces of Ahaziah came to seize him fire came down from heaven and destroyed them. Everything out from God—dependence upon nothing of nature, but wholly sustained by life from above ! How vividly there comes into view the Lord Jesus Himself, who throughout His earthly life lived by the Father, drawing all His resources from heaven. And has the Word of God not set this forth as the very basis of life in the New Creation—“ all things out from God ” (2 Cor. v. 18) ? Can this be truly applied to all that professes to represent the Lord in the earth today ? Unhappily, it is all too common a feature of so-called Christian activities to-day that they rely for their support upon resources of this world and are kept going only by the driving force of natural elements in those who manage them. Moreover, the testimony of Elijah's life is not only that God came in on the negative side to save from shortage—out from God came also the positive resources of his servant's ministry so that he was a man of power and tremendous spiritual influence, before whom none could stand. An Elijah looks upward for all things, knowing that the God who is with him is well able to meet all his need ; and if we in this day are realising our living union with the risen and ascended Christ in the Throne we may do the same—nay, we *must* do the same, depending not at all on natural sources of supply, if we are to be at all endued with “ the spirit and power of Elijah.” The Holy Ghost in His jealousy will not seal a testimony that at any point has its dependence upon things of earth.

In Touch With the Source of Life.

III. Elijah was a channel of life to others.

The story of the reviving of the son of the widow at Zarephath, and the corresponding record of Elisha's act in the case of the son of the Shunammite woman, clearly indicate that these men were in touch with the source of life in a way that others were not. Life is ever the hall mark of God's attestation—it is from Himself alone that it can come and no mere religious profession or creed or doctrine as such can produce it. The characteristic feature of a very great proportion of that which to-day passes as Christian activity and which is done ostensibly in the Name of the Lord is not life

but death, bringing no quickening to the souls whom it touches and having no power of deliverance with it. An Elijah lives in touch constantly with the living God, and all his activities are characterised by spiritual life. How many of the Lord's people to-day are looking longingly for that which has the life of God in it, crying out for a living ministry of His word and a living fellowship with His people—and it seems as if multitudes are crying in vain. But the Lord hears—and He has His heart set upon an Elijah instrument to be a channel of His life to the needy ones around.

Prevailing Intercession.

IV. Elijah was a man in touch with the Throne, and able to move the Throne by prayer.

It is hardly necessary to say much by way of emphasis on this. The Word itself tells us that the heavens themselves were closed and then opened in response to Elijah's praying. He knew the word and will of God, and was standing in the day of Israel's departure for the out-working of that which God had decreed as His judgment upon such disobedience (Deut. xi. 17). He was one who stood for God, no matter what the cost to himself, and knew how to pray so as to prevail. There is no ministry so urgently called for amongst the Lord's people to-day as this—and none that more deeply calls for the laying down of the self-life and for the activity of the Holy Spirit. An Elijah uses the weapon of "all prayer"—and persists and prevails: and the government of the heavens is brought into the earth by his intercession.

Jealousy for the Name.

V. Elijah's supreme concern was for the honour and triumph of the Name of the Lord.

The scene on Carmel surely represents the climax of his testimony. The man himself is there revealed in a light that leaves no doubt as to his attitude of heart. His own personal reputation and position is involved to the final degree with that of His Lord—if Jehovah fails he also is for ever discredited: but His confidence in the Lord, and his concern for the Holy Name that has been publicly dishonoured by the nation, leads him to risk everything on God with a sublime assurance that He cannot and will not fail. For the testimony that "Jesus Christ is Lord," despite the counter claims of all enemy powers, he jeopardised his very life. That testimony *was* his life, and he lived or died with it. "To no to live is Christ" is the language of an Elijah, and the sole and supreme honour of that Name is the motive that

actuates from the greatest to the least thing in the life of such an one. To him, "Calvary is Victory" is no mere catch phrase but the soberly accepted basis of his whole spiritual position, in line with which he acts in every particular; and he it is who "repairs the altar of the Lord that was thrown down," thus setting up anew the testimony to the Cross as the way of triumph.

A Testimony to be Restored.

We have by no means exhausted the features that strikingly marked Elijah, but enough has been said to indicate generally the elements that must mark an instrument—whether an individual or a company—which in any age represents the spirit and power of Elijah. Uncompromising; living utterly out from God; possessed of life and able to minister the very life of God to others; moving constantly in fellowship with God and knowing His mind, and by prayer bringing His will to pass; consumed with a burning zeal for His honour and glory without thought of self at all, and rejoicing constantly in the superiority of the Name over all the power of the enemy forces that challenge it: can these be said to be the commonly prevailing marks of the Lord's people generally to-day? If we look at the Church in its earliest days as revealed in the New Testament we find these as the common features: the Holy Ghost had come from heaven, bringing to the Church the spirit and power of the risen and ascended Christ, and a testimony was established amongst men and before principalities and powers that turned the world upside down and before which rulers trembled and empires presently fell. The very power of the Throne of God was with His representatives on the earth. Where is such a testimony to-day? It is certainly not conspicuous among the majority of the Lord's people, but this gracious word of promise from the Lord's own lips stands for our encouragement: "Elias truly shall come first, and restore all things" (Matthew xvii. 11).

"Restore"—a word full of hope and promise in this day of almost universal breakdown. The former things shall be restored: the spirit and power of Elijah shall again be manifest before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come, and the testimony of Jesus in the power of the Holy Ghost shall again be found on the earth—not necessarily something visibly great in the estimation of the world, but mighty and effectual in the realm of spiritual intelligences. What a promise for our hearts to seize, and what

a ground upon which to go to the Lord with our face between our knees and a sevenfold cry to Him, as Elijah of old cried, for the opening again of the heavens and the pouring forth of the needed waters! Oh, beloved, God truly has promised to do it, but He needs an Elijah instrument through which to work. And why should not you and I be such? Are we looking to Him to raise up others to do it, or are we reaching out to Him that we ourselves may be that instrument? It is a company He seeks, made up of those who count not their lives dear unto themselves and in whom the features of Elijah of old are manifested. You and I may be such if we will—the Holy Spirit will make *anybody* such who is prepared to pay the price and fulfil the necessary conditions. Oh, hear His appeal to you coming through these very words as you read them, and commit yourself to Him for this holy purpose, remembering that after Elijah our blessed Lord Himself will soon appear.

The Dynamic—Christ in Glory.

But what is the secret first of all of a burning heart to serve Him thus and then of the grace to continue in the way when the conflict is fierce and there is little to encourage? We return to our opening thought from Luke ix. The central figure there was the Lord in His glory on the transfiguration mount. Here is the secret of an Elijah ministry—the glorious Lord central to everything, constantly filling the gaze and occupying the heart! Not now a man glorious on earth, but now in the throne of God having the glory that was His before the world was—the very glory of God. How shall we find grace to lay down our lives for His sake, to let go all that this world offers of resource and opportunity; how become filled

constantly with His life and be channels of that life to others; how live in a Christ-rejecting and God-ignoring world in a way that compels the recognition that Jesus Christ is Lord? Only by having Him in His glory constantly in our hearts and before our eyes. Only three men saw His glory in the mount, and unhappily so few comparatively of His people have truly seen Him “crowned with glory and honour.” Oh, that all might see Him thus, the eyes of their hearts being opened! Beloved, let us exhort one another once again to make everything of Him *in the Glory*. The Holy Spirit who is within us has brought Him, in his glory, into our hearts. Our gospel is truly *the gospel of the Glory of Christ* (2 Cor. iv., 4, R.V.). Believe it, proclaim it, live it, manifest it! Be not content with a gospel that proclaims only a Saviour who died for sinners, precious as that is; but glory in Him who having died and been raised again is now seated at the right hand of God in glory—the guarantee of the ultimate putting down of every evil thing and the assurance of eternal salvation for all who trust in Him. And as we thus are occupied with the glorious Lord we ourselves shall be changed from glory to glory (2 Cor. iii. 18) and there will be developed in us the features not only of Elijah but of our very Lord Himself; and as we go on with our eyes ever upon Him there will come that glorious moment when, as in Elijah’s own case, the heavens will open for us and we too shall be caught up to meet our Lord in the air, and thus perfect our Elijah ministry in a final testimony to the triumph of our blessed Lord over the power of death itself. The Elijah people will be the translation people. Shall we not all seek grace to be of that company?

G. P.

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in tents; not seeing the fulfilment of the great promises given him to expect, but going on with God—so turning back to Ur—no turning aside to Sodom. The lonely misunderstood man of faith goes on with God. The flesh broke out here and there in Egypt, and with Sarai and Hagar, and had to be crucified. The bond-woman and the child must go. But at ninety years old and nine there came a new revelation of God and the seed of promise, the miracle of resurrection life and power, was given.

Deeper yet must Abraham be brought into

fellowship with his God and so the supreme test of his faith and devotion is made and Isaac is demanded and sacrificed, at any rate in Abraham’s heart and will.

In that unaccountable agony of blind faith obedience, which yet in the darkness saw the power of God to raise the dead, this pilgrim enters into a fellowship with the heart of God which is the most marvellous prophetic foreshadowing of the divine passion at Calvary. ’Tis thus revelation is given and maturity develops into perfection.

P. W. F.

The Laying on of Hands

Part II.

".....the rudiments of the first (beginning) principles of the oracles of God ;"

"Let us cease to speak of the first principles of Christ, (Greek reads: The word of the beginning of Christ).....not laying again a foundation of.....the laying on of hands."—Hebrews v. 12 ; vi. 1, 2.

Having, in the first place, brought together the Scriptures of both Testaments which relate to this subject, and made one or two general remarks as to possible wrong applications of the truth, we now proceed to do that which we saw to be necessary in the case of every aspect of doctrine, that is, set it in relation to all the rest of truth.

If the Holy Spirit calls this a "first principle of Christ," and a part of the "foundation" (the regular idiom for laying the foundation of a building is used here) then something foundational is missing if this is left out, and weakness in proportion must be at the base. Moreover, the other principles must relatively be weakened, and the symmetry be upset if the Lord says so many are required and we reduce the number.

These "principles" are said to be "of Christ" (objective genitive: about Christ). The context shows that these things are the initial basic principles of the believer's life. While true that they belong to spiritual babyhood, they *do* belong thereto, and maturity cannot be reached unless the foundations are according to Divine prescription. The superstructure will always have a basic weakness in such a case, and it is always a difficult thing to put foundational weaknesses right when the building is well-advanced, although it *is* done, even in the case of a long-standing Christian life, with much history behind it.

Christ—The Focal Point of all Truth

The little, yet all-important, objective genitive which we have noticed—"about Christ"—gives us the focal point of all truth, and immediately correlates the particular matter before us. Christ is the Centre of everything, and He is the key to and explanation of everything.

There are three main aspects of the Person and work of Christ brought into view by the Scriptures ; they are

Substitute, Representative, Head

While, in the work of His Cross (1) and (2) may, and do, overlap in measure (that is, He not only died *for* us, but *as* us) these three relate respectively to His death, His resurrection, and His exaltation. He is substitute in death. He is representative in resurrection and ascension, and He is Head in Exaltation.

One sees Him "made a curse for us" and rejected. The second sees Him made a blessing for us, and accepted. The third sees Him filled with all the fulness of God for us.

Death is rejection. Resurrection is acceptance. Exaltation is fulness. There are always two sides even to the sacrifice, the altar, the cross ; the death-side and the life-side ; the rejection side and the acceptance side ; the consuming from the presence of the Lord, and the consuming unto the Lord.

It will be seen that this embodies a very great deal of the content of the Word of God, and may lead to a fresh study thereof, but it brings us to what is specifically before us.

In our former survey of the Scriptures we saw that, in the main, the laying on of hands in the Old Testament was connected with the substitute in relation to salvation ; with blessing in relation to life and enrichment from the Lord ; and with anointing in relation to ministry and responsibility. In all these connections there was a laying on of hands which carried with it either an acting as on behalf of the Lord manward, or on behalf of man Godward, and in some instances both combined. In any case and whatever the object in view, the act was one of identification. By the outstretching of the hands a practical declaration was made that those who so acted and those touched were one. Thus, without any further delay, we can say with confidence that the laying on of hands all inclusively brings into view

The Oneness of Christ

This oneness is shown to be in three connections : firstly, His Person ; secondly, His finished work ; and thirdly, His position and continued activity.

1. As to His Person, this comes out in a

special way in His incarnation. But looking back to the two-sided feature of things and persons in representation in the Old Testament, we see that God and man came together in one object.

There is a sense in which the main matter of all the Scriptures is that of God's fellowship with man, and man's fellowship with God. This relationship is taken back into the "before-times eternal" in the thought and intention of God. It is a phase of the "mystery hid from ages and generations," but is now made known unto His saints (Col. i. 27).

But is it not just the bare fact of fellowship, it is the nature and method of that fellowship. In the full light of revelation it is seen to be, not objective, but subjective; not outward, but inward. It is God and man joined in one life and one nature. It is here, of course, that all the errors and heresies have found their entrance. This truth has been recognised, but it has had constructed upon it philosophies and interpretations which, because Christ has not been apprehended, have led their inventors, exponents, and adherents into the deepest deceptions. The cause of this error and lie—which becomes so refined as to be—in principle—accepted even in what would seek to pass as thorough-going New Testament evangelism (we are referring to the idea of "the divine in man") is the failure or refusal to accept the absoluteness and utterness of the "Fall," and its consequences. The one all-inclusive issue of the "Fall" is the impossibility of *that* man—the fallen man, man by nature—to be united or reunited with God, or for God to be united with him. *That* man has passed away for God, and has died. There must be a new man, according to God's thought and heart and will.

This New Man is Christ. He is truly man, with a humanity as real and complete as ever God meant humanity to be. But He is also God; as utterly God as Very God. These two facts meet in His Person and are interwoven beyond man's power to dissect. The gold of His Sonship is interwoven with the white linen of His perfect humanity and is one with the fabric. This is not so with even the "born anew" believer. Here again other mistaken systems of teaching have found their entrance in relation to regeneration and sanctification. Christ is the link of God and man. God is in Christ, and Christ is in God. Union with God is only possible IN CHRIST, and as Christ in the

Person of the Holy Spirit is in us. "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

But this postulates the setting aside of one man who "cannot" (1 Cor. ii. 14) for the Man who can. "If any man be IN CHRIST there is a new creation" (not, "he is a new creature") (2 Cor. iv. 17). The new creation is what is in Christ, and what Christ is.

Our fellowship with the Father is in His Son, our Lord Jesus. The Father's fellowship with us is in Him also. Everything in the types and symbols of Christ in the Old Testament declares this basic truth.

In the New Testament we find that the primary thing unto any relationship of life with God is to recognise Who Christ is. The work of Christ in His Cross was not the first thing for men's salvation, but it was Who it was that did that work. Paul's conversion was not based in the first place upon what Christ had done, but who Jesus *was*; the other immediately followed, and broke his heart. The first thing that Paul preached was not His work, but that He was the Son of God—His Person. One of the last prayers of Paul on record was that believers might be granted "a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the KNOWLEDGE OF HIM." (Ephes. i. 17.)

The revelation of this reality of the Person of Christ, if it stood alone, might not lead to salvation; that is, if it were an objective thing only. There was something gravely lacking in Peter's life even after the revelation from the Father concerning the Son, as recorded in Matthew xvi. If Paul had stayed only with the objective side of his experience on the Damascus Road things would not have worked out to his salvation. But the subjective is bound up with the objective. Peter was destined to have the counterpart, and Paul says that "It pleased God to reveal His Son IN ME." That inner revelation is undoubtedly of "Christ crucified," and embraces the work as well as the Person.

What we have sought to emphasise thus far is the oneness of the Person of Christ. This is a far-reaching, and, as we have said, an all-embracing truth which will touch things at every point as we go on. God has come to us in Him; has joined Himself with man in Him—and *only* in Him. We have come to God in Him; and have our relationship and fellowship with God in Him; and not otherwise.

Salvation is not "deciding for Christ," it is seeing and receiving the Son of God.

II. Now, inasmuch as the Person gives the value and meaning to the work, and the work cannot be of value only in the light of Who it was that accomplished it, we must go on to speak of the oneness of Christ's finished work.

While this work will always have its individual aspect, and all the saved will with Paul glory in that "He loved ME, and gave Himself for ME," a contemplation of the Scriptures on the subject will very soon convince that in the mind of God and of Christ the whole work of Christ was a collective and corporate thing. It relates to humanity as a human family, and not to individual members thereof merely. The race is in view, and the race is always regarded as an organism, related in a single life and nature.

"He made of one (blood) every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." (Acts xvii. 26.)

The sixth chapter of the Letter to the Romans is a summary of what has preceded it in which the whole range of the race—both Jew and Gentile—has been searched and swept in quest of inherent righteousness and it has not been found. Hence the race in its entirety is under condemnation and sentence of death. Then Christ is brought in and accepts the position of racial representative, and although Himself wholly and inherently righteous (which means that He is not involved in man's estate by what He Himself is, and therefore He *can* be a VOLUNTARY representative as one apart) He submits to being "made sin in our stead, he who knew no sin." Thus, when Christ died, from God's point of view, the sentence of death upon the entire race was executed, and the race died in Him.

When God raised Him from among THE DEAD (for it was not possible that an inherently holy one should see corruption) it was still in a representative capacity, that is, as Head of a new creation, a new race, and of the Church which is His Body.

This resurrection representativeness is collective and corporate, and, while all of its members will have to come into it on a personal apprehension, appreciation, and appropriation of His work, it is already regarded from the Divine standpoint as complete and a whole. God is working backward, not forward. That is, in sovereignty He has reached His complete end in foreknowledge, and is working *from* completeness not *to* completeness in the matter of the number of the elect.

Now this matter of the original nature of

Christ's work and its result is the key to the whole subject which we have before us. Of that resurrection organism He is Head, and His headship embraces various aspects of our relationship to Him and to that organic spiritual entity or Body.

Four Connections of the Laying on of Hands.

In bringing the Scriptures of both Testaments together we have seen that—in the main—the laying on of hands is in four connections, but we must clearly and strongly keep in mind that headship is that which governs them all. The four connections are:

I. Identification with the representative Head as Substitute and Saviour through judgment and death.

II. Identification with the Head as inclusive of a new race and organism.

III. Identification with the Head as anointed for blessing and gifts.

IV. Identification with the Head in relation to service and ministry.

Number one includes the death side and the life side of union with Christ.

Number two brings in the corporate nature of union with Him and of the member's new life.

Number three has to do with the gift and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Number four relates to the believer's place and work, in general and particular in the "Body of Christ" or "House of God."

Let us say again that a survey of the Scriptures on the subject will show that the laying on of hands is clearly connected with all these aspects of Christ's Headship. The Headship of Christ is the one correlating, co-ordinating, all-embracing reality, and all truth has to be focussed there.

Before we go on to deal with the laying on of hands in the four-fold connection indicated, we want to come back to our present particular object and point out that the laying-on of hands cannot be regarded as some sideline of truth, some mere phase of doctrine, some optional observance, if in the Divine thought it really is connected with four such tremendous matters, for these four cover the whole ground of the believer's life, and if this is one of the "foundation principles" of the doctrine concerning Christ, then they all stand or fall by each other. That is, the general foundation is weak or strong according to the equality of importance given to them.

Whether or not Paul wrote or instigated the Letter to the Hebrews does not come into this discussion at the moment *but at his conversion*

the first four of the six principles (Hebrews vi. 2) were definitely operative. "Repentance from dead works." "Faith toward God." "Baptisms" ("Arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins." Acts xxii. 16). "The Laying on of hands" ("And Ananias, laying his hands upon him, said, brother....." Acts ix. 17.)

There is always the peril of recognising a thing as stated in the Scriptures, and then adopting it as it stands and constructing a procedure upon it, making it a part of a creed or practice without having revelation as to God's thought—larger thought—back of the simple form of words. This leads to mere institutions, ordinances, and forms. Everything in the Word of God has got—for its true value and power in life—to come to us by revelation of the Spirit, and when that takes place we are introduced into the universal and eternal which lies behind every Divine thought.

The laying on of hands, with other things, e.g., baptism, the Lord's Table, etc., can be just the acceptance of certain bodies of people, and have to do with custom and practice, which others leave out. It is even possible that these things may be regarded by some as having no place or meaning for certain parts of the dispensational arrangement and character of the ages.

We venture to say that all this may be because the eternal and universal thought of God back of everything that comes from Him has been missed, and the things in question have been regarded too much from a local and earthly standpoint, rather than from the heavenly. These things can—and do—mean life and strength where they are spiritually apprehended and observed, but as mere ordinances they may have little uplifting or enduring value. We have known the thing in both realms and we know the difference.

(To be continued.)

(Continued from page 34.)

allows, and we can take the attitude "This is not kind," "It is cruel of the Lord."

We can take one of two attitudes toward the ways of God with us; we can get bitter, sour, hard; or we can have the enlargement by exercise, development by exercise, to develop capacity, to bring us into the large place that we may be intelligently His instrument for governing under His Headship in ages to come. Things that enter into our history we cannot always fathom, but the explanation which we can give is that, whatever there may be as second causes, the Lord is Sovereign and He thinks it worth while sometimes to allow what the world would call the most terrible thing to overtake for the time being, and it would seem that His Name and interests suffer through that thing, but through that thing He brings His people to a place of maturity and they get to know the Lord for themselves. Through these terrible things we find the Lord produces something that is very much more worthy of Himself in the life of His children. That is His justification, His vindication: if He could do it in any other way He would.

In the long run He does get spiritual maturity among His people, where they know Him. He would get us to a place where we know the Lord and we have our senses exercised to know. The Lord give us grace to accept all His dealings with us in the light of His great purpose.

T. A.-S.

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The Ark of the Testimony.

And its Progress Toward Final Rest.

READING : 1 Chronicles xiii. 1-14.

IN a very brief space I want to seek to cover a considerable amount of ground in connection with the chapter which we have just read, which chapter is the centre of a very great deal of history which was typical and symbolical of things for later times, even for our times. To gather up all that material and data very briefly, we may remind ourselves that there were three things in the main in view and related. There was the ark of the covenant of the Lord; then there was David, and thirdly there were the Philistines. We shall seek to see their significance and what they represented.

What the Ark Represents.

Firstly, as to the ark. When we have made our most comprehensive and exhaustive study of the ark, its components, its character, its place, its function, there is one thing which seems to me to embrace all of its meaning, and that is, that it is in the Old Testament meant to represent the greatness and the glory of the Lord Jesus; and that greatness and glory of the Lord Jesus as in the eye of God; for it was upon that ark that the eye of Jehovah continually rested. We may say that the ark was the focal point of the Divine attention, and that all the thought of the Lord was centred in that central object of the life of Israel as His elect people. And so the ark, which is so often referred to as the Ark of the Testimony, as well as the ark of the Covenant of the Lord, stood as a type of the Lord Jesus in His greatness and glory as in the eye of God. When we speak about "the testimony of Jesus," that is what we mean. What He is before God, as to the Divine thought, as to God's estimate and judgment. The greatness and the glory of Christ from God's standpoint, that is the testimony of Jesus. And it is that thought of God concerning Him, and of course His work, which is represented in that ark and the mercy seat over it. That thought of God concerning Him is very jealously guarded by God. We know that over the mercy seat, which was upon the top of the ark, the cherubim were represented as spreading their wings and making a complete overshadowing; and the

cherubim are throughout the Scriptures the representation of the custodianship of that which is peculiarly precious to God.

We meet them first in the book of Genesis where man, having sinned, was expelled from the garden, and the cherubim were placed with flaming swords to guard the way of the approach to the tree of life. That tree of life represented Christ again as the Life, and there is a way of life in Christ, and man was not permitted to receive that Divine life in a fallen sinful state, judgment must first be wrought out, and there must be provision made for the atonement for his sins, but the cherubim were given to safeguard that which was peculiarly holy unto the Lord; that Divine life which is in Christ. Then onwards, throughout the whole Old Testament Scriptures, the cherubim come into view, and it is always as those jealous sentinels of what is of peculiar value to God, and if man in the flesh over ventures or dares to touch that, he immediately meets the judgment of God. We shall see that in another connection as we go on. So that the cherubim over the ark and the mercy seat are there to preserve the holiness of this thing before God, and even Aaron with all the ceremonial preparation and provision dared not come into that place before that ark, or into any kind of relationship with it, unless he comes by reason of shed blood for the remission of sins, for the word is concerning him: "that he die not." "Uzza . . . died before God" because he dared to touch that which, in the eyes of God, was so peculiarly holy and precious. The ark then, in brief, is the testimony to what Jesus Christ is as in the thought and mind of God. Now you can study the ark anew in the light of that, and, of course, you will find a very great deal of material. That is the first thing here, it is the testimony of Jesus in its fulness according to God's thought.

What David Represents.

Secondly, David; and to gather up David's life and David's work into one brief statement, as we have done with the ark, we shall see that David was an instrument especially brought

in and raised up by God in relation to that testimony. God raised up David for the purpose of bringing that testimony to its final resting place. The end of David's life was the building of the temple and the bringing of the ark of the testimony to its final resting place in the Holiest of that temple. The temple represents the end of journeyings, a settled place, a place of finality, and the ark was brought to rest in the temple and found—typically—its full end there, in a settled position. David was raised up especially as an instrument to bring the ark of the testimony to its full and final and settled resting-place in the purpose of God. That is where we take him up in this chapter which we have read; David's exercise concerning the ark. That became the predominating feature of his life; the outstanding thing is this real heart exercise and concern for the ark. The one greatest desire and ambition of his life was that God should have a settled place of rest, and he related God to that ark. And so it was in his heart to build a house for the Lord into which the ark might come and be at rest, and it was for that end that God raised up David, and that became the chief feature of his life. The one great consummating word of David's life is in that heart expression: "Now, therefore, arise, O Lord God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength" (Psalm cxxxii. 8). That is like the parting word of this man which marks the close of his life work.

What the Philistines Represent.

Then, thirdly—the Philistines. The Philistines, as you notice, are peculiarly related to both David and the ark. They seem to be continuously in touch with both throughout David's life, throughout this part of history. And again, as the ark is a type, and as David and his ministry are a type, so the Philistines are an Old Testament type of spiritual things. What do the Philistines represent? We know them in Scripture as designated frequently "the uncircumcised Philistines." If we carry that word circumcision over into the New Testament and seek for the Holy Spirit's explanation of it, we find that in Colossians ii. 11: "In whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead." Christ in His

cross is the explanation of Old Testament circumcision, that is, the putting away of the body of the flesh representatively. Now the Philistines, known as the uncircumcised Philistines, stand in direct opposition to the meaning of the cross in its deepest sense, that is, putting away of the whole body of the flesh. We may say the Philistines will not have that, they stand against that; the Philistines will not have complete and utter separation unto God. That is the principle which is embodied in their history. Take up their history where you will, and you will find that in some way or another they are in opposition to the principle of Calvary which is the putting away of the body of the flesh, or absolute separation unto God. Begin if you will, with Samson in the book of Judges. You know that Samson was a Nazarite. He was a Nazarite voluntarily, not by compulsion. A Nazarite was one who had upon him voluntary vows which could not be imposed upon anybody, but which vows represented a desire to be more utterly for the Lord than the average person. And Samson was a Nazarite, and he represented that uttermost, voluntary consecration, separation, abandonment to the Lord. While in that position he was impervious, unconquerable, and predominant over the Philistines. They could neither bind him nor hurt him, he was their master. But when he disclosed through Delilah the secret of his strength, his supremacy, his ascendancy, the secret in his vow, and they captured his secret and destroyed that which represented his absolute separation unto God, then he was in their hands as weak as water, they carried him away and put his eyes out, and we have in Judges xvi., Samson making sport for the Philistines; but the most tragic thing is that they were crediting their god Dagon with this triumph. The flesh always leads on to the glorifying of Satan and that is why he likes to keep it going, it does bring him into the place of Christ. The Devil takes the Lord's place of glory when flesh is in evidence.

That is true to history and there is a good deal of history bound up with that fact. You will find that the Philistines represent that continually; and we must deal with that from another angle almost immediately. What we want to keep in view is this, God raising up an instrument to bring the testimony of Jesus to its full and final place of rest and settlement. That is what is in view. He has ever been seeking to do that, and He is seeking to do that

to-day, perhaps more than ever at this time, the Lord has His heart set upon an instrument by which the testimony of the greatness and glory of Christ, His Son, shall be brought to its finality of settlement. There may be just one stage further to go and then the end. It may be that we are, so to speak, on the last lap of God's effort to get His testimony in fulness settled. May it be so. But undoubtedly He is out to get an instrument for that purpose, to carry the testimony forward toward His ultimate end where in fulness it is settled, no more journeying, and no more in the variation of its history, but now fixed and settled in God. That instrument is what is in our hearts, as it is in the Lord's heart as the object of His peculiar interest at this time.

The Snare of Philistine Features.

If God is seeking such an instrument, that instrument must, as David did, stand completely and utterly in opposition to all that is represented by the Philistines. That instrument must be constituted and governed by those laws and principles spiritually, and morally, which are the opposite of the Philistines' laws and principles, and the things with which such an instrument will have continually to contend will be Philistine elements, Philistine features. The Philistines were the continuous menace of David's life one way and another, and that has its own significance here that they do represent that which would make impossible the realisation of God's end in bringing the testimony of His Son to its fulness and finality. So that David is introduced to us over against the Philistines and that bold embodiment of Philistine power and principle, Goliath. You remember the story without me going over it again; but here the whole Philistine power is represented in their giant, their champion. He in his very presence, bearing, and utterances betrays the Philistine spirit, nature, and meaning. David hears and sees, and is stirred mightily within; we may say he is moved by God inwardly in relation to the very thing that God has brought him in for.

But just as David comes in and is going in the Lord to meet that thing at the outset and commence his great life work which is to have this wonderful issue, a Philistine trap seems to come up secretly from behind, and Saul proposes a suit of armour, and provides it, and puts it on him, and that is a Philistine idea. There is that man out there who has all that. Shall David meet him with his own equipment?

Shall David make the weapons of his warfare carnal and not spiritual? That was the trap, the snare, the peril for the moment, and David, with a right kind of spiritual perception recognised that this was not the Divine provision.

When a man stands in a right relationship to the Lord what need has he of fleshly equipment, of worldly provision to fight the Lord's battles? And so David cast it off and went out; the Lord was his equipment. You see he stood at the outset in direct and distinct contradiction to the whole Philistine principle, and that was the way of his victory. Now again and again he was in danger of being caught in that trap. On one occasion he seems to have fallen into it. In a time of trial, a time of rejection, a time when Saul was hunting him like a partridge among the rocks, a time when it did seem that his life purpose was not developing and the Lord was not bringing him to the place of which He had spoken: one day David's heart failed him and he feared because of Saul and his army, and he fled to Achish, the king of Gath, the Philistine, and took refuge in Gath. And he heard the lords of the Philistines saying to Achish: "Is not this David? Did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?" David heard it and he was afraid, and he feigned himself to be mad and scabbled on the doors of the gate like a madman. What a pitiable state for an instrument raised up in relation to the greatness and glory of Jesus Christ. You see he had been caught in a Philistine snare and it was his undoing. When he got on to Philistine ground he went out, was broken. You see how necessary it is for a vessel in this testimony to keep clear, to keep out, to keep off that ground. Saul failed himself, he would not go out against the Philistine, and at last the Philistines took the initiative against Saul and cut off his head and put his head in the house of Dagon and said: "Dagon has done this," and the ark was then captured by the Philistines. When the Philistines brought the ark into the house of Dagon, Dagon came down on his face before the ark, they put him up again, but he came down again, broken. God is watching His testimony even when that which ought to be the instrument for its safety and preservation has failed Him. Now in the land of the Philistines, the Philistines have touched that ark and judgment has met them. It always does, Touch that which is sacred to

God in His Son with hands of flesh, with uncrucified natural life, and you meet judgment. Come into that which stands to represent truly before God, the greatness of His Son, come into that with natural judgment, with natural interference, with an unregenerate heart, the end of that will be judgment, God will meet that and there will be an awful reckoning with God; and God does not preserve us from judgment when the testimony of His Son is touched with fleshly hands. All the errors, all the false teaching, all the great systems of false doctrine which have come in have related to the person of Christ. The result has been always the outworking of judgment in divisions and loss of power, and God has never protected from that. It is always that way.

At length the Philistines were able to get rid of the ark and they put it upon a new cart and attached two milch kine and sent it in the direction of Beth-shemesh, and it went, the oxen lowing as they went. It was a right direction even for Philistines. Sometimes fleshly men, when they are under judgment get some sense of direction and the Lord helps in the right direction. The Lord helps as far as He can when things are in a right direction even if not altogether according to His mind.

Then later David stirred up all Israel to bring back the ark of the Lord and again he was caught in a Philistine trap, a Philistine idea, snare; he made a cart (that is a Philistine idea), a new cart, put the ark on it—the result was judgment. Men in the flesh when they take a right direction under a sense of judgment may be helped that far by the Lord, but when the Lord raises up a special instrument for His testimony He does not have half measures; that instrument must be kept to the utter conformity to God's thought, and so the Lord does not help David's new cart as He did the Philistines'. They knew no better; David should have known better, and because he was raised up for something so utter God did not let him off with half an idea. If the Lord is out to get something which is toward the finality and fulness of His testimony, He will not adopt half measures, He will not let off with false ideas, He will not excuse the flesh in any measure or degree. And so the Philistine idea of a mechanical contrivance to carry God's ark, instead of a living priesthood, a consecrated company, brought the judgment of God, and Uzza died before God. And David was angry. The tragedy was, that that

movement was arrested, was delayed, was put into a backwater, and there was a period without any progress of that testimony. When the Lord's own principles are not recognised, and when the Lord's way is not observed, when flesh comes into that which is so sacred to the Lord the whole testimony is held up and a long period of delay, suspense, ensues. That beautiful movement was delayed, stopped dead. During that time David doubtless had much exercise of heart, and in the Word of God discovered God's principles for His testimony, that that testimony was to be carried, not on a cart, but on the shoulders of wholly consecrated people. That is not the Philistine principle, that is the Lord's principle, that stands against the Philistine idea. There were two things which constituted the wrong in this case. One was the cart, the other was man - as such—in charge of the testimony. It may be just as disastrous for men to take the custody of the testimony of Jesus as for it to be committed to an organisation. That testimony must be borne spiritually and not officially or personally—that is as connected with a man or men personally—and when it is borne spiritually the Lord must be trusted to deal with such as would injure it, and He will. Man need not hedge it about or seek to protect it. If he does, then evils follow.

There are those who seem to think that the testimony is given into their OFFICIAL custody; and they are by this idea constituted doctrinal watch-dogs suspiciously sniffing and yapping at every approaching footfall. What is needed is that the testimony should be held in the Holy Ghost, and the Lord will look after the rest. When at length David re-discovered that principle, then the ark was brought up and eventually lodged in the House of the Lord and came to its place of finality and rest.

You see how hurriedly we have covered a large stretch of history, a large amount of Old Testament truth which has its abiding meaning, and peculiarly, I feel, for our own time. The Lord having an instrument in relation to the greatness and the glory of His Son, that that testimony of Jesus as in the thought of God, should be brought to a place of settled finality and security and rest. But such an instrument must be conformed to God's thought, must have no Philistine element about it; and God's thought is, utter, complete, entire sanctification, separation, the cutting off of the body of the flesh by the cross, and His delays are very often

related to a necessity to have that state of things brought about more fully, and His judgments are very often abroad because of a violation of that.

May we see what He is saying to us. If it is true that He is calling us into fellowship with Himself to be a part of that instrument at an end time to bring this testimony, it may be to the end of the last stage of its journey

through the ages, may we be according to His own thought, constituted by His own laws, living on His basis, and all the time by the cross repudiating and rejecting any Philistine element of the flesh, the will of the flesh, the mind of the flesh, the desire of the flesh, the heart of the flesh, any kind of flesh—for His Name's sake.

T. A.-S.

Patience'

MANY earnest Christians are distressed and discouraged into unrest because after appealing to the Lord for complete deliverance from the failures of the old life they are faced with occasional outbursts of it. They have expected Him to do something which almost never He does.

There is no sudden jump, no easy short cut into perfectness. There is a fight of faith. There is the continual necessity for our co-operation with the Holy Spirit in faith, obedience to the truth. This will be so as long as we are in the body.

Do not be discouraged because of the occasional outbursts of flesh—though do not settle down complacently with a philosophical composure that they are inevitable—but rather encourage yourself in the Lord that He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it, will keep on perfecting it, until the day of Jesus Christ.

Neither the flesh nor the devil is annihilated; though, through the Cross, our blessed Champion Redeemer has stripped them both. (Col. ii. 11; Heb. ii. 14). The day is coming when, actually, they shall be no more. Meantime, in this world where they are not annihilated faith appropriates their destruction and, as the victory of Christ is laid hold of, they are indeed destroyed. While faith actively stands in that victory in Christ, they have no power. Thus faith is the victory that overcomes the world.

God is wanting the faith that overcomes to be wrought, developed in us. It is much more precious to Him than gold is to men.

There is a sense in which Christ has done everything. He has obtained eternal redemption. Our justification and sanctification and reconciliation to God, and consequent accep-

tance by God, are of Him alone. By grace—not works in any shape or form—are ye saved through faith.

But, being justified, saved, by God's grace through faith and having entered into sonship relationship with God, we have received a new spiritual capacity of responsibility which must be exercised until perfect maturity is attained. So that by our faith surrender to God we do not become passive, volitionless spiritual automata (this is a mistaken conception of surrender to God common among many) but we become vessels of energetic activity in fellowship with Christ Who is in us by His Spirit.

Christ lives in us; not as a lodger dwelling in a house, but as the LIFE of our life. In spite of the imperfections of human nature and of our own characters, He has come to live in us who have been crucified with Him. Thus He communicates to us, so far as we will have, His own character in essence. Thus the word becomes true: "as He is, so are we in this world."

In bringing our being into subjection and conformity with Himself He is patient, so patient and long-suffering. We must be patient too. Patient with ourselves! Patient with one another. Yes, and patient with Him in His sovereign choice to work thus so silently and slowly within the deepest depths of our being, instead of working that sudden spectacular miracle we would so much like!

The fruit of the Spirit is long-suffering.

See the patient progress in perfection in spite of occasional disappointing failure in a life like Abraham's. From time to time God breaks in with a new revelation of Himself in the midst of years of dogged waiting and walking and perhaps wondering in sheer faith, sojourning

(Continued on page 38).

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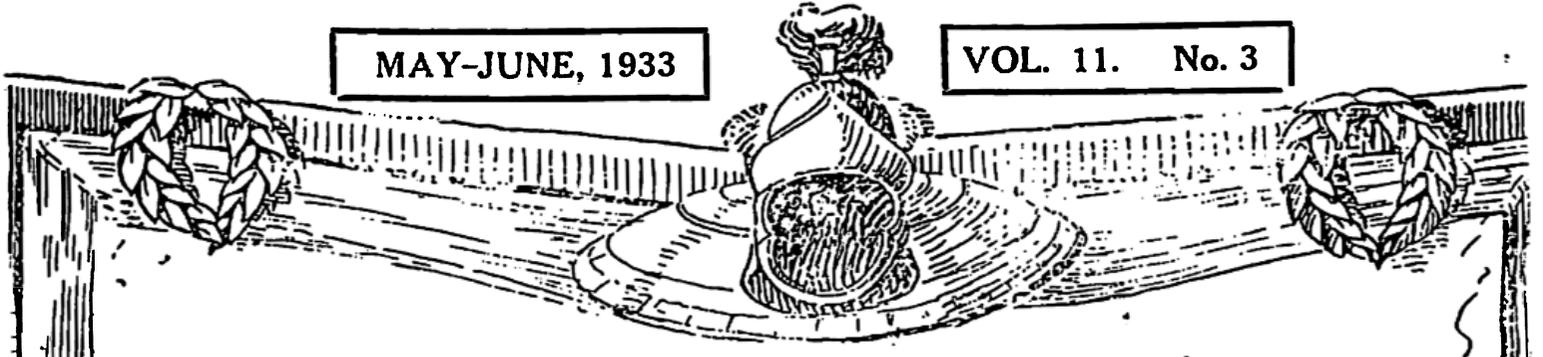
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Witness and a Testimon

MAY-JUNE, 1933

VOL. 11. No. 3



“ .. OF THE SPOIL WON
IN BATTLES DID THEY
DEDICATE TO.....
THE HOUSE OF
THE LORD ”

I. CHRON : 26. 27.



“ Lord of All ”

READING : Acts x. 2'6, 44 ; x. 36, 44.

It is that little parenthesis in verse 36 which has been holding my attention to-day and I believe pressing itself upon me for a brief word this evening. Probably there is no greater parenthesis, or even direct statement, in the whole range of Scripture than that simple, precise statement : “ He is Lord of all,” and it is important to recognise, to take account of the text. It does not say He will be Lord of all, it says He is Lord of all, and as you will notice it is a parallel statement to that which occurred in the second chapter : “ God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified.” Chapter ii and chapter x. as most of you know, are companion chapters. The one is the counterpart of the other. One is the Jewish Pentecost and the other is the Gentile Pentecost ; two halves of one thing. In the first it is Israel ; but Israel only represented a half, a part of God's thought and intention : the Gentiles were included in the Divine thought ; so that Pentecost of chapter ii. must necessarily be broadened out to include the Gentiles to make it complete, and in chapter x. the same instrument, the same messenger, the same spokesman, Peter, is used to complete this Divine act of grace ; and by wonderful activities and strategic movements of the Holy Spirit and angels in co-operation, Peter is found at length in the house of Cornelius, the Gentile. And having made a parallel declaration to the one which he made in Jerusalem to the Jews, the same result follows, the Holy Spirit fell upon the Gentiles as upon the Jews, and many were turned to the Lord.

Everything begins with Christ as Lord.

So that the commencement of everything in this dispensation, and the foundation of everything for this dispensation, is the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Not only the Saviourhood of Jesus Christ, but before that and over that and encircling that, His Lordship. It is a wonderful statement : “ He is Lord of all.” To use the very words of Peter in the 2nd chapter : “ Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost.....” Exalted by the right hand of God. “ God hath made him both Lord and Christ,

this Jesus whom ye crucified.....He is Lord of all.”

Just to gather up a few thoughts as quickly and briefly as possible let us remind ourselves that that statement in the first place represents the act and the mind of God. God's act in relation to His Own mind and eternal intention, was in the setting of His Son Jesus Christ in the place of sovereign Lordship in this universe, and there He is now, and everything that is proceeding in the history of this world is proceeding in relation to that, not in spite of that, not contrary to that, not out of relation to that, but altogether in relation to the fact that He is Lord of all. Although to the human mind, and to all natural appearance there might seem to be one tremendous contradiction to that fact, one great denial of it, and it might be said— Well, if He is Lord of all why are things as they are ? Where does His Lordship come in with things taking the course which they are taking ; the awful state of this world ? To look at it as it is and say, in spite of all this, He is Lord of all—yes, it may seem to be a contradiction, a denial and a mystery, but when you really look into it you find that the course of things is the explanation of His Lordship and not the contradiction of it. You will find that it is because the Lordship has not been recognised, accepted and established that things are as they are, and that the course which things are taking, which is so terrible, is the greatest proof that we could possibly have that the Lordship of Jesus Christ is being resisted and that His opposition to that course is making the very world reel and flounder.

When you look into those spheres, those realms, those lives where He is Lord, recognised, accepted and honoured, you find a change of such conditions, you find an entire revolution of situations, you find there that it is proved up to the hilt that in His Lordship Jesus Christ is capable of doing what no other power or force or combination of forces has ever been able to do, even when it has exhausted all its resources—He can do it. There have been ghastly situations in this world which men by force and by legislation and by every conceivable means at their command have tried

to stamp out and they have utterly failed and had to draw back and survey their failure and acknowledge that they have not the key to the situation, they have not the power to deal with that thing, and even though they may, by sheer assertion of force, have managed up to a point to hold the thing in rebellious sway or subjection, they have not got rid of it. It is still there waiting to break out, and every now and again the thing makes its presence manifest, it shows that it is not dead. In such situations again and again that which is here stated: "The word which he sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)....." has solved the problem, has dealt with the thing, not only to suppress but to rule it out, to quench it; and what armies have failed to do, the gospel of peace by Jesus Christ preached, He being Lord of all, has met that situation and changed the entire face of things.

History's Witness.

It is not for us to-night to stay to go over history and show how again and again that has proved true. We have said that there have been terrible things which no one could deal with in their root, but which have gone when Christ has come in. You think of some of those awful things in heathendom where little children, babes, being offered to idols have been on certain religious festivals placed in the red hot outstretched hands of mighty images, with their furnaces kindled inside, and the fire and smoke belching from nostrils, mouth, eyes, and then from a mother a babe is torn and placed in those red hot hands, and to drown the screams and shrieks of the tortured infant, men with their tom-toms made the most infernal noise. Armies tried to deal with that, legislation tried to deal with that, and found—as has always been proved—that these heathen superstitions are so deeply rooted that the heathen are prepared to fight for them and to lay down their lives, and although you may impose upon them some law, some restriction you have not got to the heart of things. But such things are almost a thing of the past. The armies have not solved it, legislation has not solved it, the gospel of peace by Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all) has solved it, and those things are rarely heard of because of the gospel of peace by Jesus Christ. And I could give you a good many more illustrations of this thing.

We are making a declaration which has behind it a tremendous amount of evidence.

"He is Lord of all." There is nothing too great for His Lordship. God has appointed Him and placed Him Lord of all, and that is a fact which has got to be reckoned with. Where His Lordship has been disowned and thrust away there you have the most ghastly conditions in this world. Is not God demonstrating that before our eyes? Oh, if you have eyes to see, if you have intelligence to take in the situation, if you have true information and get behind the lies that are broadcast, you have evidence which is undeniable that in those parts of the world where Jesus Christ is ousted deliberately you have the most ghastly state of things conceivable; and how men can want and press propaganda to bring those conditions into this country is inconceivable, but there they are. We could stay, if it were wise and necessary to talk about it, and I would not be talking to you for ten minutes about conditions in Russia now but that you would be shuddering. What is it? It is God's proof, that to reject the Lordship of His Son and to throw it out is the most disastrous thing that ever comes to mankind. And therefore, it is the greatest proof that the recognition and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord means to change the whole situation and to bring about an entirely different order of things. So it is; God is going to have His end. Oh, let there be done all that man can do—they have tried it before! Their story now is the story of a nation or an empire that has been glorious and waned and gone to pieces, and you go round the world now looking at the relics of the empires which set themselves against the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to blot out that Name. God will have His end! This strong affirmation is necessary because we are not going to be able to reject the Lord Jesus with impunity. We may get through this life having rejected Him and come to no apparently disastrous end, but that is not the end. ".....it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." We shall have to face God's eternal determination concerning His Son there at His throne. What God says by His Spirit and has recorded is, "He is Lord." Nothing can alter that, we have to face that. But that is the hard side. I do trust that pressing it that way is not necessary, and yet we always have to remember that we can never get away from God's facts, and to try to reject them, ignore them, set them aside only means that we come under those activities of Divine sovereignty sooner or later again,

and have to reckon with them ; and all the time we are doing this we are losing what God intended for us in making His Son both Lord and Christ.

The Universal Need.

But recognising the side of the severity of this thing, there is the other side. Not only is this God's appointment and determination, this is our need, our greatest need, that He, the Lord Jesus Christ shall be Lord of all. It is our need. It is the world's need. The world's greatest need to-day is the enthroning of the Lord Jesus. Of course, we can say that in a kind of general way and it makes no difference what we say in a little corner of the globe like this. You may say it where you like, you may proclaim it on housetops, but it does not make much difference. But all the same, it is true. The world's need is Jesus Christ as Lord, and God is heading up everything to that. Oh yes, He is heading it up. The world never was in such a state as it is now. We all recognise the seriousness of the outlook to-day. Did you ever know of the very institutions of this world whose whole business and ambition, is to have money to handle, to deal with, and to possess ; did you ever know of such institutions dreading the thought of having any money, so that bankers to-day do not want money. They do not want your money, they do not know what to do with it ; they will not accept the responsibility for handling it. That is an awful outlook, but it is only one phase of the situation to-day. With this seething turmoil beneath the surface, we seem to be on the edge of a terrific volcano which may break at any moment and involve all the nations again in a most terrible upheaval ; and the awful blindness and awful insensibility of so many is amazing. So recently the cry was "the war to end war," and to-day there is a headlong rush to something worse than anything that ever has been, and the last was the worst that ever was. There it is, and this is the state, and God is allowing this course to be followed. He is permitting this to head everything up—to what ? To the acknowledgment of His Son as Lord, the bringing in of the kingdom of His Son, and not until the Lord Jesus reigns will there be a change. Here, again, the very world conditions show the greatest need that He should be Lord of all.

But we ourselves need that, the unsaved man and woman needs that. If you are unsaved you need the Lord Jesus to be Lord in

and of your life. You need Him to be Saviour to save you, but oh, what you need above and beyond that is that He shall be Lord. That He shall be in charge, that He shall be in control, that He shall govern, that He should bring in His reign of peace and of power and of glory into your life. You need that He shall be Lord of all. And we who do know Him as Saviour, we who are His, we need to know Him as we have never known Him as Lord of all. What is the need of the believer, the greatest need of the believer ? It is that the Lord Jesus should really ascend the throne and take the government and bring everything within the compass of our lives under His sway, under His government, under His direction, to bring our thoughts and our imagination, our reasons, under His sovereign sway. To bring our desires, and affections under His government ; to bring our wills, our choosings, our determinations, our selections, all under His dominion ; to bring us altogether into subjection to His reign of holiness of life, of victory, of joy, of peace. Yes, the believer who is saved needs Him to be Lord of all, and I do believe that the trouble with so many of us who know the Lord but who are limited in our lives, limited in our usefulness, our service, limited in our joy, I do believe that the solution to the whole thing is a fresh expression of the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ in our hearts. If these chapters here, Acts ii. and x. speak of anything at all, they do declare what a state of life is where He is Lord of all. Read them again. After all, the incoming of the Holy Spirit there, when the Holy Spirit came on those two occasions and took possession, it was only that heavenly fact, that Christ was Lord, having its counterpart by the Holy Spirit in those who believed. That is the meaning of the Holy Spirit filling the life. A life filled with the Holy Spirit is, in other words, a life filled with the lordship and sovereignty of Jesus Christ. You find a wonderful state of things here in these accounts when that takes place. You see the change in the men who are most in evidence. You remember them, the eleven disciples ; you remember the story of the gospels, their constant failure, the long story of breaking down almost at every point. Oh, but what men they were afterwards, what a change. Defeated before—now in victory. Unreliable before, now as bold as lions, courageous, and you can count on them to go to death. Full of profession before, but when put to the test unable

to stand up to their profession. One saying, "I will follow Thee to death," and in a few hours denying with oaths and curses that he knew Christ; but that man now in face of every opposition going right on to his death at last in the interests of his Lord. What has happened to these men? Jesus Christ has been exalted to lordship, and the Holy Spirit has brought the meaning of that, the power, the good of all that into the lives of these men, and so His Lordship is not only something in heaven, it is something in them. That is our need. What do you need? What do I need? We need something far more spontaneous than we have. More spontaneous in testimony, in heart outflow. So much of what we have got in Christianity is doctrine, teaching, truth, things we believe and cherish about the Lord Jesus, for which we would lay down our lives, but there is that lack, limitation in the spontaneous heart-overflow. But I see the cure; the remedy is that He should be as never before, Lord of all. That is all, but it is a big "all," it is our need!

And so we might go on for a long time speaking round this great and wonderful reality,

but oh, beloved friends, what I urged upon you, as I am urging upon myself, is that in the case of those who are unsaved, and in the case of those who are saved, this one great need, this one great solution to all our problems, this one great answer to all our requirements, this one great provision for the full realisation of all God's purpose, it is the starting point of everything, that is, that we should receive, acknowledge, enthrone and surrender to the Lord Jesus as Lord of all. Not Lord of half or three-quarters or even nine-tenths, but Lord of ALL. Lord within, Lord without, Lord of our personal lives, Lord in our homes in so far as it rests with us to make Him Lord; Lord in our businesses, Lord in all our relationships and in all our interests. He is going to be that in this universe one day. May we not be those who are abandoned from that sphere into the outer darkness because we rejected Him, but be there in the fulness of joy and glory of it, because here in the day which was appointed for our acceptance of it, we made Him Lord of all. "The word which he sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)....." T. A.-S.

SOMEHOW, somewhere in their soul's history there was a day when they were free to choose or to refuse the selfish luxury of a spiritual privacy. They refused. They followed Him whose very garments were stripped from Him. One long look at Calvary and they chose loss, any loss; they were changed from what they might have been, and were made into mere stepping stones for their brother caught in some slough of despond or despair. They did not belong to themselves any more. Name, reputation, experience of the devil's power, and of the magnificence of their Saviour's deliverance. His private tenderness, His intimate touch on the reins of the spirit—all was theirs only for others. To the flesh this can be abhorrent, for it often leads to painful hours that would never have been tasted had the choice been otherwise, but it leads past pain to joy.

"As the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things"—read in polite, perhaps beautiful places, these crude words may sound almost musical. But the filth of the world is not music, it is mud. We trifle with truth when we imagine that we come near to understanding such words, while all the time we are leaning back, well out of the way of the smirch-

ing finger, the scouring tongue, the reproach of Christ.

The power to help others depends upon the acceptance of a trampled life.....

There is the brokenness of a life that has no rights.....

"God breaks up the private life of His saints and makes it a thoroughfare for the world on the one hand and for Himself on the other. No one can stand that unless he is identified with God," said Oswald Chambers, who gave his all in sacrifice and service. "Let God make you broken bread and poured out wine in His bawd for others."

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Possession—to be Realised or Forfeited?

READINGS: Exodus xxiii. 20-33.
 Hebrews iii. 12-19; iv. 1-11.
 Deut. vii. 17-21.
 Joshua i. 6.

In this Conference we have been seeing with the aid of the diagram before us a vision, beautiful, wonderful, glorious, how you and I may escape from where we are by nature to where every heart would desire to be in the utter emancipation that the Lord Jesus Christ died to secure. Using another figure by way of illustration, we have been looking at the 23rd of Exodus, and considering the Lord's desire to bring His people out of Egypt, through a wilderness, into the land of promise. This evening we have turned again to that chapter. I want to take with particular emphasis something that is not explicitly in the chapter, but which is implied in what is said. You will notice that nearly a dozen times in the fourteen verses the Lord Himself says "I will"—once, in addition, He says an equally significant "I will not"—and this is related to bringing His people into that inheritance which He has reserved for them, and into which He has covenanted, so that His very Name is involved, that He will bring them. A dozen times "I will." And God has been saying to us in these few days that He has set before us a land of wondrous promise, a land we call "In Christ," a heavenly life, a life under an opened heaven in fellowship with Himself where our enemies cannot successfully molest and assail, outside the reach of principalities and powers, even while we live here in this world. The Lord's way for us is to come out into the fulness of Christ, and He has been shewing us how to come there. We have seen the wonder of the grace of God in the shedding of the Blood to purchase for us this deliverance, and we have been saying: "Lord, I am going to enter this land which Thou hast set before me: I am out, by Thy grace, to possess it for Thy glory"; and particularly when the Lord says again and again "I will," it is very easy to say "Lord, I am coming." But in practice it is not just as easy as it sounds, for there are ominous references in our chapter to the enemy nations that have to be dis-

possessed, and these demand our serious consideration.

Possession is by Faith.

You will notice the Lord says more than once: "I will drive out," but finally, verse 31: ".....thou shalt drive them out." We have the same thing in the Book of Deuteronomy ii. 31: "I have begun to deliver.....begin to possess." "I have started a process of driving out, you begin to take advantage of it." It is very clear, one hardly needs to stress it, that possession of the Lord's promised heritage for us is on the basis of appropriating faith exercised towards the Lord and His promises by the people to whom the promises are made. Every blessing with which we are blessed in the heavenlies is ours, freely given, but upon the basis of co-operating faith. God says He will do, we say we will have, but God says: "The condition of your possession is that you co-operate by faith with Me." "I will drive them out.....Ye shall drive them out." And then to strengthen the point, the Lord in the beginning says He will send an angel to bring them into the land (verse 20).

You are coming into the possession that is in Christ for you by the will of God: but He is going to bring you in unto the Amorite and to all the rest of those nations that contest the possession of the land, and the thing I want to stress is this: while we have been seeing the vision the Lord has been setting before us, and have been saying in our hearts: "Yes, Lord, I am going in, I am out for that," entering in to possess that which God offers in Christ means to be brought in unto the Amorite and the rest of those nations who are set in enmity to Christ Himself and against those who would enter into His fulness.

Possession is Withstood.

The Adversary is persistently set by any means to rob God's people of their inheritance in Christ. So the Lord makes it abundantly clear that to possess Christ, to come into a living, personal, inward realisation and experience of Him, is to come into the realm where we face persistent and malignant enmity, and to win through to His fulness is to overcome that which is determinedly in opposition

to us. My desire is that none of us should go away from this conference under the delusion that it is all plain sailing. I am sure of the emphasis of the Lord in my own heart at this time, and I feel He would have us take serious note of it.

There have been many of us in this week-end who, in the light of what God has been saying to us, have had our own personal, secret lives touched here and there, things have come up in our minds and we have said: "Yes, what the Lord has said touches that matter, evidently He is speaking to me about so-and-so; I will deal with that." If you are going in obedience to the Lord to put into operation the word He has said to you about that thing it is going to be withstood, and you have got to press through to do it. It will not simply happen. The thing you feel the Lord wants you to put right, you will find everything set against your adjustment of it. The Lord may have spoken to you about a link with a system which is against Him. The breaking of that link will not just happen. You will find that although you determine to let something be no longer found in your life and practice you are not going to get rid of it easily. You may have felt that from this time you will have a closer walk with Him, you will give more time to life in the Most Holy place instead of being occupied with outward things, you will spend more time with the Lord. It will not just happen. You will have to stand in all the power of Calvary, because against that thing in Christ on which your heart is set there are ranged seven nations greater than yourself.

Possession Forfeited by Fear.

Now all this sounds terribly discouraging at the end of a conference when you have made up your mind that henceforth things were going to be so different. But we cannot afford to be blind to facts, and there is one solemn point I want to press home. You would suppose after words like these in Exodus, addressed by God to a people, and their response "All the words which the Lord hath spoken will we do," and a few verses later, "We will be obedient" (Ex. xxiv. 3 & 7)—you would expect to read after that, that nothing could daunt these people. These words were spoken in Horeb, but at the very beginning of the Book of Deuteronomy with its recapitulation, many years later, of all the wilderness wanderings, we read this (Deut. i. 2 & 3): "It is *eleven days'* journey from

Horeb.....unto Kadesh-Barnea. And it came to pass in the *fortieth year*.....that Moses spake unto the children of Israel....." What is the point of this seemingly irrelevant reference to the eleven days' journey? It does not help forward the narrative, and why put it in at all? The next words explain: "In the *fortieth year*" Eleven days' journey from the place where God made that promise to the point where the land of promise was reached, and now it is the fortieth year and they are still outside. A tragedy! That is my message to you to-night. They needed to take eleven days' journey to possess the promise and after forty years they still had not possessed it. I do not need to remind you what it was that prevented the possession of that land, what it was that caused eleven days to grow into forty years. You know what it was. They reached the border of the land concerning which God had given the heartening promises recorded in Exodus xxiii., including the many "I wills." But having reached the edge of the land they looked in, and that which they saw was more present to their consciousness than the word God had spoken, and eleven days became forty years, on the sole ground that they feared the nations that were there before them. It is amongst the greatest tragedies in scriptural history and it represents the biggest and most solemn challenge to a people such as we are at the end of a time like this. It is possible that the things God has said to us which might take us eleven days to realise, through fear may take us forty years; and remember, the whole generation, with the exception of two men, failed to enter in, because of *unbelief*. (This is the word the Lord uses in relation to their fear.) It was another generation that went in. I want dear friends, with all the sympathetic fellowship that is possible, but in the most earnest way, to bring before you this, that the thing that you have seen, the thing which now as we speak you recognise to be God's objective for you—the enjoyment now of a heavenly life in fellowship with Him on the basis of the Cross—it is possible that the very thing itself may never come into your grasp, for according to the example of this word you may lose it all through that enemy called fear.. Fear of what you see, what you anticipate may be the cost; fear of what your natural eyes take into account instead of your spiritual eyes taking note of Him Who sits upon the Throne. I want to plead to-night that before we leave this hall we

shall in a most definite and deliberate way look to the Lord in relation to every matter that He has been saying to us, upon which He may have been dealing with us, touching our hearts, that we shall not go away with merely a good resolve—"Yes, I will do that"—but recognise that to put that into practice and stand into the good of all that we have seen demands an attitude of co-operation with God in persistent, victorious, overcoming faith that refuses to be daunted and will not let go. You say, how may I obtain such faith? Moses told the people before they entered into the land that the nations would be great and the cities would be high and walled, and giants would be there, but exhorted: "Remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh" (Deut. vii. 18). I would say in the Lord's Name to you this evening: "Remember what Christ did in His Cross when He stripped off principalities and powers making a show of them openly. Remember in the hour of your trial what Calvary means, remember that Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God and has met the power of that enemy you see in front of you, and overthrown every bit of that against which you fear you may be set." Whatever there may be before you, and however great the difficulties you may foresee, our blessed Lord in His conquest at Calvary has overcome it all in your behalf, and now He comes to you and says: "I have given, begin to possess." And so when, after forty years, the Lord gets His people by experience to a knowledge of Himself that their predecessors never had, He again and again in Deuteronomy reminds them through Moses of the giants and the walled cities, and all that God has done, and says: "You are going over to possess nations greater than yourselves—be strong and of a good courage." I believe that is the Word of the Lord to us. "Be strong and very courageous." Take note of the terms. He does not say "I will make you strong," He says "*Be strong.*" and "*Be very courageous.*" And over against this direct command stands the tragic possibility that we may fail, as they of old failed, through the same example of unbelief—an awful possibility that a people of God may miss that which He purposed for them.

Courage comes by Calvary.

One would speak with tender understanding, for I know how much the Lord and I, and it may be others, have lost at times through my own lack of moral courage in the things of the

Lord, and I have cried to the Lord about it. I think some of you have cried to the Lord about your own conscious timidity and fearfulness, and nothing has happened; you are fearful and afraid, daring not to take a certain position in relation to something of the Lord. I think the Lord would say to you what He has said to me, that if you are going to inherit the land you must *be strong*. He does not say He will make you strong, for once and for all in the Cross of the Lord Jesus He has provided a source of strength and courage upon which you may draw by faith—a new and living way between your heart and God's Christ in the Throne, and the very power and courage of that mighty heart of His that faced death in its terrors and went in unafraid, the very elements of His character, may be received by that way into your own heart. You are weak in yourself but it is for you to come in and possess this land. The courage of Christ will not simply drop into your heart as rain comes from heaven. The courage of Christ will come into your heart as you by faith in Him draw it from Him. You get courage and boldness in just the same way that you got any other thing in Christ, you get it by taking Him by faith to be that in you. So God is justified when He says "*Be strong.*" It is a gracious command which is rather a promise than anything else. "I have done all that is needful for your emancipation, for your victorious equipment in this battle; take what I have given you." Courage, boldness, victory—Christ Jesus is made unto us all this. Faith that appropriates *Him* is the victory that overcomes.

Do you notice in this passage the Lord is speaking in advance of something He knew would happen? He knew the children of Israel at Kadesh-Barnea were going to fail through fear, yet He is speaking to them, giving wonderful promises, not hinting at their failure. God is speaking in the light of something He knew lay ahead, that in the event of failure through fear the moral responsibility might clearly rest upon those who thus doubted His Word. I believe that to-day He is speaking to us in advance of situations which are going to arise, and through which we shall only come triumphantly as we lay hold of the courage of Christ to take us through. Many of our brethren in Christ who already have passed through fires of persecution and tribulation have gloriously come through by faith in their Risen Lord. We do not know the kind of

experience that lies before us, but we do know that to go through will demand something more than our own natural courage. It will demand boldness which is not ours but His, and He offers it to us. He stretches out His hand and offers us the faith to overcome. He offers to you as in Christ, by way of that Cross, all that you will need to face that problem which you are going home with. You need not break down when it comes to the test. I do not know what the Lord is saying in your heart, but I feel the necessity of strongly urging that this matter of courage and fearfulness be faced, and the Lord does not speak like this in the midst of a company without an objective.

The Enemy has already been Overcome.

It may be some are thinking of what will be demanded if they take such and such a course. Are there not some who are seeing the tremendous upheaving that will result from their yielding to the Lord, simply following a line of light He is giving them? Take hold of this word as your way through. There never was a giant that could ever face you that has not been met by Him in that Cross. The enmity you are going to meet in the realm of your Christian associations as you take a step that will not be understood, the bitterness of opposition, and the losing of friendships—the power of that life that comes from the Risen Lord in glory into your feeble heart, the mighty power of God Himself, will be enough to meet every giant in the land and to slay and destroy it. However great the cities and however high their walls, you can overcome. Watch Joshua, the man to whom God said: “Be strong and very courageous.” He goes round Jericho with the Ark of the Lord, that which speaks of the triumphant Christ in the midst. “In nothing affrighted by the adversaries.” (Phil. i. 28)—Joshua went in undaunted. How unlike Kadesh-Barnea is this! It is true that Joshua sent over his two spies to Jericho as Israel sent the twelve into the land previously. But what a contrast there was in the background! Joshua sent in to discover *how* he should enter the land: at Kadesh-Barnea Israel sent in to discover *whether* they should enter. A tremendous difference! Those who failed sent in their spies without any assurance of victory, to see whether they could overcome, and were assured they could not! Joshua had already triumphed in spirit before he sent the spies over! What a

lesson for us! Beloved, the Lord in His Cross has already triumphed, and we have triumphed *in Him!* Shall we not then face the problems before us not as matters still to be dealt with so far as the issue of victory or defeat is concerned, but as already settled gloriously in His once-for-all victory? Let me urge you again—before you go back home with your difficulty, take from Him by faith grace to face it courageously, not in the attitude: “Shall I go through with it?” but “Lord, in spirit I am through, this thing is met and accomplished in your Cross. Lead me in your victory.” And thus with courage which is not yours by nature, but His, and which becomes yours by appropriating faith, you *will* face out the problem before you, however severe, and inevitably triumph in Him! Oh, what a gospel this is for the faint-hearted! And what a tragedy that the Lord should be robbed by the very people that love Him, who instead of going into the land in strong faith in Him, saying “Lord, you must shew me the way, but I am already in, in spirit,” they who know His will stand on the brink and say: “Shall I or shall I not?” Fear has robbed God many a time.

Beloved, you may be God's way into a situation, into a country, God's link to a nation: you may be the one God wants to move into a situation which has until now withstood Him. “Come with Me,” He would say to you, “it will cost, it will mean the letting go of many things, but come with Me and you shall cause this people to inherit the land.” This was the responsibility upon Joshua. Beloved, obedience to the Lord in the matter about which He has spoken to you may mean the inheriting of untold blessing to a multitude of other souls, or you may shut the door. Do you see your responsibility, and faith's way of victory?

Love will Triumph, Love will Dare.

One final word. This whole matter is one of the heart's attitude to our Lord who loved us and gave Himself for us. Fear is unbelief, and unbelief is sin, for it is the very opposite of trust in the Lord. “Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him” is His promise to each one of us. Do we fear to obey Him? Then let us seek a deeper love for Him, for “perfect love casteth out fear”; and then going forward with Him, though into the very teeth of antagonism and difficulty, we shall be able to say in the words of the hymn that we delight so much to sing:

I need not fear to trust Thee,
 Thy love and skill are such,
 New lessons Thou wilt teach me,
 While yielding to Thy touch.
 And with a fresh, grateful appropriation of
 all that His Cross means for us of emancipation

through death in the power of His resurrection,
 the language of our hearts will be :
 Bend me, oh, bend me to Thy will,
 While in Thy hand I'm lying still.

G. P.

The Lord's Assembly

Its Constitution and Nature

A Conference Message as Spoken.

READING : Exodus xxxv. 1-xl. 38.

I THINK first of all for the Bible Students I would like to say a few general things about these five chapters by way of giving you a basis for study. There are five things that can be said about these chapters.

First of all they are a comprehensive representation of Christ as tabernacling among us.

Secondly, they are a detailed definition of the testimony of Jesus.

Thirdly, they are a typical setting forth of the Body of Christ, the Church, in (1) its object ; (2) its nature ; (3) its ministry.

Fourthly, they are a most valuable disclosure of the spiritual principles of the life and service of the people of God.

Fifthly, they are a complete embodiment of Christian doctrine.

Now that is fairly comprehensive. While I have no thought of going into all that here, we shall be touching it in a general way.

We come to chapter xxxv. But before we can deal with the content of these chapters we must remind ourselves of the background and main setting, and the ultimate thing which is in view, and that can be stated in this way. What we have here is one of those breakings into this world of the God of glory. God has broken into this world at different intervals in its history and this is one of those breakings in of the God of glory. You read back immediately before this and you have God descending from the heavens, breaking through to the mount and meeting His servant there at a place mid-way between heaven and earth with a purpose concerning this world. The glory of the God of Israel fell upon Moses and he brought it down out of the Divine presence into this

world, and it was reflected in his face as the mediator between God and man. Then the purpose of that breaking through and breaking in of the God of glory was unto the setting up, or constituting of a vessel for His testimony. That there should be here that which according to His own mind was for Him the instrument of His self-manifestation, and typically it was in Christ. It was to be in effect God here manifesting Himself in His heavenly power and glory amongst the nations, registering in the earth His own sovereign supremacy. Now that is the setting of all this and brings us back to the whole theme of this conference, the testimony and its vessel. With that background clearly before us we are able to come to this section of the book from chapter xxxv. Here the mediator of the Divine glory is before the people with that glory shining forth from his countenance, and we listen to his first utterances. I am quite sure that your minds have already leaped on to another dispensation, and you are in 2 Corinthians iii. and iv., the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shining in our hearts, and we have *this* ministry. I mention it to remind you of the link and to indicate immediately what it is we are after.

The Assembly Constituted upon the Sabbath of God.

Now the first utterances of the mediator upon whom rests the glory of God : " And Moses assembled all the congregation of the children of Israel, and said unto them, These are the words which Jehovah hath commanded, that ye should do them. Six days shall work be done ; but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day, a sabbath of solemn rest to Jehovah : whosoever doeth any work therein

shall be put to death. Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day." Be reminded again of what is in view, a vessel for the testimony, the heavenly testimony of God in Christ. That is going to be constituted, constructed; and the first words which lead up to the constituting relate to the Sabbath, and that carries with it a very great and important truth, that the Sabbath is the ground upon which the tent of meeting will be constructed. That is the ground upon which it can be constructed, and the only ground upon which it can be constructed, because that Sabbath represents the end of the works of God and the entering by man into the finished works of God, and only a man of rest can build the House of God. Solomon was a man of peace, or rest, and because he was such he could build the House. His father David, having been a man of war, was forbidden on that ground to build. The vessel of the testimony can only be constituted on the ground and principle that those who have a part in it have come definitely and finally to rest in the perfected works of God.

We have been seeing in these gatherings that the testimony and its instrument have a specific relationship to the whole kingdom of hostile forces, principalities and powers and world-rulers of this darkness, and so on, and that in that realm the establishing or maintenance of the testimony represents terrific conflict, warfare, wrestling, and the only hope of the triumph of the testimony, the coming through to finality of the instrument of the testimony, is that before ever it enters into the conflict it has the victory in hand, it is at rest in the perfect assurance that the end has already been secured.

Uncertainty, A Satanic Strategy.

We have covered ground like that many times here but it has not been covered too often, I do not know that it can be covered too often. One of the enemy's most successful activities against the testimony and its vessel is to bring about uncertainty, unrest, and a lack of assurance as to relationship to the Lord, and as to the Lord's relationship to them. In many ways he seeks to create that state, that condition; introspection, self-analysis, self-judgment, self-occupation, the accusations of the enemy, the bringing of feelings and impressions to bear upon one's soul, the wrapping round of the mind with blankets of uncertainty and doubt and questionings; all manner of

means are used to break in upon the restful, confident, assurance of faith in relation to the Lord; by fears and forebodings; and mark you, beloved, there is nothing which will paralyse the Lord's servants so quickly and so utterly as fear. In this connection the Apostle would say to us: "And in nothing affrighted by the adversaries." The Adversary would get us affrighted, and if he does that we are paralysed, we are helpless, it means that we have lost the Sabbath. The Sabbath in principle is a spiritual state, not a period of time, a spiritual state into which we have entered, a state of restful assurance that God has reached the end of all His works and has nothing more to do, has secured finality in Himself and in His Son, and it is a matter of the apprehension of the completeness of Calvary's work which brings rest, assurance; and you cannot fight and you cannot build until you come there. People who have not come there are useless as vessels of the testimony. Now if we are always fretful and worried and agitated and restless and concerned about our spiritual life, about our acceptance, our standing, our fellowship, and the Lord's attitude toward us, and there is a state of disturbance in our spirit, well, we cannot touch this building, we have no place in the constituting of this vessel: we must come there first.

That is something to immediately lead us to exercise before the Lord; and so it is simply that the mediator with the light of the glory of God upon his face, speaks first of all in relation to the setting up of this vessel of the testimony about the Sabbath.

Man's Natural Interests Cease on the Sabbath.

Did it strike you as strange that one thing about the Sabbath was emphasised? Elsewhere you may have many other things said about the prohibitions of the Sabbath, but only one is mentioned here. "Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the Sabbath day." It is the only one. The Holy Spirit, of course, knows exactly what He means and what He is doing when He singles out a thing like that and makes it the only thing in relation to the Sabbath. What does the Holy Spirit intend to say by that? As far as I can see (I will be glad if you can help me with more light, doubtless you can) that kindling of fire in the habitations represents looking after your own comfort. It is the personal, natural interests, comforts and pleasures which are represented by that, and what the Holy Spirit says here is, that if

you are going to constitute the vessel, build the tent of meeting, the Sabbath means for you an end of all personal, natural interests, the setting aside of self-consideration. I look elsewhere in the Scripture to see if I am borne out by the Word of God and I think undoubtedly I am borne out by the Word in Is. lviii. 13 : "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from *doing thy pleasure* on my holy day ; and call the Sabbath a delight, and the holy of Jehovah honorable ; and shalt honor it, not doing *thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words* ; then shalt thou delight thyself in Jehovah : and I will make thee to ride upon the high places of the earth ; and *I will feed thee* with the heritage of Jacob thy father : for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it." We are borne out are we not ? To know what spiritual ascendancy is in the testimony, to be on the high places, the uplands, moral elevation, the places above only and not beneath, means first of all we have to enter into God's rest in His completed work and then cease from our own personal, selfish interests and pleasures. Self goes out on the Sabbath. That is simple enough, but it is a principle basic to all that follows in the testimony and its vessel. It means that our labours and our self-interest are ended in Christ's mediatorial work, and that tabernacle service demands rest Godward. So we see the significance of these first utterances of Moses.

The Assembly is for God's Pleasure.

Now we go on in the chapter and we see what a fine state of things prevailed here. The whole assembly is moved in response to God's pleasure. If you like, run your blue pencil underneath the constantly recurrent words and see the willing-heartedness here, two things going together, a willing heart and a wise heart. I am tremendously impressed with the recurrence of that word "willing." A willing heart, a willing spirit, everyone whose heart made him willing, everyone whose spirit stirred him up ; they are all moving in response to God's pleasure, for everything here is unto the Lord. The Lord has made known what He would desire and you must notice that it is not a command from the Lord that is here. In another place the Lord commands to bring the offerings ; offerings are commanded because when it is a matter of sacrifices there is no fellowship with God without, and therefore it is a matter of command and demand, and the Lord commands that they should be brought ; but here

you are setting up a vessel for the testimony which is something for God's pleasure, God's heart satisfaction, and the Lord does not command that these things be brought, He simply says : "Whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring....." This is voluntary activity for the pleasure of God, and it is that which gives character to this whole thing. The beauty of it all is that there is a spontaneous movement of all hearts for God's pleasure. It is a heart movement. Now I think we shall have to recover this feature in relation to the testimony of the Lord Jesus and our being vessels. I am afraid we have regarded it as somewhat onerous to be vessels of the testimony, something imposed upon us, something required of us which is a demand so difficult to meet ; a requirement so hard for us to respond to ; and we vessels of the testimony go about so often with faces as though we were carrying the weight of the universe upon our shoulders because we are in this testimony, because the testimony is entrusted to us and deposited in us. I may be just as guilty as anybody else of that failure, and so I need talking to as much, as or more than anyone else, and I am being talked to here—and allowing myself to be thoroughly dressed down, I feel perfectly at liberty to press this upon you !

When we think of the Apostle Paul of whom we have been speaking earlier in the day, as the representative vessel of the testimony, well, with one exception, no one who has ever borne the testimony had to pay a higher price than he did. It has cost no one more than it cost him, but it is marvellous how even at the end, writing from his prison in Rome, where, being looked at from the outside, people might have said : "Poor old Paul, his work is done" ; he is sending out : "Rejoice in the Lord always : again I will say, Rejoice." That Philippian letter throbs with joy, and shall we not say that that was the testimony. The power of the testimony is in that : "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" : "Rejoicing in hope ; patient in tribulation ; continuing instantly in prayer." We may not be there, beloved, but we are here to-night to try and help one another in these matters, and it is the heart response to the Lord's pleasure which will give the testimony so much power. This is to the Lord's pleasure, and it becomes a heart matter with us. Oh, that the Lord would just put more of this spirit into us, into me, where things are more fully and continuously looked at in the light of the

Lord's pleasure, and everything is done out of a heart which responds to the pleasure of the Lord. The doing of the will of God by the Lord Jesus was a thing which cost Him intense anguish, it meant terrific conflict, a wrestling and resisting unto blood, and yet He says: "I delight to do thy will, O my God." Two things going together all the time, a consciousness of the cost, the suffering, pain, anguish, and yet because it is unto the Lord's satisfaction, something very much is in the nature of joy in suffering. And if there is that apprehension of the Lord's delight it takes a good deal of the sting out of the suffering.

These people were going to be called upon to produce all sorts of precious things. That is, this was going to lead to their bringing of that which meant their foregoing, their sacrificing that which perhaps to them naturally would be precious. But anything in the nature of yielding, sacrificing, giving and letting go was deprived of regret or pain or pang by the very fact that they were responding in heart to the Lord's pleasure. It was unto the Lord's pleasure. Now without adding words to this, let us ask the Lord to give us a greater delight in His testimony, a greater joy in bearing the testimony, though it be at great cost. We must pray for more joy even in the midst of suffering, for that is the testimony. Well, it was the heart response to the Lord's pleasure.

Love Produces the Materials.

Then the third thing. When the heart was moved they found all that was necessary and required. I can imagine that when all the requirements had been outlined by Moses, the gold and the silver and the brass, the precious stones, the various materials, if these people had had no heart-response to the Lord and His pleasure, they might well have doubt as to whether they had got any of these things, and you would have heard them saying: "I do not know whether I have got any of those things at all"; "I am not sure that I can answer to those requirements"; "I do not think that I can do anything in this matter." They would perhaps not have known what they had got, and if they had got it they would have forgotten all about it, or it would have been somewhere where they could not find it! You see what I am getting at? But because the heart was in this thing they had all that was necessary. All the material was produced from the affections. It is wonderful, beloved, what we can discover that we have in the Lord Jesus

when our hearts are aglow for Him and for the Father's satisfaction. I mean those people who really have a heart devotion to, and delight in the Lord, are always discovering treasures which they are bringing out all the time for the satisfaction of the Lord. And people whose hearts are cold never bring out any of those treasures; they do not know that they have got them. To the Corinthians the Apostle said: "In everything ye were enriched in him," but it takes love to discover that, what those riches are; love for the Lord. You will not, in the time of worship, have to scour through your Bible to find some passage of Scripture that will suit the occasion to be your contribution. If your heart is aglow to the Lord you will have something spontaneous to offer in the hour of worship, and if your heart is aglow to the Lord you will discover that you are richer in spiritual possessions than you thought you were and you will always have something to give.

The Features of Christ.

You see everything here of these various and numerous things mentioned were related to the Lord Jesus in type, for there can be nothing to the satisfaction of God apart from the Lord Jesus. They all were different phases and aspects of Christ; gold, silver, brass and fine linen, all these things were types of some aspects of Christ in His person and work, and people discover those things because of their heart-relationship to the Lord's pleasure; and our heart-relationship to the Lord will be our means of discovering what we have of Christ and in Christ, and we will be constantly making those discoveries. You find the person who is just full of love for the Lord, whose heart is burning and throbbing with love for the Lord, they have always got to tell you something about the preciousness of the Lord, they are always seeing the glory of their Lord from a different angle and giving you a different facet. People whose hearts are not so aglow with the Lord have not much to say about Him and cannot give very much. You see the principle, it was all produced, it all came, and we are told they brought more than was required and they had to stop the bringing! We have not reached that stage yet. The Lord make that symbolism a speedy realisation. But you see the possibilities of delighting in the Lord. Oh, how it makes the testimony grow. This is the testimony. Before there can be any outward expression there must be an inward relationship.

All outward ministry must be the result of an inward state with the Lord. And it is a great thing, beloved, a great thing to have our ministry as the spontaneous expression of our personal delight in the Lord. That carries weight, that is the testimony.

Now the fact is that every child of God has got all in Christ that they can have. It is true of all children of God as it was true of the Corinthians that "in everything.....enriched in him" but it wants love to discover it; heart devotion to the Lord to find out that it is so. So let us ask the Lord to increase with our joy, our love for Himself.

The fourth thing. The assembly and the testimony are constituted by the heart product of Christ. That is, all this that now comes into being and is set up on the earth is just the accumulation, the bringing together of the individual heart exercises in the appreciation of the Lord Jesus, and that defines what God's assembly is. What is the assembly? It is not just a congregation, it is not just the coming together of people for services, meetings, conferences, public worship and so on. The assembly is the bringing together on the part of a company of the Lord's people, of the features of the Lord Jesus so that as the Father looks down He sees His Son befeatured by that company. This one has brought the gold, and that one the silver, and another the brass, another the fine linen, and another the blue, another the scarlet, another the purple, and each one has brought their own apprehension and appreciation of the Lord Jesus, and these things being put together constitute the assembly, and the Father looks down and sees the Son; that is the testimony of Jesus in the earth. That is Christ tabernacling amongst us. That is the tent of meeting, and what the Lord is looking for is Christ as represented by the assemblies of His people. That is the nature of the assembly. And the Lord is working to that. As we follow on the Lord leads out in exercise, spiritual and secret exercise unto that end, and the things that the Lord is causing us to be exercised about in our private, personal, secret life and history is that we might discover the virtues and the values of His Son, and having made those discoveries, when we come together with other children of God we speak together and sing together about the glories of Christ as things which have come up in our own life experimentally and livingly, and we become a collective and corporate representation of

those glories which are living realities to us, and all the exercise which the Lord brings about in our lives individually and secretly, is in order that we may make discoveries about Christ.

So they go back to their tents; see the scouring of those tents for these things, see the exercise. And then they all come together and as the result of their exercise apart, in secret, they have brought some feature of Christ and all those features put together represent Christ as a whole. They all have some part of Him which, being added to the other parts makes a whole Christ, and that is the assembly.

The Mutual Love and Cooperation of the Saints.

Fifthly, they all co-operate in varied contributions and exercises, that is, they all worked to make their part a part of someone else's. They worked in relation to the rest. Not all could bring gold, not all could bring silver, not all could bring brass, but these things all had to be related to the other, and so the spirit of co-operation was there. And mark you, even a Bezaleel, who was especially anointed and filled with the Holy Spirit unto all this, could not have made what was necessary for the tent of meeting if there had not been that personal, individual, secret activity on the part of each one. If the women, for instance, had not done the spinning and the weaving all the filling of the Holy Spirit of Bezaleel would have been in vain. The Holy Spirit Himself depends upon each one co-operating toward the end. And speaking of the women who did the spinning and the weaving, one might just say that spinning and weaving means bringing things together and binding them together. It is so easy to tear things apart, to put things asunder and have shreds. We can do it by our talk, our flippant or careless talk, by letting our tongues run away with us, by gossip, by criticism, that perennial "but": "She is an awfully good soul—*but*....."; "He is a fine fellow—*but*....."; "Yes, he is going on with the Lord—*but*....." We are all guilty of that. Now the women did the spinning and weaving. I am not specially laying these charges at the door of the women, but you see I am only saying it by way of illustration. It is bringing together, it is constructive work in relation to everything else in this testimony. And how strange it is that so many of us who are in the same testimony, paying the same price, going through the same sufferings, find it so easy to criticise one another, and weaken the testimony by strains in our relationships.

It is strange, isn't it? But it is true. It must be positively constructive in co-operation with all the others, toward one end. The Holy Spirit Himself cannot do this work and perfect this testimony only as each one takes personal and individual responsibility and works toward

the common end of God, the manifestation and glorifying of the Lord Jesus.

The Lord just lay that on our hearts and may we be better instruments of the testimony for His glory.

T. A.-S.

A Missionary's Balance Sheet

BALANCE SHEET FOR YEAR ENDING DECEMBER, 193--.

<i>Debit.</i>	<i>Credit.</i>
1. Weakness.	"My strength is made perfect in weakness."— 2 Cor. xii. 9.
2. Wisdom needed.	"Christ Jesus.....of God is made unto us wisdom." —1 Cor. i. 30.
3. Not mighty.	"Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of Hosts."—Zech. iv. 6.
4. Fearful.	"Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." —Psalm xxiii. 4.
5. Lonely.	"Lo, I am with you always."—Matt. xxviii 20.
6. In the midst of enemies.	"Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of my enemies."—Ps. xxiii. 5.
7. Many needs.	"My God shall supply all your need according to His riches."—Phil. iv. 19.
TOTAL ... UNABLE.	"God Whom we servo is able."—Dan. iv. 17.
Balance brought forward.	"Exceeding abundantly above." HALLELUJAH!

"I can excuse his Dogmatism and his Prejudices; but he throws about rather too much of what some Frenchmen call 'The Essence of But.' In plain English, he seems to have something to except in every man's character."

"'Do you know that girl?' 'Only to talk about.' The Essence of But is distilled death: it carries the chill of death."

"But fear can hamstring the soul. And presently fear crept up, and a devastating sense of unfitness and insufficiency, and I saw our tiny company strung out like a little row of noughts on a sheet of paper. But "Thou art worth ten thousand of us"—an inadequate comparison, fitting the earthly David, bathos as applied to the Lion of the tribe of Judah,

and yet it carried truth. What did it matter if we were noughts? It was for the Lord our God to write the figure to head that row of noughts. He Himself was the Figure. And we saw our calling, how that we were truly of no account ("like to a shell dishabited") that no flesh should glory in His presence."

From 'Gold Cord.'

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Fellowship

Its basis and some of its outworkings

SCRIPTURES : Psalms cxxxii. and cxxxiii.

1 John i. 7.

Hebrews x. 24-25.

THE Lord has been speaking in one's heart in these last hours on the subject of Fellowship, as it is expressed in the passages of Scripture read. This afternoon we shall consider this subject in the light of the statement made in 1 John i. 7 : " If we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another," linked with the exhortation which comes in the passage from the Hebrew letter to cultivate fellowship, and provide opportunities for its expression, by the assembling of ourselves together, by exhorting one another, and so much the more to give attention to this as we see the end of the age drawing nigh, the blessed day of the Lord's coming....." So much the more." Fellowship is the characteristic word of the Christian Assembly, the characteristic feature of every true Assembly of God. There is a beautiful order in Psalm cxxxii and Psalm cxxxiii. speaks of the Ark of God coming to its rest in the House of God, and then that lovely little Psalm follows, so wonderfully descriptive of the subject before us. " Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." How beautiful a thing is Christian togetherness. How sweet and blessed is fellowship among brethren in the Holy Spirit. Rotherham renders the first verse of Psalm cxxxiii : " Lo, how good, how delightful for brethren to dwell together, even as one."

Is there any experience more completely blessed on this earth than to come into a Christian Assembly where there is absolute unity in the Holy Spirit, this feature being immediately recognised ? How beautiful it is. How rare it is, yet how precious when found. Well might the Psalmist say : " It is like..... the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion : for *there* the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

If there was one feature above another that characterised the New Testament Church it

was fellowship, partnership, togetherness, co-operation, one-ness. The reason, largely, of the power of the early Church was that it understood the secret of fellowship. " And they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship....." " And all that believed were together, and had all things common." They " continued steadfastly in fellowship," they persevered in fellowship. The primitive simplicity of the early Church quickly, and perhaps necessarily, passed. What was true of a small company, in one city, could not, in the nature of things, find the same form of expression in the larger companies, and yet the record of the first Church in Jerusalem abides as a beautiful picture of Christian fellowship.

Now, what is Fellowship ? I think we shall get a good idea if I run over the words used in our English Bible to translate the original word. Fellowship is the word most frequently used ; but you have also, distribution, contribution, communication, communion. Four times it is rendered communion. You have it in 1 Cor. x. 16. The communion of the body and blood of Christ. " Communion " is " Fellowship." There are few things more precious than to gather round the Lord's Table in fellowship with Himself, and with one another, and share mutually in the emblems of His Body and His Blood. Read the passage in Conybeare as given in his footnote : " The cup of blessing which we bless is it not a common participation in the Blood of Christ ? The bread which we break, is it not a common participation in the Body of Christ ? " Now I want to take that phrase " common participation." That is Fellowship. It is something we have in common. We shall see as we proceed how necessary it is to realise that fellowship is a common participation. If we walk in the light as He is in the light we enjoy a common participation with one another. But note the conditional " if." What is " walking in the light as He is in the light ? " What does it mean ? There can be no real experience of fellowship save as we are walking in the light

of God. There is nothing that destroys the basis of fellowship so quickly as an injection of darkness, however it may come. Light is basic and vital for fellowship. The Apostle John uses a strong expression when he writes: "If we walk in the light as He is in the light." Dean Alford says: "Walking in the light is no mere imitation of God, but it is an identity in the essential element of our daily walk with the essential element of God's eternal Being: not imitation, but coincidence and identity of the very atmosphere of life." That is, we have come in experience to the recognition of the fact which is elsewhere stated in this very chapter: "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." Yes, it is true that "God is love," but first it is stated that "God is light." In His essential Being, in His character, in His nature, God is light, and if we are to enjoy the bliss of fellowship our walk must be in the light. Our daily habit and practice must be walking in the light of God, not in some dim and distant way but "as He is in the light"; keeping in the light deliberately; bringing everything to the light; letting the light shine and correcting our walk by the light of God. Every dark thing, every doubtful thing, every shadow, every grey thing, everything that is not in harmony with the white light of the Eternal Throne has to be put away for "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." "If we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another." We are in the sphere where fellowship is not only possible, but where fellowship is....."we have fellowship."

Let us turn to Luke xi. 34-36: "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light.....If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light."

Note that searching phrase "having no part dark." Can we face up to it this afternoon as in the Lord's presence?

Dr. W. Y. Fullerton in his book of reminiscences tells a story of a lighthouse keeper on the Florida coast. One stormy evening he broke a pane of glass in the lantern, and having no glass available for repair, he tacked a piece of tin over the hole and trusted that all would be right. The storm increased in fury, and that night a ship coming from the direction in which the light was not shining, looking for the

light, went on the rocks and lives were lost. The light had not gone out, it was still shining, but there was a dark part. The word "having no part dark" was not true of the lantern and so there was wreckage. Dr. Fullerton says he was telling that story in a meeting one day and it went home to the conscience of a believer, as the people were exhorted to bring their lives to the light of God. This believer was a brother really living for the Lord, but there was one habit of his life which was not clear: he was a tobacco smoker and the Lord had smitten him on that point. He realised that the part of his life which was dark was this indulgence of the flesh. He determined to face up to all the implications of fellowship in the light and have no part dark. Gathering his smoking utensils together on returning home, he put them into the heart of the fire laid ready to light in the morning. Among them was a beautiful tobacco pouch, a valued gift from a friend. His heart smote him and he said "I do not think that need be burnt, I can keep it as a gift and treasure it for the sake of the giver." His little daughter standing by his side was wiser than he and she said: "No, let it be a whole burnt offering, Daddy." So the whole burnt offering was made, and in that respect his life came into the light of God. It is not a question of attacking any particular habit, that is not the point. Here the basis of Fellowship with God is stated. We must walk in the light as He is in the light, our whole body full of light, no part dark, no part through which the light, the glory of God cannot shine, if there is to be unbroken fellowship with Himself, and with fellow believers.

If walking in the light is basic to fellowship it is easy to see the point to which the enemy's attacks will be directed. Beloved, you will, I think, agree that the fellowship of the Christian Assembly is the focal point of the enemy's attack. He is always striving to break fellowship. Of course he is. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. THERE the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." How true that is. If you can find on this earth a company of the Lord's people who are walking in the light as He is in the light" and therefore walking in fellowship with Him and with one another, you have found a place where life is—and you have also found a place where the Devil is raging. His object is to get the Saints out of the sphere where the light is shining, so

break the fellowship and stop the life from functioning.

If the characteristic feature of the New Testament Church was fellowship; a mutual sharing, a common participation, the characteristic feature of the twentieth century Church is the exact opposite. We are too familiar with division, schism, discord, individualism, rather than fellowship. Yes, individualism in testimony instead of corporate testimony. One of the most distressing features of present-day Christian life and service is this spirit of individualism. Godly men, with a deposit of truth in their hearts, get isolated and pursue an individualistic line. They do not practise fellowship or share in the fellowship of an assembly of God's people. This plays directly into the enemy's hands. Where does the Lord command the blessing? Where brethren are dwelling together in a common participation. Where is life for evermore? In the fellowship of a Christian assembly. Where is it that souls come out of darkness into light and open to God as a flower opens to the sun? In the fellowship of God's people where the blessing and the life are found. The enemy not only seeks to destroy the basis of the blessing thus associated with, and springing from, fellowship, but he seeks to counterfeit it too. One of the most striking features of present-day politics is the Devil's imitation of this truth. What is doing mischief in the world to-day? Communism. The Devil's attempt to imitate the Christian assembly and to produce a common participation. What is communism? "The organisation of society on the basis of common ownership of the means of production, and of the goods produced." The enemy endeavours to get something like that which is God's pattern apart from God. The strange thing about communism is that wherever you come across it, it is anti-God. And yet its central feature is that which is the heart and centre of the Christian Church, common participation, mutual sharing, togetherness. Very significant that.

Note another significant thing. The Apostle says, if we fulfil the basic condition of walking in the light "we have fellowship." It follows, therefore, that if fellowship is broken there has been an invasion of darkness. We may not personally be guilty in the matter, but the enemy has found entrance somewhere, and, using darkness as his weapon, has made fellowship impossible. If we are not sharing mutually in the assembly, the enemy has, for the time,

triumphed. All broken fellowship results from an invasion of darkness.

Now while the local company is the place where practical fellowship finds its chief expression, yet the whole Church, the Body of Christ, is the sphere where fellowship is to function. That is to say, our sympathy and love must not be confined to the company of God's people in which we happen to be found, but our hearts must go out to all the members of Christ, we must embrace in our thought all children of God; the realm of our prayer life must be "for all saints." "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." That is a test for our prayer life, a challenge to our hearts. Where are our sympathies? We may be ever so loyal to the local assembly, giving our time and strength to the people we know and are meeting with continually; and that is good so far as it goes. Yet, if we allow the limits of the local company to circumscribe our sympathy so that we are not vitally concerned for the other members of the Body, we are falling short of God's purpose. Our fellowship is with Him, and He is concerned for every member of Christ's Body. We should have on our hearts those whom He has on His heart. In spirit we must be going out to all the Lord's people, crying for them continually that they may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. "For all saints" must ever be our watchword.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." There has to be a deliberateness, a set purpose in our hearts, in these end days. Away there in the early Church there were some who pursued an individualistic line of service and ministry; they, for one reason or another, cut themselves off from the assembly, and went out on a line of their own. The Apostle says it is wrong. If it was wrong then so much the more is it wrong now. For surely the day is approaching. In the nature of the case it cannot be long before He comes again. The day of joy, of light, of glorious consummation is drawing nigh, and this exhortation, therefore, comes to us with redoubled emphasis. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. Individualism will be ruled out when the Lord comes. It will be the whole Church then, the Lord and His people together, and what is to be true when He

returns, the Lord would have true of His people now.

There are three reasons why individualism in Christian Service is dangerous. First, it is a denial of the foundation principle of the Christian Church. Our salvation was unto functioning membership of the Body of Christ. The Body is not an association of individuals it is a corporate whole. All true believers, baptised by one Spirit into one Body, are meant to be functioning members of a spiritual organism; and the Lord desires that fact to be recognised, and that we walk in the light of it. Individualism is out of harmony with God's thought for His people.

Secondly it isolates, and because it isolates it frequently leads to lack of balance in the presentation of truth. It is only in the assembly that you have the whole counsel of God declared. Broken fellowship often leads to bitterness of heart, and that brings many evils in its train.

Lastly, it leads to discouragement and often despair. So the Apostle says "Exhorting one

another." The word exhorting means literally "to call near to comfort and encourage." "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.....exhorting one another.....and so much the more as ye see the day approaching."

The need of comfort and mutual sustenance, of encouragement, will greatly increase as the days darken, and the final battle draws on. The nearer we get to the glory, the more we shall know of the attacks of the powers of darkness, and the more we shall need the mutual support, comfort and encouragement which can only be found in the assembly.

Let us, then, heed this word. Walking in the light we have fellowship, but this needs to be diligently cultivated and jealously guarded. It can only be cultivated as we come together according to God's pattern, and, in the Christian assembly, mutually share each others' burdens and thus helping one another, look for, and hasten unto, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. May He bring us practically into the good of it for His Name's sake. S. A.

To be continued.

WHERE there is building there is rubbish. "People will try to discourage you.....Of course there is rubbish—there always is where anything is being done. Don't stop because of the rubbish; get on with the building."

THE book of Ezra, chapters three to six, had shown the way I must go. By holding to this line (that of using as builders only those who had a spiritual call to build), the work is sure to be hindered for a time. Then ceased the work of the house of God—but in the end it goes on. And as to supplies, the command of the King is: That which they have need of, let it be given them day by day without fail.

AN Indian woman is trying single-handed to lead the mission of which she is a member back to the ways of the Acts of the Apostles. She is considered unpractical—always the word for anything that crosses the usual. God's dreamers are always "unpractical"; but in the end some of their dreams come true.

AND if among the trials that you are called to bear, there is one that seems, I do not say heavier than the others, but more compromising to your ministry, and likely to ruin for ever all the hopes of your holy mission, if outward temptations be added to these coming from within, if all seems assailed, body, mind, spirit, if all seems lost without remedy, well, accept this trial, shall I say, or this assemblage

of trials, in a peculiar feeling of submission, hope and gratitude, as a trial in which the Lord will cause you to find a new mission. Hail it as the beginning of a ministry of weakness and bitterness, which the Lord has reserved for the last because the best, and which He will cause to abound in more living fruit than your ministry of strength and joy in days gone by over yielded.....

Would it be truly so? Would what had seemed only hurtful to our ministry turn to blessing and power and joy? Was this something to be accepted with hope and gratitude? And now He who guides even to the sending of books caused a friend to lend us one just then which gave us this:

The old nature dies as He died. That which we were by nature, peacemakers, centres of happiness, dies as the corn of wheat dies, or rather appears to die as it passes out of sight, in order that it may re-appear in a glorious resurrection form. If by God's help we hold fast in humble submission and childlike trust to our Lord while the dying is being accomplished, then our prayers for others have a tremendous power in His Name, and either here or hereafter we find that we, like our Lord, have lifted up those for whom we prayed by His own resurrection force.

From 'Gold Cord,' by A. W. C.

The Testimony and its Vessel unto the Time of the End

The Abiding Message of Daniel.—*Continued.*

We are concentrating upon this particular thought, that in relation to His heavenly testimony, the testimony concerning His Son Jesus Christ, God has constituted and appointed a vessel, an instrument here in the midst of the Gentile world powers, and that from that vessel or instrument the government of the heavens in this world unto the Lord's end is expressed. The Church is that instrument. Inasmuch as the Church as a whole is not in line with God's purpose, vitally co-operating, and spiritually in a position to exercise that Divine and heavenly authority, God is securing for Himself a remnant, a body within, an overcomer company in which, and through which the laws and principles of this heavenly government are established and put into operation. We are here because it is in that connection that the Spirit is speaking, and we want to hear what the Spirit saith. So far as we are concerned, and all those to whom we may have a ministry, with whom we may have any spiritual influence, that we and they should come fully, livingly, vitally, energetically into oneness with God's purpose unto the time of the end.

Now we began to see that that instrument, that vessel, functions by reason of certain very clearly defined laws. It has to be in a spiritual and moral position and relationship to the Lord. It does not function mechanically or automatically. It may be an elect vessel, and it may have been foreknown and fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, God may have foreknown every member of it, and yet running alongside all the eternal counsels of God, and the sovereignty of God, there is always spiritual and moral responsibility; and while it is difficult to relate and reconcile those two things, nevertheless they are equally true that even an elect vessel can never fulfil the object of its predestination, its fore-ordination, only in so far as it corresponds with the spiritual and moral principles which God has laid down for its effectiveness.

Chapter one of the Book of Daniel, as we

have seen, introduces the basic principle of spiritual effectiveness. I am very anxious that this shall not go over your heads or that you should in any measure feel that a great deal of truth on a broad scale is being given out, but rather that you should see that this does apply to you personally and individually, that every one is, in God's thought and desire and will, related to this testimony and to this vessel of the testimony unto the time of the end. That you individually with a personal responsibility and anointing, and in relation to others of the children of God are really called into fellowship with the government of the heavens in this earth concerning God's purpose for the age. You and I are really solemnly called into that. That just as truly as ever Daniel was in that, you and I are in that, for Daniel is only a type and representation. He typifies and represents that which we have in the letter to the Ephesians, which reaches on to us, embraces us, calls us in; and beloved, if ever you read the sixth chapter, or the first chapter of the letter to the Ephesians and feel that that in any way applies to you, that you can stand in there, you can lay claim to that, that it embraces you, well, you are in effect standing in the place of Daniel and his three friends.

Now if Daniel and his three friends represented something of tremendously solemn significance and import to heaven in their day, and to hell, and to the nations of this world, you and I occupy that position of spiritual importance to God. And while that may sound very lofty, it may sound very much above you, if only you could read your own spiritual history in the light of heaven—that is, if you have got a spiritual history, if you are really going on with God spiritually, if you are alive unto the Lord—if you could read your own spiritual history in the light of heaven, you would be reading the Book of Daniel and the letter to the Ephesians in your own life. You would be able to see that the same things are operative in your experience spiritually as were there.

and are there. So I want this thing to come right home to us very definitely and draw us in, every one of us.

The Basic Principle of Spiritual Effectiveness.

The first chapter of this book, as we have said, introduces that basic principle of spiritual power, authority, dominion, which comes out in the life of Daniel and his friends, and that basic principle is found in the words: "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's dainties, nor with the wine which he drank." I do want to add just a very brief word in that connection again by way of extra emphasis, to point out that no life can be spiritually effective, can count for God in the spiritual realm, bring in the government of God, can uphold or maintain or advance the testimony of Jesus, stand against the powers of darkness, bring the consummation of the ages nearer, which is the overthrow of the whole satanic kingdom and the bringing in of the universal rule of the heavens, only in so far as that life is in a position of absolute separation from everything in that realm against which that testimony of Jesus stands. If you have one link, one point of contact voluntarily with that system through any medium, you are crippled, you are paralysed. How often we have had people come to us and they have poured out a story of spiritual defeat, of failure, an up and down experience (not a down and up one), more downs than ups, a lack of spiritual power, and when we have sought to get to the cause of it they have been willing to confess various things, they have come out quite frankly—"I think it very likely may be this or that or something else," and they have not made much difficulty about confessing certain things, and the Spirit of the Lord has been saying in us: "It is not that, there is something else." "There is something else that they are not willing to mention," and when through probing and sifting at last we have got on the scent of the thing, we have touched something that had a relation to their like, something they liked (these other things they did not like, and therefore were willing to confess them), but there was something that they liked, some indulgence of the flesh, and this they would not confess. I remember a man who was in that category, and when one tried to help him he was ready to confess that most likely it was his bad temper, that was the trouble. Confessed it with a long face, and in my heart I felt, No, that is not it, there is something else, and

I was asking the Lord: "What is it?" "Give this thing into my hands," and as that man got round to another point of the compass in his direction to me I got his breath, and the Lord said: "That is it, tobacco." And I said: "Has the Lord ever put His finger upon a certain habit, indulgence?" "You may have argued that there was no wrong in it, but has the Lord ever very gently said something to you about that?" and I saw by a flush that the thing had been touched. He said: "Well, I see no harm in that, what is wrong with that?" "A good many other men have been used of God who do it." I said: "It is not a matter of general right and wrong; right and wrong is a matter of whether the Lord has ever just touched a thing ever so lightly and said, not that it was a downright wicked thing, but: "I would rather it was not" and that raises the issue. When we had got down to that he said: "There have been times when I have come up against it." I said: "Brother, that is the arrest of your whole spiritual life and that is the back door through which the Devil comes in, and the bad temper is not the cause but the effect, and all the defeat is the result of one reservation that you have with the Lord. There is not a full obedience and willing abandonment; you are prepared to confess all sorts of faults, but that one thing you are not prepared to confess, you have got a hold with the Lord."

Satan's Vantage Ground.

"Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's dainties, nor with the wine which he drank"; for the king of Babylon was related to Nebuchadnezzar's gods, to idolatry, and this Book of Daniel shows perfectly clearly that it is not just Babylon, but it is the spiritual power and system back of Babylon with which Daniel was dealing. We will prove that before we are through. And Daniel saw that that would be a gangway between him and their system, against which he stood and across that gangway the enemy would come and paralyse him and rob him of the power of spiritual and moral dominion, ascendancy to govern the situation in Babylon for God. The Devil was out to offer him the dainties from the king's table and the pleasant wine as a trap to paralyse his spiritual life. Now do not misunderstand me. The instance cited is not intended as a wholesale condemnation of that thing mentioned or of other things, but it is used as an illustration to show you that

if in secret history with the Lord where neither companions, Christian friends and brethren know anything, where Daniel is alone with the Lord, there is a realisation of what the Lord would have and a facing up to that: if in that secret history there is the slightest touch of question, doubt about anything as to the Lord's will, that is the pivot upon which revolves the strength of the whole spiritual life, the dominion, the government of the heavens. Just think, that all the mighty power of the God of the heavens, the kingdom of the God of the heavens is suspended in our lives if there is a questionable thing between us and the Lord, a thing about which we have doubt. Yes, we bind the hands of heaven if we are not absolutely clear on every detail with the Lord and there is not the most complete break at every point with that whole system against which we are here as a vessel of the testimony. Holiness is necessary, separation is necessary; an uncompromising attitude between everything that the Devil offers as a link between us and his system. The victory of the Lord Jesus over the prince of this world was because the prince of this world came to Him and had nothing in Him. "The prince of this world cometh: and he hath nothing in me." If only the prince of this world could have got something in Him! He tried to get personal ambition. Anything like that and the Divine end is frustrated. You see how basic is the principle of an absolute separateness from that kingdom in all its connections and aspects if there is going to be spiritual power. Let us not consider the question of spiritual power merely from a personal standpoint of how it affects us, whether we win the benefit or not, but let us remember that it is a part of a testimony to God's Son. The Lord Jesus is bound up with this. The kingdom of the heavens is bound up with this. The eternal predestinating of God is bound up with this, and a people out of the nations for His Name.

So then Daniel brings in the moral ascendancy or elevation which is necessary to the vessel of the testimony unto the time of the end. He lays the foundation in that realm, moral and spiritual elevation brought about in the secret presence of God. It says Daniel purposed in his heart; it does not say the other three purposed, but before you get through the chapter the other three are in this; out of the secret history on the part of one the others are brought in, but it was a personal thing in the presence

of God where Daniel said: "I must be clear of this thing, I must stand back from this system at every point; I will not be defiled, for defilement means an advantage to the enemy." That was where the foundations were laid for this whole book on the spiritual side.

Chapter two, of course, brings in the practical outworking of that and it is not long after Daniel has purposed in his heart that he comes into action, God brings him forward under such circumstances and conditions as put the whole situation into Daniel's hands. The king dreams. No magician, no wise men in all Babylon can help the king in the interpretation of the dream and he commands that they all be slain, and they seek for Daniel and his companions to be included in the slaying. Daniel asks: "Why is the decree so hasty from the king?" Asks the king to appoint a time—"There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets," and so the time, the space is given and Daniel mobilises the prayer forces, goes to his three companions, calls them together, and then in the night vision the thing is revealed to Daniel, and out of the secret history of moral ascendancy there issues the outward and public expression of that ascendancy and the whole situation is put into the hands of Daniel, he is the man in command.

They that Honour God, God will Honour.

Now what is the next thing as a secret, for the vessel, as to its ascendancy? The first thing is the purposing of heart. The second is the honouring of God, and that is a thing which runs right through this book. It comes out in very clear definition. "There is a God in heaven," and all the way through when a crisis arises and there is an emergency, it is always a recognition of the God of the heavens, and without any kind of veiling, covering up, hiding, compromise. The declaration is made: "There is a God in heaven." God is honoured. You remember when the image was set up in the plain of Dura and all were commanded to bow down and worship that image, these three companions and Daniel refused to worship the image, and they were brought before the king and challenged as to why they refused. What was their answer? "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer thee in this matter"—that is fine! There is no place for any argument. The fact is that we are responsible to God, that is settled for us in our hearts for ever. We do not argue, we do not explain, we have taken our position of absolute faithfulness to

God and that is all there is to it. If you throw us into the fiery furnace it makes no difference to the position we have taken. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up"—this is settled once and for all, the thing which is paramount is that we honour God.

Beloved, that represents something very, very valuable to the Lord and gives the Lord a way. There was never for one moment a hint that it was in themselves to do anything. You read chapter one and you find that those who were brought in before the king, of the children of the captivity, were to be of the royal seed and of those who held high positions amongst the Jews in their own nation, socially and intellectually; they were to be wise, taught in all the learning and science of their own people and well read, and Daniel and the other three were chosen because they occupied that high position socially and intellectually and were learned in all the wisdom of their people, but never for one moment in the hour of crises did they hint that any ability of theirs would solve the problem, would give the answer. "There is a God in heaven." They honoured God. They gave no honour in the first place to the king's meat. The difficulty with the prince of the eunuchs was that if Daniel carried out his purpose, and his brethren did likewise, their countenances would be poorer and they would look less well nourished than those who received the king's meat. Daniel and his brethren honoured God and refused to give any honour to the king's meat or wine. If they looked the same as the others, having partaken of the king's food, where was the superiority of the spiritual over the natural? And so they determined to refuse the king's meat and they said in effect: "At the end of the time of probation you will find that we are better than the rest, without the meat." They honoured God, they were trusting God, they gave no honour to the king's meat. They took no honour to themselves and their own ability. They attributed all to God, and whenever a situation of difficulty arose they went to the Lord about it. In the first instance, the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel having been given a space of time sought out his three brethren and before the Lord they sought guidance.

You see it was always honouring God: "For them that honour me I will honour," and He did.

This is perhaps a very simple principle and you may hardly see the force of it but a vessel that is really going to bring God into evidence, and the heavens into evidence so that the forces of hell and earth are going to have to take account of this and say: "There is that here which cannot be accounted for on any human ground whatever, this is something beyond the natural, this is something more than man, this is none other than God," a vessel that is going to bring in a testimony like that, a vessel that is going to be instrumental in making every knee to bow to Him, has got to be one which is wholly and utterly relying and dependent upon the Lord, taking nothing to itself, honouring God. It must be a vessel which is empty of everything but the Lord and gives the Lord His place, and in everything it is perfectly clear that it is the Lord; not man or woman, the company, the movement, the organisation, not the brain behind the thing, the ability, the acumen, but the Lord; on the human plane there is nothing to account for this; this is the Lord.

That is what the Lord is after, to get that testimony. It was like that in the first days of the Church. "For behold your calling, brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea, and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory before God." But the thing which governs that strange providence of God in making sure that His vessel is an empty one and in himself a weak one and one which will take no honour to itself, the thing which governs Him in so dealing with His vessel is to make sure that all who see, know, wholly attribute it to Himself. You want God to come in? God will come in in the measure in which you go out. The heavens will come in in so far as we are emptied and stripped of all natural resources, and if we are emptied out to the last drop that may be God's way of making room for a larger manifestation of heaven. It is true to spiritual experience. When you are weak and conscious of personal helplessness, that is not the time to throw up your hands and say: "I am

no good for anything and never shall be," that is the time to say there is plenty of room for the Lord, and to exercise faith in the Lord to come in, and the Lord's providences and sovereignty operate along the line of weakening us to make us strong. "Through faith.....out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight." "The people that know their God shall be strong, and do exploits," but it is immensely important to recognise the place of honouring God. It is just the opposite of nature: it represents the work of the cross having been done. The natural man never will honour God. He may in a mock-humility, but flesh never has, and never will honour God; flesh always takes glory to itself. The most difficult thing for the Lord is to use anybody very much. Whenever the Lord begins to use us there is always that little demon sitting upon our shoulder whispering in our ears: "You are becoming successful, you are becoming something," and that is the Lord's difficulty with this flesh of ours. It does so quickly become gratified with any kind of success or blessing.

take something to itself, and when people foolishly begin to gather round and make something of the instrument, as though the instrument were an authority, the flesh feels so nice about it and begins to purr like a cat. Self-satisfaction—that is the curse, and it gets in God's way. For heaven to come in completely God must be honoured, it must be all the Lord and that means when God is honoured He can go on with His work. It is a law of spiritual power, spiritual authority. If Christ had power and authority over the Devil it was surely because of the emptiness of His life from the self-principle. We have often said that the root sin is self interest.

May the Lord just take afresh these two things and bring them home to our hearts. May we keep in mind that what the Lord is after in these days is to bring individuals, and a company of people in this world into a place that through them the heavens may govern, and the powers back of this world system may recognise that there is a God in heaven.

T. A.-S.

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"Of all plans of ensuring success, the most certain is Christ's own—becoming a corn of wheat, falling into the ground and dying: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall to the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.'"

"It often appears to us that there is nothing except our private walk with God which is more detested and assaulted by the devil than just this beautiful happy thing, the loyalty that is the basic quality of vital unity."

The words "vital unity" are from Westcott's note on St. John xvii. 22. This unity, he says, is something far more than a mere moral unity of purpose, feeling, affection; it is in some mysterious mode which we cannot distinctly apprehend, a vital unity."

From 'Gold Cord.'

The Verifying of God and the Vindication of Christ

READING : 1 Corinthians xv. 1—4.

“He hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures.”

While it would be possible for us to cite some, and perhaps many fragments of the Scriptures which have a direct bearing upon what is said here, that “He hath been raised again the third day,” the Apostle did not mean any particular Scriptures when he said this. He did not intend that those who read what he said should go and look up some Scriptures (which of course would then have been in the Old Testament, because there was no New Testament) bearing upon the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, but what he did mean was that the whole of the Scriptures bear upon this thing, that all the Scriptures relate to this great fact which he was stating. “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures;” that is, that all the Scriptures bear upon these things. And we shall remember that in Luke xxiv. the Lord Jesus after His resurrection, to certain who journeyed to Emmaus opened the Scriptures, it says in Moses, in the Psalms and in the Prophets the things concerning Himself, and the things concerning Himself there are specified as the sufferings of Christ, that He should be delivered into the hands of wicked men and they would crucify Him, and He should rise again the third day: so that Moses, which covers the whole of the first section of the Bible, the Psalms the second, and the Prophets the third, had to do with the sufferings, the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and it was in that comprehensive sense that the Apostle wrote these words: “He hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” In a moment we shall come back for the specific value of that to ourselves.

God verifying Himself

“According to the Scriptures.” Now this phrase clearly represents God’s verifying of Himself. The Scriptures are the words of God.

God hath spoken in all the Scriptures. We are told in the beginning of the letter to the Hebrews that: “God (who) at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.....” So that the Scriptures are the utterance, the sayings, the words of God, and when it says here that something has been “according to the Scriptures” that happening is the verifying of God, and God Who brought about that event, God Who caused it to be, is by it verifying Himself. So that this phrase “according to the Scriptures” represents the verifying of Himself on the part of God: the acts which establish the words.

The vindication of the Lord Jesus

And then, again, this particular clause represents the vindication of the Lord Jesus: “He hath been raised on the third day.” That is the vindication of Christ. Which means, that Christ is vindicated in resurrection. That is the point, central, pivotal, the supreme point of everything; the vindication of the Lord Jesus. If He had been crucified, slain, murdered, executed, and been buried and that had been the end, well, what would you have had to vindicate Him? But when God stepped in and raised Him from the dead on the third day Christ was vindicated up to the hilt.

Now very swiftly and briefly I want to gather up these three things in a word or two of practical application to ourselves, because there are here some very serious and momentous implications for the people of God; and we will begin at the end with number three. Christ’s vindication by resurrection from the dead. The thing which is of so great importance to us, beloved, is this, that while the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is undoubtedly an historical fact, something which did take place at a certain time in the history of this world, that is not an adequate basis of the vindication of the Lord Jesus. In other words, Christ’s vindication is not merely a historical fact, but it is a revealed and experienced truth.

“He appeared” is the word here, and the Apostle tells us elsewhere that He appeared not unto all the people but unto witnesses whom God had before chosen; so that the vindication of the Lord Jesus was brought about by the Risen Christ, as risen becoming revealed, personally, to certain people. They came into what we mean by the revelation of Jesus Christ, which is infinitely more than the story of the historic Jesus. And then not only was He revealed to them but He became in them the Living One in the power of His risen life, and that is the vindication of the Lord Jesus. It requires living witnesses in whom Christ has been revealed and is their life to vindicate the Lord Jesus. Concerning Lazarus, on hearing of the news of his sickness, the Lord Jesus said: “This sickness is not unto death but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” And He was not mistaken when Lazarus died, it was not a contradiction of His utterance: “This sickness is not unto death.” He meant this sickness is not a sickness unto death but a sickness unto resurrection, but the object in view was this, that the Son of God might be glorified. That is the vindication of the Lord Jesus, and the Lord Jesus is vindicated when He as the Resurrection and the Life has an object in which He can manifest the power of resurrection. So you and I are called to be witnesses to the resurrection, not in the manner of declaring historical facts, or believing that there was a time when God really did raise the Lord Jesus from the dead so many years ago, but as now being personally in the experience and knowledge of Christ as living, and as the Conqueror of death. And if there is one thing revealed as pre-eminent throughout all the Scriptures, it is God’s desire to vindicate His Son.

Then we have a strong basis of hope and confidence when we go into death, not merely physical but the various forms in which death works and abounds—death in our work for the Lord, death in our spiritual experience in deep trial, in great suffering, in various ways—if we are really related to the Lord, God’s whole object is to vindicate His Son in the display of the truth that He raised Him from the dead, and make that truth a reality in us. The vindication of the Lord Jesus is God’s dearest heart purpose. And so unto witnesses chosen aforetime He makes real the fact of not only Christ now living, but that Christ living

now represents God’s triumph over death. Then believers are those who have the Divine verification on their side. “According to the Scriptures.” It is a great thing to have the verification of God on our side. Perhaps you do not quite grasp what is meant by that. I mean this, that we who believe, we who are in Christ, we who stand with God, stand in line with God’s determination to verify Himself, seeing God has spoken, God has said things, God has made promises, God has given certain assurances, God has declared He will do this and that, the Scriptures contain it—we, standing by faith with God, in Christ, He is going to verify Himself in all those Scriptures, and the verifying of Himself relates to us. You see that is what is said here.

“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” That means that God verified Himself on our behalf when Christ died for our sins, for all the way through God had been pointing by the Scriptures to that sin-remitting death, that sin-atonement death of the Lord Jesus, that by that Lamb of God the sin of the world would be taken away: God had pointed all along to that, all the way through the Scriptures, and the thing has taken place and Christ has died for our sins according to the Scriptures. We stand by faith on His side, and God in verifying Himself makes good the Scriptures for us. And what is true in dying for our sins according to the Scriptures, is true in this: “.....has been raised the third day according to the Scriptures.” That is for us also. We come into the good of that because the Scriptures include us in that. “He died for our sins and rose again for our justification.” He rose that we might know life that is victorious over death, that we might know Him as the One Who has conquered death for us, know Him as our life, indestructible and incorruptible. God is not going to say a thing, and eternity reveal He failed to fulfil it. All the promises of God are in Christ, yea, and in Him. Amen. That is, verily, verily. God fulfils His Word in Christ for us and God verifies His Word in Christ, every promise is established in Christ for us.

There is another side. God is going to verify Himself, every word God has ever said is going to be verified, but for multitudes who do not believe, all that is going to be against them. Their unbelief cannot hinder God from verifying Himself, but the full impact of it will be against them for condemnation. To those who believe the full force of God’s eternal faithful-

ness to His Word is for them, on their side. It is a great thing to recognise that all the Scriptures have to be fulfilled and in their fulfilment God verifies Himself, and that for believers.

One final word in connection with the rest of this passage which we read. There is a challenge here, to living faith. Why did Paul write this fifteenth chapter? Well, for several reasons which we will not stay to mention, but undoubtedly the words with which he opens this section, this new section relative to resurrection, were meant to bring these Corinthians, shall I say, up to scratch, to confront them with the necessity for taking seriously the things that they knew. "Now I made known unto you brethren....." "I make known"; the force of those words if you can get behind the English is this—"Now I want you to recognise what it is that I have said. I want you to recognise that which you received, the meaning of it, I am bringing it to you with emphasis and with challenge and with fuller explanation: He is calling upon them to take serious account of the gospel which he preached unto them. And you notice a little clause he puts in, a kind of proviso about the whole thing which introduces an element of very serious possibility. He says: "unless"—oh, what a big word that unless is—"except (or unless) ye believed in vain." More literally "Unless from the beginning your faith has been unreal." That is what it means. So he is calling them to reality, he is calling them to a serious recognition of what they had received as the gospel. There is a good deal in this letter about the possibilities of unreality. There is a chapter which takes them back to Israel in the wilderness and reminds them that all Israel came out of Egypt, passed through the Red Sea, were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, they all partook of the bread from heaven, of the spiritual water from the Rock, but that generation perished in the wilderness, that generation never went through to God's end, it died in the wilderness. And Paul is afraid that there should be unreality: "Lest from the beginning your faith has been unreal." It is a challenge to a living faith, and in this connection speci-

fically with which we are at the moment occupied, a challenge to a living faith that God raised the Lord Jesus from the dead on the third day to be to us the Resurrection and the Life in spiritual experience, to make good all His Word concerning the Lord Jesus in our experience. A living faith in that. A faith which appropriates that, which takes hold of that. A faith which believes in Christ's triumph over death and which makes good, so far as our faith can make anything good, makes good for us the promise, the word of God, "According to the Scriptures." A living faith in what God has done for us. You and I, beloved, need more of that living faith. We want to escape entirely from unreality and a living faith is not a historical faith: a living faith is a faith which comes out of history of what happened in a certain eastern country so many centuries ago and makes good all the spiritual value of that now in our own experience. That is a living faith, and when we focus upon "God raised Him from the dead," "He hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures," faith does not just say: "Yes, I believe in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead," faith makes that a personal possession with a personal value for our present experiment.

The Holy Spirit from the beginning of our history as a child of God is vindicating the Lord Jesus. It is impossible for any soul to be saved without the miracle of resurrection being wrought in them by God the Holy Ghost. We are dead, according to God's Word, in our trespasses and sins, and no amount of preaching can ever raise a soul from the dead; it needs the quickening act of the Holy Ghost, and we have to come and believe God is able to do that and make that good for our salvation, before we can become a saved child of God. What is true of salvation is true all the way along right to the end, that we have by faith to appropriate all the value of God having raised Christ from the dead to be our life. "He that hath the Son hath life."

That has all been a crowding into a little space of a great deal. The Lord open it up to our hearts.

T. A.-S.

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Diagrams.

1. The Centrality and Universality of the Cross.

2. The Cross and our Salvation.

3. The Attitude of the Crucified Ones Toward Each Other.

4. The Cross and the New Creation.

5. The Cross and the New Man.

6. The Cross and the Promise of the Father.

7. 'In Christ Jesus.'

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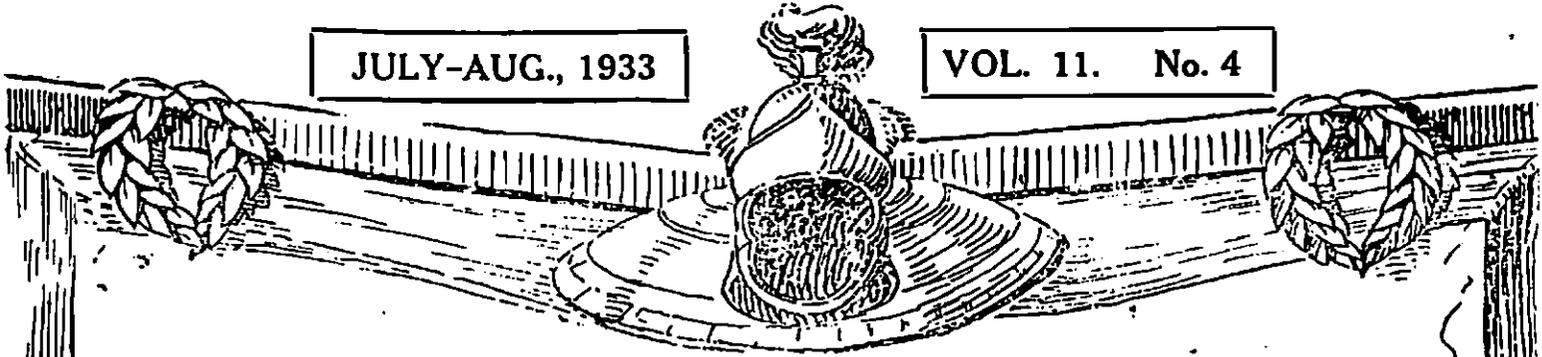
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Witness and a Testimon

JULY-AUG., 1933

VOL. 11. No. 4



“THEY THAT WAIT
FOR ME SHALL NOT
BE PUT TO SHAME.”

ISAIAH. 49. 23.

“THOU THAT MADEST
THE DEPTHS OF THE
SEA A WAY FOR THE
REDEEMED TO PASS
OVER.”

ISAIAH. 51. 10.



The Testimony and its Vessel unto the Time of the End

The Abiding Message of Daniel.—*Continued.*

We resume our consideration of this subject by asking—What is the thing that is really upon our hearts as the burden of the Lord at this time? What is the object which we have so strongly in view?

A Primary Object of Present Divine Need.

My answer is, without any hesitation or equivocation, that I believe and feel most strongly and intensely that what the Lord is after, what the Lord needs, what the Lord is seeking to possess Himself of is a vessel in such relationship to Himself and His throne in the heavens, as will bring that throne and that heavenly dominion and authority very mightily to bear upon the whole spiritual system of His enemy, the principalities and powers and the world rulers of this darkness and the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies, as they have control of this cosmos; to register the throne of God upon those forces and upon the kosmos. Now that is what is weighing with me tremendously, and that is the burden of these days. That has been the thing central to the six gatherings which we have already had as we have been dwelling hugely in the book of Daniel, and what we are going on with to-day is not a departure from that, it is only a following up, a continuation, for we said earlier in the conference that the book of Daniel and the letter to the Ephesians have very much in common. The principles are the same. And so as we are perhaps more in Ephesians now than in Daniel so far as the actual Scripture is concerned, we are still dealing with the same matter. In the book of Daniel we saw four men, and the Lord making one, in the midst of them, forming a vessel, an instrument for the registration of the rule of the heavens upon the spiritual forces operating back of world systems, and we saw the breaking-in of the government of the heavens again and again as those men operated in fellowship with the throne of God. And that is where we are and everything is gathered up into that, and I do trust that with all that may be said which may be more or less helpful,

illuminating or interesting or informative, we shall see that the centre and heart of the whole thing is just that God shall have in us individually and collectively, wherever He may place us on this earth, vessels, an instrument in such a spiritual union with Himself in the heavenlies that the heavenly thing may be wrought out.

That brings together the testimony of Jesus, that is, as to who the Lord Jesus is and what He is in the appointment of God the Father, the position that He holds, and what is related to Him as to the history and consummation of the universe. The testimony of Jesus, Sovereign Lord, and the vessel as eternally foreknown, foreordained, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, brought into being in time, and as is seen by the Scripture, joined with Him in His heavenly position for that testimony not only to men, but to men by reason of having dealt with the spiritual powers and intelligences back of men.

Now then, we are able to speak a little more about the vessel of the testimony and we are looking at the matter of the vessel as mainly a corporate and collective thing, that is the Body of Christ; but specifically at present that company which is moving, and which the Lord is seeking to bring into that advanced position with Himself, in relation to the heavenlies. Not all the members of the Church which is His Body are there, or are going on there, but the Lord will from His people obtain a company which will be the vanguard of the whole, and which will go on with Him and take the heavenly place and be His instrument for the breaking through and leading a way for the others. That is the peculiar vessel upon which the heart of the Lord is set, and we believe that we are here in relation to, not God's second or third thing, but God's first thing. It would be very good if one could take that for granted, that everyone here is here because their hearts are wholly bent upon God's first thing, and they will never be content with anything less than that. Well, God's first thing is taking the

heavens with Him against those forces which now are opposed to Him in the heavens.

The Universal Range of the Eternal Purpose.

I think just one word here extra of a very general character might put us into line with the whole purpose of God. That is, that we should remind ourselves of the cosmic nature of everything in the purpose of God and in the person of Christ, and in the work of Christ. That word cosmic may not convey to all of you what it is intended as used, but the intention in using it is to indicate the range of God's purpose, and the range of everything relative to the person and work of the Lord Jesus. The range is not just the limited compass of a few saved people. It is not just the salvation of so many individuals, and it is not just the salvation of a company our from the nations. All these may be stages, steps toward the ultimate; but God has swept the ultimate from the beginning and it is cosmic in its range; that is, it embraces the whole world with all the nations, every inch of territory and all the realm surrounding and encompassing the world; how far beyond that we do not know, only by fragmentary suggestions; but we do know that the whole world and the whole encompassing realm of the lower heavenlies, and super-heavenlies are involved in this purpose of God in the person of the Lord Jesus and in His work. The fall was not just the fall of man, it was the fall of a creation. It was not two people who fell and involved their progeny; it was the fall of a whole creation, and every part of that creation was involved in that fall, touched by that fall. Sin and death, which are the two issues of the fall, were shot through the whole creation and everything is touched by sin and death; and the very atmosphere, air, heavenly realms around the creation is saturated with this spiritual defilement and occupied by sinful elements and death elements, fallen intelligences, "the prince of the power of the air." That was the range of the fall. Redemption is cosmic. It is not just the redemption of man, let alone a few men, it is the redemption of the whole cosmos. "The creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption." Christ's work in His Cross has effected, in the ultimate, the redemption of the whole creation. But more, the redemption of the whole heavenly range surrounding the creation; and the heavenlies are going to be cleared, and the very atmosphere is going to be purged, and the person of Christ in sovereignty embraces that

for coming government, and the work of Calvary involves that. So that the vessel of the testimony is called not merely into relationship to the salvation of a few men and women, the vessel of the testimony will go on in relation to the whole work of Calvary, the full work of redemption, the entire range of the significance of the Person of Christ, and that vessel will not only be in relation to the earth, the redemption of and the redeemed earth and the new creation, it will be related to the whole range of heavenly realms, lower and higher, in the ages to come. That is the vessel and that is its calling, that is its ministry. It is called to a tremendous thing, and it is important for us to see the cosmic nature of the Cross, the cosmic significance of the Person and work of Christ, and then the cosmic relationship and vocation of the vessel of the testimony.

At present it is the taking out of the nations a people for His Name. There will be developments by stages, but the ultimate issue—while we do not believe in Universalism, so called, that even the Devil himself is going to be redeemed and saved and put back in a place of honour; nothing like that!—ultimately when God's day of probation is finally closed and the testimony has been for ever decided according to an attitude taken, and evil and evil ones have been swept from God's world, then the vessel, the Church, the Body, will be the instrument of administration; administrative in relation to the throne and the whole of that range of redemption's work. There will be things beyond the Church, there will be nations which will walk in the light of that City, which is the Church; but at present the Church is the thing upon which the Lord's heart is set as the vessel, not only for purposes in this age, which are limited comparatively, but for the unlimited ranges of influence and usefulness in the ages to come. Now I have only spoken out of the Word and you hardly need that I quote Scripture, it is floating in your mind as I go on. In the ages to come He is going to show by us the exceeding riches of His grace, and it is now unto principalities and powers He is making known His manifold wisdom by the Church. You see what we mean by the cosmic range of things; and the vessel is called in relation to that, something very great, very wide, very far-reaching. (Ephesians i. 21; ii. 7; iii. 10.)

We said that in speaking of the vessel we are here regarding it from the personal and

collective, or corporate standpoint—in this sense—that we must not forget that while the vessel in the thought and mind of God is a corporate thing, a Body, a collective thing, it is made up of living members, and every living member of that Body is in itself a vessel and has its peculiar responsibility to the whole. It is related, and therefore, everything for that vessel is relative; and yet we must not fall into the snare of allowing our individual and personal responsibility to be lost sight of by the corporate conception of things. We must realise that we, individually, have a responsibility as a vessel, although our responsibility as vessels is related to the whole. And so we are vessels as part of a vessel. That is what I want to get at, so that we lay a safe emphasis upon the individual place in the vessel for the testimony.

Paul a type of the whole Vessel.

That truth and that principle comes out in the way which we are very fond of speaking of and thinking here. That is, in connection with Paul and the Church. As we have frequently said, the great revelation of the mystery of Christ and His members, one Body, the Church, with all its meaning, which comes through the Apostle Paul, was personally represented and signified by the man himself. That he as a vessel in every detail represented the vessel of the testimony. What was true of the corporate vessel, the Church, was revealed through him, was true of him personally and had to be made so. That is where we begin when we speak of the vessel and that is the most helpful way, perhaps, of reaching the heart of this matter. There are one or two passages which come through the Apostle, which show that this very thought was in his own mind. The passage in Philippians iii. 17: "Brethren, be ye imitators together of me, and mark them that so walk even as ye have us for an ensample." The word ensample there is the word *typos*, which is type. "Even as ye have us for a type." Now you take that last fragment, ye have us for a type, and link it with the first fragment, be ye imitators of me. If you turn to 1 Tim. i. 15: "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation; that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief: howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me as chief might Jesus Christ show forth all his long suffering, for an ensample (for a type) of them that should thereafter believe on him unto eternal life."

More literally that is: "This is a trustworthy saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief; howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth the whole long-suffering for a pattern, or delineation of them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." Do you catch that? Paul made a pattern for all who should hereafter believe; that is, he is placed at the head of the age which he represents, as a pattern, as a model, as a type, as a delineation, as a representation. There is a great deal more in what he is saying here than I have time for, but when he speaks of the whole long-suffering, he is referring to a dispensation which he had represented as a member of Israel (the long-suffering of God through the whole Jewish age was the most marvellous thing) and that whole dispensation of Judaism which drew out the long-suffering of God in such a marvellous way. Think about it.

I confess that spiritually I have often found God's dealings with Ahab a stumbling-block, for I have felt that God ought to have dealt with Ahab long before He did. But while it is said of Ahab that he sinned more than all the kings of Israel that were before him, and that was before he married Jezebel (what could be said of him afterward I do not know) and yet when God did pronounce a judgment on Ahab and determined his end, and Ahab started whimpering and putting on sackcloth and fasting, the Lord said to the prophet: "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's day will I bring the evil upon his house." I have had a quarrel with the Lord over that many a time because of the issue. But I am wrong, of course! Now take that as a fragment of the long-suffering of God and spread a thing like that over the long dispensation, and then take Saul of Tarsus as an outstanding and inclusive representation, as we shall see presently, of that whole Jewish dispensation and order, and the last thing that Saul of Tarsus did was to consent to the murder, the martyrdom of Stephen in red-hot blood, so to speak, violent blood, against Jesus of Nazareth. Now, he says, the whole long-suffering, all the long-suffering of God as shown through that long and terrible age is gathered up in Saul, the cumulative long-suffering of God is gathered up and he stands as a model of the long-suffering

of God for all who should hereafter believe. But the heart of the thing that I am trying to get at is this, that Paul was a model, a type at the beginning of the age, of the vessel, the vessel of mercy, and what he was individually, the whole Body—vessel—would be collectively; and as parts of that Body, and as individual vessels, we stand in relation to that whole long-suffering of God. We are where we are because of the infinite grace of God.

Now I think we have established fairly well at the outset, our principle, that what is true of the whole vessel has to be true of the individual vessel, and that the individual vessel has to be a representation of the whole.

The Closing of an entire History.

I expect in most of our minds there is already the fragment which the Lord uttered concerning him to Ananias: "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me." The first thing we notice in relation to the vessel, that is, now speaking of Paul as a vessel, and as a vessel-type of the vessel, the Church, the Body of Christ, is that one history is brought fully and finally to a close. Saul of Tarsus, we have said, represented Israel and Judaism. The closing down of the Jewish dispensation and of Judaism and its age was clearly foreshown and foretold, and the imminence of that was clearly indicated by the Lord Jesus Himself. He has some parables and amongst them as in Luke xiii., the parable of the fig tree, the fig tree which was fruitless and concerning which the owner of the vineyard said: "Cut it down: why doth it also cumber the ground." It was not only fruitless, but it was mischievous; it was not only useless, but it was in the way. There was not only the negative aspect, but there was the positive which the Lord saw. It was a menace to something else, as well as unsatisfactory to Him. "Cut it down." That was a clear indication of what was coming to Israel, to Judaism. The argument of the gardener was: "Lord, let it alone this year, till I shall dig about it and dung it: and if it bear fruit henceforth, well; but if not, thou shalt cut it down." He would dig it and dung it and seek to improve the thing, and so it was given a little space for an extra ministration of grace, but then the result was just the same, and it was cut down. Now that was Israel and that was Judaism up to the time of Calvary. With the cross of the Lord Jesus it is then, we remember, this dispensation was closed, but there is the plea for still a season

of grace, and a season of grace, that little extra period, was given from Calvary to the death of Stephen, and the digging and the care was that wonderful grace of God shown at and round Pentecost; for you notice that through the first chapters of Acts it is Israel in view. Right up to the point where the lame man is at the Beautiful Gate and Peter and John going up to the temple at the ninth hour to pray saw that man there who asked an alms, and Peter said: "Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus (Christ of Nazareth, walk)." And I think there is so much that is significant there; that up to that point the extra period of grace is ruling. That man had been in that state forty years, the number of Israel's crippled movement in the wilderness, and representing the probationary period in which Israel was useless. It is the probationary period represented by that man. That period ends, and at the end of that probationary period Israel is in a state of crippled infirmity, useless, cannot stand on its feet, but Jesus of Nazareth comes in at the end of that period. What Judaism could not do, Jesus of Nazareth is able to do, and now Israel's only hope as represented by that man of forty years' impotence is in Jesus of Nazareth. Oh yes, but Saul of Tarsus represented Israel, and: "Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the High Priest, and asked of him letters to Damascus unto the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." With the authority of the official representatives of his nation, he went forth to destroy Jesus of Nazareth just as they had destroyed Him at Calvary. You see! That closed the extra period to Israel, the extra period of grace closed when Saul of Tarsus consented to the death of Stephen, because Stephen was a vessel who, in a specific way, brought in Jesus of Nazareth in the glory. "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

The New Vessel comes in only on the ground of one History Ended.

Well, now, this is the point, it was then that Saul of Tarsus, representing his nation and the whole Jewish dispensation, came to his end. He came to his end that day, that was the end, and this vessel only comes in on the ground of one history having been closed.

It is a history that has been entirely closed from heaven, that introduces this vessel.

Paul never came in as a distinguished member of his elect nation, he came in as a man on the common level of men, dead in trespasses and sins, and the Lord from heaven never made anything of Paul, or Saul of Tarsus as a distinguished member of a chosen people. He dealt with him there and then as a common member of a sinful race, dead in trespasses and sins, subjected him as such to the assembly, and he got his instructions there. The Lord never made a fuss of Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus. He never recognised him as what he had been in the past history. He took him up as a common sinner, and that is why the Apostle says: "Of whom I am chief," and he saw that all that he had in Judaism counted for nothing.

Now that is the background truth of the vessel, and what I am coming to now is this, that we never come in any relation to the testimony of Jesus as vessels, or as a part of the vessel, only on the ground that there has been an absolute closing of one history. It does not matter what that history has been religiously, traditionally, that history has to be closed and we can bring none of that with us. Our history begins (I am rather passing on to the positive side; we will have to see this again with the coming in of the vessel) by seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. That is where this vessel commenced his history, he took his rise out of that.

The Realm where the Vessel functions Supremely.

Now do you recognise this, that this vessel is for a heavenly testimony, pre-eminently and supremely in a spiritual realm against spiritual forces? No amount of religious tradition can enable us to function there. There is nothing that we can bring in traditionally, however good it might be religiously, that can count for anything against principalities and powers, the spiritual forces of evil. Good upbringing may be good, but as such, if it falls short of a personal inward revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, it cannot meet this situation. This is what Paul declares in his very being; *that* history is closed, he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, he was everything that was splendid in that history, but now it is closed; he has come into another realm, he is no longer of the earthly system, he is now of the heavenly system, and none of that counts here. Read

the account of it again in Acts ix. See it in full swing as he sets out for Damascus. He sets out for Damascus because there is nothing more to do at Jerusalem. Now because the thing has been successful in Jerusalem, he must find new quarters for carrying out this devastating work, and so Damascus is the next centre for this, and you see him in the full strength of his old system starting out for that. Before he reaches Damascus he is on the ground in face to face dealings with Jesus of Nazareth. The two things that arise there are "I" and "Thou." Yes, Jesus of Nazareth has got him alone, he is alone with Jesus of Nazareth, and before very long he is saying: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "And he trembling and astonished said....." "They led him by the hand." Tell me that is not the closing of a history, the shutting up of one *regime* effectively! Isn't that a new situation, a new history? Isn't that beginning in a new realm? Yes, but that represents a principle. That is the way; it may be violent for some of us, it may be progressive but revolutionary and not so immediately cataclysmic and violent for others, but the same principle holds. We can carry nothing over into the heavenlies that belongs to that old history of our relationship to the old creation, to the old earth. The severance in God's mind and thought is utter, is absolute. For ever after that the enemy's main manoeuvre and tactic will be to bring about some kind of contact with that. Typically that always was so, and spiritually it always is so. Pass your eye over the Old Testament in the types and you will see that wherever you have a type of that which is linked with heaven, for heaven's purposes, you will find the persistent effort of the enemy in that case to bring about some kind of contact, link, or bridge, with his own kingdom, in order to destroy the ministry of that instrument.

Noah comes out on to a new earth in touch with the heavens, an instrument for God's testimony to a new heavenly order. It is not long before the contact is made between Noah and that which destroys the testimony in him and mars him as a vessel. Abram, called out of the world, so to speak, linked with the heavens, tempted down into Egypt, guilty of duplicity, robbed of his spiritual position and power. Isaac! Oh surely Isaac did not make a mistake, that beautiful outstanding representation of resurrection life! Isaac grows to be an old man and because he has come as an old

man to think too much of his natural appetite he brings about that unhappy situation between his two sons. Yes, he loses his spiritual perception, and you notice there is confusion in his action at the end in blessing. He is acting as though his spiritual discernment and understanding have gone from him, and in the blessing of his two sons he is not a man alive to the situation: and mark you, it is because the natural appetites along the food line had got too strong a hold on him. Interpreted spiritually, you see how the flesh spoils everything, even in an Isaac; in the end it spoils the testimony of a faith life. Jacob has made his contacts with the other system and before ever he can come to Bethel and bring in the testimony to the House of God he has to see to his family; "Put away the strange gods that are among you." But what are strange gods doing in the house of Jacob? Yes, the Devil is there all the time, very often. Joseph! Perhaps a happier situation, but the Devil tried it in the house of Potiphar's wife. Yes, the Devil knew that he, as a type, was coming to the throne, was a marked man, and the Devil laid a trap for him and sought to bring about that thing which would have for ever wrecked his testimony and set him at variance with heaven, robbed him of heaven's upholding. It is there, you see, the sinister hand. Moses—the same thing. Israel coming in relation to the heavenlies—Achan; one link with the other system to pull all Israel right out of their heavenly position. So with Israel's history from then onward. Balaam may not curse, but he ensnares, all with this purpose of getting a contact between the heavenly people and a system from which they had been cut off by the Lord, in order to rob them of their testimony and spoil them as a vessel. That is the type through and through.

Come into the New Testament; spiritually that holds good, and the one thing the Lord puts right at the commencement, which He seeks to bring us to recognise, which He labours in our experience, seeks continuously to drive home to us, is, that the very commencement of our relationship to the heavenlies as a vessel of the testimony of Jesus pre-supposes that we have left a history behind, closed; the history of the old creation, the "old man." That nature is set aside, the natural man is put out, whether he be a good natural man, as men would call him, or a bad natural man; a religious natural man or an irreligious natural man.

Disastrous Contradiction.

Now beloved, you cannot (I doubt whether you can) measure and catch the importance of that principle as to spiritual ministry, but we are all going to be made more and more aware of how vital a principle that is. I have known men who have taken up this teaching and have become authorities on the teaching of the Victory of Calvary over the powers of darkness, the kingdom of Satan, over the Devil and the whole matter of our authority in Christ; yes, gone in for it and always talking about it, and I have known those men to be smashed, broken, and thrown completely out of the thing so that the place where their words were spoken will not have it any more. It was not borne out, the Devil is triumphant, and it is quite clear there that the Devil has triumphed, and the men themselves are out of it in defeat, and what is being said is: "That principle does not work, look!" And look deeper, I have known that in the Churches where those men were responsible heads under God there were concerts and worldly amusements, bazaars, and such like, and they, rather than make the great sacrifice, because of human considerations, and a price to be paid, would not take a stand fully and finally in regard to those things. What happened? Those things were gangways of the Devil across which he came and smashed them and their testimony and brought shame and reproach upon the Word of God. We use living examples not for one moment to judge others. It is the enforcement of the principle. If this vessel is going to carry through to the end and stand in victory, and the testimony is going to be established, and it is going to be proved that in His Cross the Lord Jesus won a cosmic victory which He will put into a vessel as its testimony, that vessel must be so wholly and utterly cut off in every direction from that system against which Calvary stands or else that vessel will be smashed, will be broken, will be defeated. There has got to be a closure of a history, and Saul of Tarsus represents the first stage of the vessel—one history closed. That is where you come to in Ephesians ii. When you come out of chapter one, and the eternities of the counsels of God and the foreordinations and the will of God from eternity, and you come into time, you find the state to be: "dead in trespasses and sins." That is Ephesians ii. 1. And that is a history, a spiritual state, a spiritual history, and that history has got to be left behind you. He quickened you; dead, but

made alive. That is the beginning of the positive side of the testimony of the vessel, but there has to be a closing of one history.

There is so much more that one ought to say in that connection, but we can take the fact, the principle itself and see that it does mean that inwardly and outwardly we have to have no voluntary relationship with that whole system which is enclosed within the principalities and powers and world rulers of this darkness and spiritual hosts of wickedness; that we have no voluntary relationship with it at any point: We must be crucified to the world, and crucified as men to the flesh, and thus must any ground of Satanic activity be taken away from him so that he has nothing

which is his essential occasion for bringing about an arrest in the testimony. That is 'essentially' the meaning of our being in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. "They are not of the world."

May the Lord bring this home to us and apply it in the way in which it needs to be applied to us individually and respectively, and give us grace that we will not allow any kind of association with that which gives the enemy the occasion for destroying the testimony and putting the vessel out of action. May our life continually be wholly hid with Christ in God.

T. A.-S.

(To be continued.)

'GOLD CORD'

We have had a number of enquiries from readers of the WITNESS AND TESTIMONY as to the book from which our quotations have been taken, and we are glad of the opportunity thus afforded of saying that few things which we have read have given us more help along the line of spiritual corroboration, as well as stimulating faith, as Miss Amy Wilson Carmichael's recently published volume by the above name. It is being sold at 7s. 6d., but this is a mere cipher in comparison with its cost to the writer and its value to the reader.

T. A.-S.

"Do not be so busy with work for Christ that you have no strength left for praying," said Hudson Taylor once. "True prayer requires strength." To secure even half a day's quiet in a large family like ours needs careful planning beforehand, but it is worth that. Again and again things have happened after such a day that nothing we could have done could have effected, for prayer is truly force."

From 'Gold Cord.'

"No master is responsible for uncommanded work. We find it necessary constantly to ask for a spirit of wisdom and penetration through an intimate knowledge of Him, so that the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, we may know what we ought to do, and never, through carelessness in waiting upon Him, pledge Him to do what He did not intend should be done. 'Depend upon it, God's work, done in God's way, will never lack supplies,' said Hudson Taylor."

From 'Gold Cord.'

"THEN another Scripture came, and with great might succoured us: Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and will save thy children. Who can fathom the consolation of such a word? Earnestly then our hearts answered, Confirm to Thy servant that promise of Thine. (Psalm exix. 38.)

And it was confirmed, though it was never easy to find the special child that we exist to save—the child in temple peril—and as we could not take all who needed care, we had to try to keep to those for whose rescue we were specially commissioned; but more than one baby fold was opened about that time, and many little ones as needy as these of ours were gathered by others into safety.

With the coming of each new child we learned a little more of the private ways of this dreadful underworld of India; but it was a long time before all the secret sources of traffic in the bodies and souls of children were uncovered, and as we penetrated deeper and deeper into the under life of the land, and came upon things that were hateful even to know, we learned what F. H. Meyers meant by fierce and patient purity: "Yea, Lord, I know it, teach me yet anew with what a fierce and patient purity I must confront the horror of the world." We can only touch evil by virtue of the cleansing blood. Nothing but the white fires of God's holiness suffice for such contact. Move out from the full stream of Calvary and you know yourself not only defenceless, but stained."

From 'Gold Cord.'

Fellowship

Its basis and some of its Outworkings

No. II.

SCRIPTURES: 1 Corinthians ix. 24 to x. 13.

1 John i. 1-4.

YESTERDAY afternoon we were meditating on the subject of fellowship and chiefly on that aspect of fellowship as between believers walking in the Light. In the early verses of John's Epistle we are led to think of fellowship as with the Father and the Son. We see that our fellowship with one another flows out of this. Fellowship with the Father and the Son can only be experienced in the Light, and the Apostle says, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another." So fellowship with one another depends upon our fellowship with the Father and the Son. We saw yesterday that fellowship, in its essence, is "a common participation." Is it not a wonderful thing that we should be brought into such a relationship with the Father as to share in a common participation with Him, we who were rebel sinners against the throne of God, who deserved nothing but the "blackness of darkness" for ever. That we should be in such a place that this word may be true of us in actual experience, our fellowship, our communion is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. supremely wonderful, gloriously, blessedly true, and yet how little realised, how little enjoyed.

Any fellowship with the Father will be a fellowship in the Son, for the Father's heart is wrapped up in the Son, all the Father's delight is in the Son, and, therefore, if we are brought into fellowship with the Father, it will be in a rich and blessed appreciation of His Son. Christ, in His person, and His work, will be the supreme object of our hearts.

"Tis meet that Thy delight
Should centre in Thy Son;
That Thou should'st place us in Thy Sight
In Him, Thy Holy One."

We are, therefore, brought into communion with the Father in His appreciation of, and love for, the Son. All the Father's purposes centre in, and encircle, the Son. As we also find our delight in Him, and are brought to the place where our purposes centre in Him, we enjoy fellowship with the Father.

The first verse of this first chapter of John's Epistle is wonderful: "That which was from

the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of Life." Note the five things here. "That which was" carries us back to the beginning of manifestation: "Which we have heard." The message; for, faith, cometh by hearing. "Which we have seen with our eyes." Sight follows faith. "Which we have looked upon." That is not repetition, it is a development of the thought. That which we have seen we earnestly contemplated, meditated upon. Finally, a close and living touch. "Our hands have handled." John was writing of Apostolic experience in the revelation of the Lord, and, according to verse three, his desire is to bring those to whom he is writing into the enjoyment of the fellowship into which he and his fellow-apostles have come. "These things," he says, "write we unto you that our joy may be full." The R.V. gives "our joy" not "your joy," as in the A.V. It is not "ours" as distinguished from "yours," but "ours" that is yours and ours together; a fellowship of joy; mutuality in joy. There is a joy that passes all power of expression when we enter into fellowship with the Father and the Son.

This morning it is on my heart to lead you in thought to some of the implications and outworkings of this fellowship, this common participation, this communion with the Father and the Son. The first consideration is that fellowship demands a mutuality of life. Paul sets this forth on the negative side in 2 Cor. vi. 14-16. Note in Conybeare's rendering of this passage the five words used to express the impossibility of fellowship apart from this oneness of life. For what FELLOWSHIP has righteousness with unrighteousness? what COMMUNION has light with darkness? what CONCORD has Christ with Belial? what PARTNERSHIP has a believer with an unbeliever? what AGREEMENT has the temple of God with idols? There is no possibility of fellowship between these opposites, they are as far apart as the Poles. This constitutes the problem of many of the Lord's people. Darkness has invaded the Church and enwraps many a believer; thus destroying the very basis of fellowship. Both light, and mutuality of life, are indispensable

for fellowship. Peter says in his Second Epistle Ch. i. 4: "Exceeding great and precious promises (are given to us) that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature." That is, brought into a mutuality of life. The word "partakers" carries the same idea as "fellowship." We are brought into the fellowship of the divine nature in order that fellowship may be experienced in two realms, firstly, between us and the Father and the Son, and, secondly, between us and our fellow believers.

We know that we have come into the enjoyment of this new life. We have the witness of the Spirit in our hearts that we are children of God, and we know it also because of the experience of conflict into which we are brought. The new life and the old come immediately into conflict, and in the early stages of Christian experience, that conflict is often a bitter one. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh." The new nature in us is seeking development, and the old, not yet yielded to the death of the Cross, is seeking to choke the new. The new life is nothing less than that of Christ Himself imparted to us. If our fellowship with the Father and the Son is to be maintained, the new nature must be cultivated, and the old, both in a crisis act, once for all, and in a steadfastly maintained attitude of surrender, yielded to the Cross. That is vital. It is an absolute necessity, if we are to realise this purpose of God in the enjoyment of fellowship, that the old nature be crucified in experience, and the new life come to maturity.

Now fellowship as enjoyed with the Father and the Son, is more than a comfortable frame of mind in the presence of God, more than the stirring of the soul in worship, in praise and adoration; this is an essential and most blessed part, too little entered into by the Lord's people, but it by no means embraces the whole thought. Fellowship with the Father includes the entering into an understanding of, and co-operation with, the eternal purpose which God has purposed for the glory of His Son, a purpose towards which God has been working throughout the ages; and to the accomplishment of which, we may reverently say, He is bending all His energies. In Hebrews iii. 1 the Saints are described as "Holy brethren, partakers of the Heavenly Calling." The term "Holy brethren" not only relates to our standing in Christ, but to the state corresponding thereto. Practical holiness must be produced in us by the

sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," and so without holiness no man can know what it is to be a partaker, a companion, a fellow of the Heavenly Calling. Further, fellowship in the Heavenly Calling demands spiritual intelligence, necessitates the illumination of our hearts by the Holy Spirit. "The eyes of your understanding (heart) being filled with light, that you may know what is the hope of His calling" (Eph. i. 18. Conybeare). It is impossible to enter practically into intelligent fellowship with God save as we are spiritually illumined. "For this cause we.....do not cease to pray for you and to desire that ye may be filled with the (full) knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col. i. 9). The goal towards which God is leading us is "Fullness." Filled with the full knowledge of His will. Well might we say that the words of Holy Scripture are great words and that the purpose they describe transcends all human thought. The Holy Spirit would enlighten us, would continually shift back our horizons, and make us see the far-flung, wonderful purpose of God. Both the Heavenly Calling and the means taken to secure it are revealed in Hebrews ii.: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also Himself, likewise, took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (v. 14-15). The Devil, the lord of death, nullified.....brought to naught; his captives delivered. Wherefore? In order that many sons might be brought to glory (v. 10). And why should there be Sons in glory? That Christ "in all things might have the pre-eminence." "That He might be the firstborn among many brethren." Upon His shoulder the government lies. Yes, but He is not to reign, in the coming Kingdom, in lonely splendour. The Sons of God, brought to glory, are to share the throne of the unique and glorified Son, and be the instrument in the heavens of His universal administration. Far-flung, wonderful purpose!! God will lift a people into such intelligent fellowship with Himself, and make them in character, in disposition, so like His Son, that they, in the coming Kingdom age, may occupy thrones which are an expression of the throne of God and of the Lamb. That is the Heavenly calling, the sovereign purpose of God. God will glorify His Son here

in this world where He was crucified, He will manifest Him as the Supreme One in the whole creation. "Unto the Son, He saith, Thy throne, O God is for ever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy Kingdom" (Heb. i. viii.). And this immediately follows in verse 9: "God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." Ah, He is to have "fellows." The word is that translated "partakers" in Ch. iii. 14. These "fellows," these "companions," these "partakers" are to sit down with Him in His throne (Rev. iii. 21).

The Apostle John, writing of that Revelation which God gave to His Son "to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. i. 1) sees the purpose of God accomplished. He sees saints of this dispensation brought into such fellowship with God in His appreciation of His Son, that they can sit upon thrones which are an expression of the Son's throne. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them and judgment was given unto them" (Rev. xx. 4). This is the fulfilment of the promise of Rev. iii. 21. "Ho that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in His throne."

"And she (the Woman) brought forth a man-child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up to God and to His throne" (Rev. xii. 5.) Beloved, these scriptures bring before us one of the mighty out-workings of fellowship with God, of a common participation with the Father and the Son. The practical question for us is, are we hearing the call of God, heeding it, giving ourselves to it, this mighty Heavenly calling? In Hebrews iii., immediately following the declaration that we are "Holy brethren, partakers of the Heavenly Calling," the Apostle gives one of his tremendous warnings: "Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness." What was the issue of that day? "So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest" (v. 7, 8 and 11).

It is a characteristic feature of the New Testament that whenever you get a revelation concerning the great purpose of the heart of God for the believer, there quickly follows a solemn warning lest there be failure to enter into it. Here the warning is by illustration on a big scale. The people of Israel, redeemed

by the blood of the slain Lamb, delivered from Egypt by the stretched out, mighty arm of the Lord, yet completely fail of God's purpose for them.

Paul follows exactly the same method in the portion of Scripture we read earlier this morning. In 1 Cor. ix. 24-27 He speaks of the prize to be won in the heavenly race. "So run that ye may obtain" (v. 24). He declares his personal attitude to the prize: "I, therefore, run not like the racer who is uncertain of his goal; I fight, not as the pugilist who strikes out against the air; but I bruise my body and force it into bondage; lest, perchance, having called others to the contest, I should myself fail shamefully of the prize" (v. 26-27, Conybeare). Note what follows. Chapter x. flows right on. Again Israel's failure in the wilderness is used as an illustration. "All our fathers were under the cloud and all passed through the sea, and were all baptised 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 that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well-pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness." It is expressly declared in verse 11 that "these things happened unto them for ensamples and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come." "WHEREFORE let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (v. 12). Could the danger of the believer missing the prize be more plainly stated, or warning more earnestly given.

Now what we are seeing this morning is that God's desire is to bring us into this close and vital fellowship with Himself, which will have as its issue our association with the Lord Jesus in His millennial reign, Christ THE Son, and the Sons brought to glory with Him, operating from the Heavens, they (the Sons) seated upon thrones and having judgment committed to them. But this gracious purpose of God can be missed! The sad thing is that multitudes of the Lord's people are going to miss it.

In the letter to the Church at Philadelphia the Lord sounds this warning note: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." The Crown symbolises the throne. It is, the Lord would say, possible for you to be a member of that true company which, in Laodicean days, has a little strength, has kept His word, and

has not denied His Name, before which company He has set an opened door, and yet for the crown to be lost by the individual believer. Yes, it is possible to get to Heaven and enjoy a great deal of blessedness and yet to miss the supreme purpose for which you have been apprehended of Christ Jesus. So Paul is found saying: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but ONE THING, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Why is the Apostle thus on the stretch, like a runner in a race, reaching forth, pressing on? Because he sees the greatness, the grandeur of the prize to be gained. Because the "calling on high" (Phil. iii. 14) has gripped his heart, and he knows that to miss this is to fail of God's supreme purpose for him. To "sit with THE SON in His Throne" (Rev. iii. 21) is a consummation passing all human thought.

Oh, what an example is this man. Well might he say: "Brethren, be followers together of me." Many of the Lord's people to-day say "Well, I shall be content if I get to heaven; if I get there I shall not worry about anything else." That attitude is completely foreign to the New Testament. It is not the utterance of the Holy Spirit. It is the utterance of the carnal mind, the voice of those "whose carcasses will fall in the wilderness" (Heb. iii. 17). This is not a question of salvation in the initial sense, it is a question of coming through to the throne, a question of fellowship, of common participation with the Father and the Son. It is for this that God is calling us.

In Revelation vii. 9-17 you have a beautiful picture of a company of the redeemed who come out of great tribulation; a great multitude which no man can number. Dean Alford renders the central clause of verse 14: "These are they which come out of the tribulation—the great one"; of these it is written: "They washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb." They are undoubtedly in Heaven, for they are "before the Throne of God." They cry "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb." They are BEFORE the Throne of God, and serve

Him day and night in His Temple." All this clearly shows that this great multitude have been raptured during the period of the great tribulation. According to the chronological sequence of the story unfolded in Chapter vii. it would appear that their rapture takes place after the opening of the sixth Seal. They enjoy a great deal of heavenly blessedness. "He that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the Throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." But they are BEFORE the Throne, not seated thereon. They do not form part of that "Man-child" company of which Rev. xii. 5 says: "her child was caught up to God and His Throne"; nor a part of that company of which we read in Rev. xx. 4: "I saw Thrones, and they sat upon them and judgment was given unto them." This palm-bearing multitude undoubtedly includes hosts of those saved during the progress of the Great Tribulation; but in so far as it is composed of those unready believers left behind at the Lord's "*parousia*" (coming), they are those who did not heed the call of God, were not made "partakers of the Heavenly calling" in experience, did not enter into "Fellowship with the Father and the Son" but were those who "dwelt upon the earth" (Rev. iii. 10). They did not "keep the word of His patience," and, therefore, could not claim the fulfilment of His promise to such that they should be kept from (out of) the hour of temptation. They have been saved, nevertheless. The grace of God has been abundant towards them, and their soiled robes have now been "washed and made white in the Blood of the Lamb." They are raptured to heaven and are in a state of bliss and great felicity. But, oh, the pity of it, they have missed the supreme purpose of God for them, missed the "on high calling" and its wondrous prize.

What is the purpose of our hearts? Are we resolved at all costs to go through with God? If so, we must give ourselves to the practice, and blessed enjoyment of Fellowship with the Father and the Son, and, following on in pursuit of the Heavenly Calling, shall, with the Apostle Paul, come to "apprehend that for which we have been apprehended of Christ Jesus."

S. A.

“Nehemiah”

A Living Message for God's People To-day

For some time past the Lord has been laying the message of this book upon my heart, and I believe the time has come for that message to be brought anew to His people. I believe that there is that in this book which can touch the need at this present time in a very real way; for, indeed, this is a time when the Lord's people need help to meet the many activities which are meant by the adversary to lead them away from, or prevent them from coming to, the place where the Lord has all that His heart desires in and through them.

This first message will be occupied with a few general principles which govern the book.

The first is that this book represents an end-time activity. You know that this is the last fragment of history before you reach the gospel of Luke. Whether that has impressed you sufficiently I do not know, but it is indeed an impressive fact that the next bit of history recorded in the Canon of Holy Scripture as we have it is the gospel of Luke. Thus, what you have here, so far as the old dispensation is concerned, is an end-time activity. The content of this book represents what God did at the end of that dispensation, and will therefore forshadow what an end-time activity is on the part of God; the kind of thing that the Lord will do in the end-time.

And then the other thing which goes along with it is that the link through all Nehemiah is with the Coming of the Lord, for if Luke brings in the Lord Jesus in a very immediate way, and we find Him in the temple surrounded by the few who represent the remnant which has come over from the old dispensation and take up the testimony in the new (for the testimony was indeed represented by a very few when the Lord Jesus came; Simeon and Anna and a few others who looked for the consolation of Israel, for the Lord's Christ), if they are found there with the Lord in His House in Luke, if that is the next bit of history, and Nehemiah was the last before that, you will see that the link with Nehemiah is the Coming of the Lord.

Putting these two things together, you have your foundation laid for the abiding value of this book. An end-time activity related to the Coming of the Lord.

Now we go to the book, and in a few further observations we take note of what we might call the typology of this book; that is, the typical elements and features of this book. Indeed, we have to link another book with it, for they are one, and in the Hebrew Scriptures they were not separated, but one was regarded as the completion of the other; Ezra and Nehemiah. With Ezra, as we know, we have the House of God. With Nehemiah we have the enclosure, the wall of Jerusalem; and these two speak to us of the testimony of the Lord as here on the earth.

The Divine Order; the Altar; the House, the Wall.

In Ezra we find the order introduced. The first feature of the order of things is the setting of the altar, the great altar, in its place. Ezra iii. 3: "And they set the altar in its place." Then after the altar was put in its place, the House of God was built; then when the House was built, at a subsequent time the wall was re-built. This is the three-fold order. The altar, which typifies the Cross as being basic to the whole Divine activity; then the House, which typifies the Church as resultant from the Cross being in its place. It is important to have the aspect of things as well as the order. The House is here presented in its Godward direction, what it is to God, and what it is in itself. And then the Wall is the testimony manward and world-ward. That is the order and the aspect of things. Let us gather them up again very briefly. The altar—the Cross, basic to the whole Divine activity; the House resultant from the Cross, the Church—as issuing therefrom—in its Godward aspect and as to what it is in itself; and then the Wall as the testimony of the Cross and the House outwardly toward man and the world.

The Cross—Basic Victory.

You will have noted that the Cross is here seen as a basic deliverance from all hostile forces. That does not mean that the hostile forces cease to be, or cease to trouble; they are not annihilated by the Cross, they are very much in evidence afterward, but there is a factor about the Cross here which represents basic deliverance from the hostile forces. Ezra iii. 3 tells us that they put the altar in its place: ".....for fear was upon them because of the people of the countries." So that their fear of the peoples led them to put the altar in its place. Working the other way it meant, or implied, that the Cross—the altar—was the ground of their security, their safety, and their deliverance from the hostile peoples round about. The Cross is basic to deliverance. The forces will not cease to trouble, the antagonism of the enemy will not become a thing of naught; there may be a good deal of challenging, pressing and assailing, but there is that basic thing in the Cross which speaks of security, safety and deliverance. By the Cross, says the Apostle, He triumphed: "Having put off from himself the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it (His cross)." You have the basic thing in the Cross.

The House—Heavenly Order.

The House sees a heavenly order set up in the Lord's people. That is the resultant work of the cross, the issue of the cross, because until the Cross has done its work nothing heavenly can be brought in. Ephesians sees us in the heavenlies when we have been quickened together with Him, and raised, and seated; but quickening has nothing to do with other than those who have died. So that the Cross sees an order of the earth and of man set aside; and, therefore, the House of God coming in after the Cross, represents a heavenly order, not of man, set up in the Lord's people.

The Wall—the Testimony Outward.

Then the wall sees the testimony of the Lord; the divide as to the world and as to mere professors. If I were asked to define the testimony here I should say that it is the testimony of what is in resurrection. These walls were resurrected, something brought back from destruction, disintegration and death, and reconstituted; but in association with the heavens in a marked way, and the feature which they represent pre-eminently is that of distinctiveness. It is a distinctiveness of testi-

mony as represented by what is raised, what is in resurrection; the tremendous difference between that and what has died, what has been and what is no more. The testimony of resurrection life and nature is something very distinct. So the wall represents distinctiveness of testimony as characterised by what is risen and of the heavens.

Now having said all that in a general way as introductory, we are able to go on with the book more fully. And we shall take as our first matter of consideration, things as they were when Nehemiah came to Jerusalem. We shall follow afterward with Nehemiah himself as the vessel of recovery, and then after that with the way of recovery. But I think that we may not get much beyond the summarising of "things as they were." Each feature, I am sure, will itself be very challenging to our hearts, and to our day.

I would like to say here, by way of parenthesis, that it is not for one moment my desire just to accumulate truth or Bible matter for the sake of an address, a theme, but very truly that the Lord may be able to get at this end-time that which He is after, and that as we speak of these things the Holy Spirit may strike them home to us in relation to His own purpose.

Things as they were.

Now, coming back to this book, and reading it through and marking the things which represented the conditions in Nehemiah's time, you will find that there is presented a very deplorable state of affairs. In the first place, the clear testimony of the House of God has broken down. The things resisted by Ezra have recurred and revived, and that beautiful movement which is presented in Ezra's account, that recovery of truth as to the House of God, that putting away of things which were contrary to that testimony and that House, has all collapsed and the old evils have raised their heads again; the testimony is in a state of weakness and ineffectiveness; and as we read through the Book of Nehemiah, with Ezra in the background, having Ezra freshly in mind with all that is there, we shall be startled and amazed that here in Nehemiah such things were unrecognised, only coming to light when Nehemiah comes on the scene to do something which is according to God's mind. It is always like that. You never know what there is of evil and of that which is contrary to God until you come out in some whole-hearted purpose

for God, and then you discover things that you would not have believed to be existent before. These things are quiescent, they are hidden, they are going on quietly holding and gripping the life of the people, destroying the testimony of the Lord, and they only spring into manifest life and activity when something positive for God comes into the midst.

Oppression.

Look at some of these things. Many of the Lord's people—(speaking historically here, we say the Jews)—had been sold into slavery among their own brethren. The Lord's people were making merchandise of one another; were seeking their own good and gain at the expense of their brethren; were maintaining their own position by the humiliation and degradation of their own brethren; and I am very far from sure but that that has a spiritual counterpart. I do not know what some people would do if they had not got others over whom they could lord it, and turn to their own good and account even God's heritage. This works out from simple forms to extreme forms. It may work out in the simple form of that unholy, unlovely criticism amongst the Lord's people, which after all only implies that we are better than they, and bolsters us up at their expense. I wonder how much of our criticism of one another does not secretly have that motive. That eternal, everlasting "but," and always a reservation. "You know they love the Lord, but....." "They are very zealous for the Lord, but....." "There is all that is good about them, but....." and the "but" is bigger than all the good, it undermines all the good. So many of us who use that "but" are only prompted to do so by our superior judgment, by our pride. I mean, too often we get on top by making others appear small, and we gain, or seek to gain, our prominence, our position, our influence by that form of pride which does harm to the children of God. That may be a simple illustration of this thing spiritually. The whole force of the New Testament is in the other direction. The emphasis is that we should put others above ourselves, that we should always be esteeming others better than ourselves. That is the opposite direction. That is very hard for the flesh to do, and you see why we have to stress the fact that if the testimony of a heavenly thing in the House of God is to be maintained in fulness and clearness, the Cross has to come first, where it goes right to the root of this pride, this arro-

gance, this subtle self-sufficiency, self-esteem, this "humble" (?) criticism of ours which, after all, is the very essence of pride; and it may work out in many other ways—as it does; lording it over God's heritage. Taking position and making the very privileges and opportunities of service the occasion for our position. To put that in another way, in the New Testament form it is this; the disciples, before they were baptised with the Holy Spirit were men who were always looking out for an opportunity of being on top of their brethren, and having the advantage over one another, having first place; and the Lord Jesus had to say to them strong words: "I am among you as he that serveth": ".....the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister....." That is the spirit of the Cross. Now I think you can see that there is undoubtedly a spiritual counterpart to this, where others are made the means of our gain, where we in a spiritual sense sell our brethren into slavery for our own advantage. You may follow that further if you desire.

Insolvency.

Another thing which comes out in this book is that many of the Lord's people the Jews were living in insolvency, partly by reason of mortgages, or by selling of their sons and daughters into servitude. That is, they were not living in their own rights. They were reduced to poverty and they had no resources of their own, therefore dignity was absent, and honour, and they were a debtor people. That also has a spiritual counterpart. I wonder, beloved, how far it is true of ourselves, and of many of the Lord's people to-day, that they are not living in their own title, that were things brought to the balance they would be insolvent. To put it more simply, how many of us know in ourselves, the riches of Christ, and how many of us are in that false position of having other people's riches to live upon? I mean this; that if all the external things of spiritual help were stripped off, the meetings, and the fellowship, and all these things taken away, how many of us would discover that we were living in our own title and absolutely independent in the last analysis of all such things? While enjoying them, profiting by them, thanking God for them, yet it is not things on the outside which constitute our life, it is our own knowledge of the preciousness of the Lord, and, strip everything of the outside from us, we are solvent, we can stand up and say: "Yes, but you cannot

take away my own heritage; I have a heritage in Christ which is not dependent upon meetings, conferences, addresses, or anything on the outside, but is my own inward life with the Lord, I know Him." It might just be in the end-time, beloved, that the Lord will call many of His people to have to face situations like that for their own discovery, their own finding out. I am quite sure that the Lord will require at the end-time, that every child of His knows Him in a personal, inward way, to their own sufficiency and satisfaction in Christ, and that the outward things may be removed, they may collapse, they may disappoint, in order that we might come to find fulness in Christ for ourselves. Are you solvent? Are you mortgaged? Are you living entirely upon what other people have got to give you? Is that your sustenance? Or, are you living upon what you get from the Lord? If so, you have got your own, you will have something to give, and you are not in the state of beggary, poverty, such as these people were in. I am so glad that Nehemiah redeemed the people who were sold into slavery, and bought them back in their own rights. I am so glad that Nehemiah stopped this business of mortgaging and selling their own children to maintain their own lives, and saw to it that every man could stand on his own feet before God, and pay his own way. That is an important spiritual reflection for the Lord's people, and that represents an end-time movement, for we have lived far too long upon mere externals of grace and far too little upon what the Lord is Himself to us.

The House of God Defiled.

Then the temple had been polluted by the heathen and had been used for secular purposes. I think that hardly need be applied: The two things go together. When those who are not of pure blood by direct birth from above, heathen in this sense that they are not born children of God—come into the House of God, and have a place amongst the Lord's people, you very soon find that the House of the Lord is turned in the direction of interests and usages which are altogether contrary to the mind of the Lord. It is brought down to earth, the House of God is made an earthly thing, drawn out of its place. The enemy is always trying to do this. It is one of his persistent strategies, to get in amongst the Lord's people those who are not really born again, who assume and presume, who would come in as of the Lord's people, but who are

not the Lord's people, and the issue of their presence is to introduce worldly judgments, worldly methods, man's ways in the House of God, man's thoughts, and so pull the House of God down on to the lower, the carnal level of life. That is persistently attempted, and too often successfully, as one of the Devil's master-strokes; surely we see that to-day; it is very widespread. You hardly need to be told that, we are aware of it all round. But Nehemiah, as representing God's end-time movement, put a stop to that. He purged the House of God of the heathen and saw to it that the House of God was maintained according to God's thought, and that man's thought and man's way was ruled out. No one thinks, of course, that I am talking about the House of God in any material sense, as to churches and places where people gather. That may be an application of this, but I am thinking of the people of God, who are called to be for Him a heavenly people, into the midst of whom the enemy is constantly trying to get carnal principles, natural activities and energies to pull this thing down from the heavenlies and make of it an earthly thing run by man. Nehemiah will not have that, he counters that and so represents what God will have at the end-time.

The Sabbath Violated.

Then, again, the Sabbath was neglected. An extraordinary thing after Ezra, isn't it, that the Sabbath should have fallen out of its place, being neglected, set aside, overlooked, ignored. Let us hasten at once to say that we are thinking now in the spiritual and New Testament counterpart of this; not of a day. While we do still thank God for the Sabbath day as a point of time here, and while we would cling to it and not let it go easily, we have been lifted in our understanding of this thing onto a much higher level, and we have come to see that the Sabbath is the historical type of the end of God's works when He enters into His rest in the Lord Jesus; and that the Sabbath speaks of a full accomplishment of all God's work in the Person of His Son. Set aside, overlook, ignore the finality of Divine activity in Christ, and you have lost your rest, you have lost your peace, you are still wandering in a circle in a wilderness, you are still in the realm of the imperfect and unaccomplished, you have not come to settle down on that ground which speaks of "It is finished." The soul that really apprehends spiritually the finished work of Christ, is a soul at rest; it has entered into

God's rest. It is delivered from the tyranny of the Devil who is always seeking to bring accusation and condemnation when the finished work of Christ says there is no condemnation. All this restless, feverish introspection, self-analysis, self-encompassment, never at rest, never settled, never sure, never certain of anything, is all because the Sabbath has been overlooked. For us the Sabbath is a Person and not a day, and therefore every day should be to us a Sabbath. That is the deepest meaning, I am sure, of this magnificent word which we all quote as a fragment of Scripture, a text, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." What is the joy of the Lord? "God..... rested from all his work....." "God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good," and that all-inclusively is Christ in His full work by His Cross. God has looked upon the new creation in Christ and said: "It is good." "The joy of the Lord is your strength." The finality of God's satisfaction in Christ. Overlook that, miss that, and you have lost your Sabbath rest of heart. That is how it was here; but Nehemiah brought that back, and an end-time movement represents the recovery of the finality of Christ's work, the fulness of His satisfaction to the Father, and the people of God being brought into that. Oh, beloved, the importance of that can never be over-estimated, because against that the adversary is dead set. If I see two movements as marking the end-time, they are these; the enemy trying to rob the people of God of their rest, assurance, peace, certainty, confidence, and circling them round with doubts, fears, apprehensiveness of things, to cut the ground of confidence from under their feet. The Accuser of the brethren comes out in that way at the end-time in an intensified form. Over against that, God would bring back the fulness and finality of His work in Christ, set His people in their Sabbath rest, directing their hearts toward Him, saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"; "You are accepted in Him, I am satisfied." It is all in Him. Bring back that testimony of the Lord Jesus at the end-time, and it is a great counter. "Nehemiah," be he a man or be he a corporate instrument for recovery at the end-time, must have that as a part, an important part of his ministry, establishing the Sabbath in this sense.

Defaulting the Tithe.

Another thing comes up in this book as a

part of the conditions. It is that the tithe of the Lord's people was falling into default. The tenth part of all they had. Here we have been well trained in the matter of the tithe and perhaps very little need be said, and yet it may be necessary for a warning. Do not let anybody think that when we mention the tithe that we are suggesting that just the tithe belongs to the Lord and the other nine-tenths belong to you. That is an utterly false apprehension of Scripture. The tenth was representative of the whole and was given, saying, everything is held as to the Lord; it was a token and a testimony that the whole was the Lord's and when the tithe was presented it was presented in this spirit: "Lord, this tenth part of all we have is given to You in token that it is all Yours and we hold it all for You as from You for us." Now when lives come into that realm there is Divine blessing. I do not know whether you have all instituted the tithe. That is only the beginning. You will find that when that has been well established the Lord makes possible a good deal more than that, and you will be surprised at the blessing of the Lord that comes along that way. And if we did but know, many of the Lord's people are harassed and worried and fretted about means, temporal resources, and life in that realm is a distressing thing because the Lord has not got His place. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase." ".....for them that honour me I will honour." And there may be a good deal of relief from temporal distress if only we recognised the Lord's law of holding things for Him, and saw to it that at the very outset He got His tithe, His tenth. Suffer this word, it may be well to re-emphasise it; that God has all, and our tenth is but our initial testimony that all is the Lord's, and must be held and used as belonging to the Lord. Well, Nehemiah put that right, bringing the Lord into His place as to the resources and means of His people; and that makes for spiritual prosperity and temporal relief. We are satisfied to leave it there at the moment.

Mixture and Lost Distinctiveness.

Then, again, we find here that many of the Lord's people had married foreign wives and thus their distinctiveness was destroyed. Nehemiah destroyed those unions, and compelled such to send back their wives to their own homes and countries, upholding a Divine principle; and the spiritual counterpart is not

that those who have unconverted husbands or wives should leave them, or neglect them—I am afraid there are a good many doing that (in effect) mistakenly. Because the husband or wife has not the things of the Lord, the interests of the Lord at heart, they go out to meetings and leave them alone. Do not fall into that trap. No, the spiritual counterpart is that these wives in the Old Testament always represent principles. Women, as we know, through the Bible are types of principles, and what is here typified is alliance, and relationship, and association with principles which are foreign to what is wholly of God; and any voluntary association with those principles destroys that spiritual distinctiveness which must ever characterise the Lord's people. That covers a very wide area and includes innumerable things, but that is the inclusive application of this. What we have here is an element, a feature, a principle, a law that is contrary to the revealed will of God, which is foreign and alien to the mind of the Lord, to the Word of God, to the way of the Spirit; and we have a voluntary association with that, we allow that to come into relationship with ourselves. There will be an offspring which is a mixture, which has a mixture of things of God and things of the enemy. And if there is one abomination to God as revealed in the Word of God it is mixture. Everywhere God is against mixture. God will have things utter, complete, absolute, clearly defined, wholly of Himself, and this wall of Nehemiah represents the mark which divides between what is of God wholly, and what is not of God. Not just a matter of the different shades and degrees of what is not of God, but what is not of God to the finest degree. What is inside is to be of God to the very last measure, and everything that is not of God has no place there inside that. And so these wives must be expelled from that area and sent away. It is a spiritual principle which is in view. God is against mixture. There is a terrible amount of mixture amongst the Lord's people.

Suburban Christians.

There are, perhaps, two other things to be mentioned. The majority of the people we find here were living outside of Jerusalem, in the suburbs, and Nehemiah had not enough people in Jerusalem for the work in hand, and so he had to appeal to them, encourage them, exhort them, go out to them to bring them in. A very simple thing in its spiritual interpreta-

tion, and yet an important thing. There are a good many of the Lord's people living in the spiritual suburbs, who are not right inside His testimony. They may be only a little way out, but they are out; they may be a long way out. There may be all manner of—shall we say—reasons—which they would give. Some would say that they did not want to be singular, they did not want to seem to be unbalanced, they want to keep the balance of things. Yes, all kinds of things. It may be prejudice, it may be suspicion, it may be keeping on the safe side of the road, it may be fear of the cost, unwillingness to pay the price. It may be that Sanballat and Tobiah will look unfavourably at them if they come inside and co-operate with Nehemiah. It may be that they are not quite sure about this thing; it may be that they want to see how it is going to fare, if it is going to succeed, and if they see the thing is solid ground they will take the risk! There is no risk if the thing is solid and therefore, there is no heroism and no honour. You see what I mean. When the Lord does a new thing, and the Lord is seeking to have His utter testimony to what is utterly of Himself and of heaven, where man has no place in the flesh, in nature, that thing which is wholly of the Lord—it involves cost, it involves loss of favour, loss of friends, it involves misunderstanding, misrepresentation, it involves in criticism, it involves in the judgments of being extreme and singular and different from every-one else, all that! Yes, well, what about it? The issue is, are you going to be wholly in with God or are you going to remain in the suburbs. Nehemiah would urge, would exhort, would entreat, would encourage, would reach out, would call in; and blessed be God, there was a response adequate to the need. This remains for us to decide in our own hearts, whether we are on the fringe of things, on the outskirts, on the rim, or whether we are right in, taking the consequences; and we shall just have to square right down to them. Some of us had to do that. We had seen what it would involve, what it would cost, at least we had seen a good deal of the inevitable practical outcome of taking that course with God. Yes, but the issue has just been this—was it the way of the Lord? If so, to be out of it could not pay in the long run, whatever we might have in the time being, it must be lost sooner or later. And not merely upon that low level of things—gain and loss—but after all, what are we here for? For

the Lord, or for ourselves? For the Lord or for others? No, the whole question is—what does the Lord want? Then, it may be costly, it may mean much, it may mean loss of fellowship in many directions, loss of favour, and it may be involving ourselves in the terrific *animos* of the enemy; but what can we do? We must go on with God. Are we all there? That is bringing things very close to our hearts, is it not?

Official Obstruction.

Then in closing; all these things which we have mentioned as being the wrongs, the evils, which Nehemiah encountered, which existed, which were taken no notice of until he came on the scene, all these things were supported by an important influential and official class, priests and nobles, and even the high priest himself was a party to them, and Nehemiah came right up against that. Well, it is quite true that when we determine to go right on with the Lord it is the official element that obstructs. We meet an influential force, we come right up against those who have place and position, and we find too often that, like the high priest, even those who are officially representing, and are accepted as the representatives of God's highest interests, are not favourable toward the whole counsel of God, the whole purpose of God, but condone things which are altogether contrary to His full testimony. That is very true. Some of you have proved it, and will know it if you determine to go right on with the Lord. But Nehemiah met it all and he met it with courage. "Then Icontended with the nobles and rulers," he

said. "I did not grovel before the influential class, I did not bow to the official elements, I contended with the nobles." He recognised he was a man with a Divine mandate, and that gave him spiritual dignity—not natural—amongst men, because as he stood upon his Divinely given ground, to fulfill his Divinely given ministry, he knew that God would stand by him.

There were other factors, which we shall see, in the background, which made him the man he was; but that was his attitude. It is a great thing to know you are in the purpose of God. You have great confidence when you know you are in a Divine activity; that this thing was not initiated by you but came from heaven, and you came into it from heaven, spiritually; the thing is of God. It puts you in a position of moral and spiritual ascendancy and gives you a dignity above the dignity of men whose dignity is merely official and not spiritual.

Now you have been making you application as we have gone along. The Lord hold us for the time being until we are able to come back and see this instrument of recovery, and the method of recovery more fully. I do trust that the Lord will enable you to see that we are in an end-time related to the Coming of the Lord, and that an end-time activity is the raising of a testimony of distinctiveness; that is, that which is in resurrection life and power, a thing all of God, with nothing of man in it. And that testimony demands that a very great deal that is contrary to it shall be dealt with and put away.

T. A.-S.

The Anointing of the Holy Spirit

Luke iii. 21, 22. ; iv. 1, 2, 18, 19.
 Acts iv. 27 ; x. 38.
 2 Cor. i. 21, 22.
 1 John ii. 20, 27.
 1 Sam. xvi. 11-14.
 2 Sam. vii. 8.

I AM quite sure that many of the Lord's people are none too clear upon the different aspects of the Holy Spirit's Presence and ministry in the life of the believer, and that there is a good deal of confusion ; that terms become mixed and there is not clear discernment of the specific significance of each term used in the Word of God. I mean the fact that we hear of those in the New Testament who were *baptised* with the Spirit, and *filled* with the Spirit, and *sealed* by the Spirit, and *anointed* ; and it is important that we should be able to discriminate on these matters. It is not my intention to lead you out in such a discrimination, that may come itself as we go on. What I am concerned and occupied with is the anointing as representing some particular aspect of the Holy Spirit's presence and work.

The anointing of the Holy Spirit need not be something apart from or distinct from our definitely receiving the Holy Spirit. That is not always so. It may depend very largely upon the measure in which we apprehend the truth of the Spirit. There is that instance in Acts xix. : "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed ?" making the receiving of the Holy Spirit something subsequent to believing. The context shows quite clearly that there was absolutely no light whatsoever upon the truth of the Holy Spirit, and those spoken to were in utter ignorance as to whether the Holy Spirit was. The question by the Apostle there was evidently asked because he had discerned the absence of what he knew to be an essential of a true and full life in Christ. That may be an exceptional case, for in most instances in the New Testament we find the Holy Spirit coming, possessing, and often filling at the time of believing and of the exercise of saving faith and of a consecration or surrender to our enthroning of the Lord Jesus. But I repeat,

it is not necessarily a thing apart that we receive the anointing ; it is a part of our understanding of the truth ; it is something to be understood. In the understanding of it there is particular value.

Anointing for all to Minister.

Now to get directly to this matter, it will be perhaps simplest if we immediately state what is the specific characteristic of the anointing of the Spirit. I think undoubtedly it is the vocational side of the Spirit's presence in us. The active functional side. The anointing has to do with vocation and action. We may have the Spirit, the Spirit may be in us, the Spirit may be very largely quiescent in us, very largely in—shall I say—a passive state—or we in a passive state to the Spirit. The anointing is always intended to mean action, vocation, in relation to the purpose of God. Were I not afraid of being misunderstood a little I should speak of it as the official side of things. When we use a word like that a large number of people who regard themselves as the rank and file, the ordinary folk, begin to visualise a class of people anointed who become the official class, and they regard themselves as being not in that specific class. They get back into the Old Testament and see certain ones anointed and set apart by anointing, and so they constitute mentally an Old Testament class—all anointed—on New Testament ground. I want to say immediately that you must not entertain that mentality. Anointing now is not for a class, it is for all the Lord's people. It never was, in the thought of God, for a class. Even in the Old Testament where you have certain ones anointed such as Aaron and his sons, they were only representative in the thought of God ; they really did include all the rest of the Lord's people, and as the Lord looked upon them He looked upon all His people, and all His people were anointed in them, they were anointed for all, for all the people laid their hands upon them ; which meant there was identification between all the people and those who stood representatively for them. The principle is carried over into the New Testament and all

the Lord's people are called into the anointing. I think John makes that perfectly clear in his first letter, from which we have read. He is speaking to "my little children" and he speaks to them of the anointing which they had received and which was in them and which taught them things. So that when we use the word "official" we are not speaking of any specific class of people; we mean that the anointing is that which marks out in the matter of vocation, of active service, of purpose in Christ. Now you can trace that truth right through if you like. You can trace it from before the present creation for evidently anointing was known before Adam was created. Ezekiel xxviii. speaks of one who was termed "The anointed (cherub) that covereth." Lucifer was probably anointed to a specific office in relation to God's universal thought and purpose. It was position that was involved in the anointing. And then all the way through the Old Testament you find that the anointing carried with it something of an active character in relation to the purpose of God. It brought in action; it brought in vocation. It carried with it position, dignity, and various other features. In the New Testament, of course, the thing is quite patent. With the Lord Jesus—He was born of the Spirit; we have no right to say that the Spirit of the Lord was not with Him through the silent thirty years but even then when He stepped across the line which divided between His private life and His public ministry there was that which betokened the anointing, and under the anointing through the opened heaven He stepped into His ministry, shall we say—His official work. It was a stepping out into His heavenly vocation under, and by reason of, the anointing. And so it ever was. The Apostles were forbidden to move, with all the fulness of doctrine which they possessed as to the facts of Christ historically, they were forbidden to move even after the commission had been given to go into the world, until that day when with the gift, the advent of the Spirit, they not only received the Spirit but the Spirit came also to them as the anointing for the commission. There was that aspect of it. They received the Spirit, they were baptised by the Spirit, they were filled with the Spirit, but they were also anointed in the same hour, which put them into a place of active vocation and made the commission possible. The Apostle Paul following later, used these words which we have read from 2 Corinthians i. 21: "Now he which stablisheth us with you in

Christ, and hath anointed us, is God." I think he was referring to himself and Silvanus and Timothy, but he was also linking the Corinthians with himself and the others in this anointing. It would be very profitable if we could stay to see how the second letter to the Corinthians makes that possible. The first letter is corrective; the second letter is constructive. In the first letter there is a need for—shall we say—pulling down false structure; in the second letter there is putting up a right structure. The first letter is a seeking to get an adjustment to the Lord, but the second letter sees an adjusted people commissioned. The second letter to the Corinthians is service, as you know. "Therefore seeing we have this ministry": ".....this ministry," that is the key to the second letter. "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, even as we obtained mercy, we faint not: but we have renounced the hidden things of shame.....": "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." And our ministry is that shining forth of Christ in Whom the glory of God has been revealed in our hearts to destroy the darkening work of him who darkens the minds of them that believe not. It is ministry that comes in with the second letter. And so for that ministry the question of anointing comes in in the first chapter. Now I have said enough to indicate that the anointing is specifically in relation to vocation and action, and having said that we can see what it is that the Lord is desirous of saying to us in these days.

The Many-sided Ministry.

I want to say just one other general word, and it is this; that there may be well-nigh countless phases and aspects of the purpose of God, there may be as many aspects of the purpose of God or of its fulfilment as there are believers. It may be that the purpose of God calls one into a factory, another into a workshop, another into teaching in a school, another into full-time ministry in the Word of the Lord at home or abroad. And so we might go over all the vocations here on earth of the children of God, and in every one of them if they are there in the will of God, some fragment, aspect, phase of the purpose of God must be bound up with it, and that being so it will be just as necessary and just as blessedly possible for them to be appointed to teach in a school, to work in a factory, to work in domestic duties, as it is to work in what we call "the ministry." Anointing, beloved, can go into the kitchen, into the school, into any place where God

appoints, and anointing is just as necessary there as in any other place; and it is a very blessed thing to know that for all manner of work for the House of the Lord there is anointing. That is made very clear in the Word of God. And to have anointed school teachers and anointed factory workers and anointed domestic helps, and anointed everything, makes up the complete function of the House of God in all its ministries. Now of course it is important that we should be in our work by the will of God, and I do feel there is a great necessity for more prayerful attention to the taking up of vocations under Divine guidance, in order that being in that in the will of God there may be anointing for it, because in that the whole purpose of God is bound up. I am not going to deal with what the purpose of God is for the moment. I am making merely general observations for the moment to move to something more specific from day to day. But anointing is not just for what we call a ministerial class, or for missionaries going abroad. Anointing is for every member of the House of God to fulfil a Divine appointment in the work to which God calls them while they are here on the earth. Anointing is both possible, and necessary, and it is for all. It is to fulfil the vocation; because whatever our earthly vocations as we are led to them by the Lord, there is a heavenly vocation. There is that which is of God enshrined within that which we are led to by the Lord here on the earth, whatever it is. Many have discovered in work which they would never have chosen for themselves, in vocations which they have oft-times sought to escape and get out of, that being held there or led there by the Lord and at last having come to the place where they recognise that that is the place where the Lord has put them, and they have accepted it with all their hearts and said: "Lord, I no longer chafe against this, I accept it and give myself to it for all Your will and purpose in it, and claim for this in Thy will all the enablement of the Holy Spirit," they have found there the fulfilment of some fragment of the great Divine purpose which they could never have fulfilled in anything else. The trouble is that so many people have got some false conception about the ministry and that the ministry is one thing and serving the Lord in this and that and something else is another thing. The ministry is that which the Holy Spirit enables you to do in any sphere and occupation to which the Lord leads you.

Now these are very general observations, but not without their importance when we begin to speak about the anointing. Because I am afraid in speaking about the anointing of the Holy Spirit people will begin to get these water-tight compartment ideas and think that is for some exclusive spiritual work, being a "minister," a "missionary" going abroad, taking meetings—yes, a lot of people think that, but it is not so. The anointing is for anything and everything that the Lord may call to: we may have the anointing there.

David—a Great Example of Anointing.

Having said that, I want to come to our subject more closely. I have read these portions from the books of Samuel, because very largely I think we are going to be occupied with David. David has within the compass of his life almost everything that we want to know about the meaning of the anointing. I am quite sure we shall never exhaust it in these messages, but I feel that the Lord will say some very precious things to us out from the experience and history of His servant David in connection with the anointing. We read about the anointing of David. If you look at that chapter again, 1 Sam. xvi., you will find that it comes in when God has finally rejected Saul, and Samuel is commanded concerning the anointing of God's own man, the man after His own heart. Samuel was evidently mourning very much for Saul, as the opening of the chapter shows, and the Lord reaffirms His rejection and commands him to fill his horn with oil: ".....and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons." Samuel is a little fearful of taking this action. He is evidently afraid of Saul and wants to know how the thing can be done without his being involved in the perils of anointing a successor to a living king, or one to take his place. But the Lord leads him and leads him to Jesse, and as you know, all the sons of Jesse excepting David were called. And the Lord gave Samuel these two things: "I have provided me a king among his sons": and then the Lord said definitely: "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature.....for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." The Lord knows the peril of this thing. The Lord knows how His purposes can be just turned aside, how easy it will be for His intention to be hindered or thwarted. The Lord is taking everything

into account. He knows what is going to follow. He knows what this movement involves, and so He takes precautions in His words to Samuel, and says to him in a precautionary word: "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Now that is precautionary against a repetition of what has happened. Eliab, this fine, tall son of Jesse, has been brought and he in his stature and appearance compared favourably with Saul, who was head and shoulders above all the rest of Israel. That is what he was in himself, and Samuel was in danger of being impressed with what a man was in himself, and to find that which would obviously without any difficulty commend itself to the people as standing in a line with Saul. That was underlying this whole thing; that there should be the selecting of something upon a natural basis which would commend itself for what it was in itself. And the Lord was rejecting everything, however fine and great it might be, which was something in itself; He was rejecting that. "I have rejected him." And so they go on, and even Samuel well nigh broke down on this thing: "Surely this is he," said Samuel, and upon his natural understanding, upon his own judgment, upon what appealed to him himself, he would have acted and anointed one who could stand well before men, who could take his place amongst men for what he was in himself; and right through the whole range all that sort of thing the Lord rejected. The Lord rejected right to the last all that was something in itself and that could commend itself to natural men, commend itself to religious people as such. No! The Lord was going to have no repetition of this thing. He has rejected, and there is no way for what is something in itself by nature. Well, there was no thought of bringing David. Samuel evidently remembered what the Lord said: "I have provided me a king among his sons." "Are here all thy children?" "Well, there is one other, but I did not think it worth while bringing him; he is more used to the sheep than anything else and he is out there looking after those sheep." "He is the youngest, the most insignificant, it is not worth while bringing him; I did not think it mattered about him at all." I am afraid Samuel, in not a hopeful way said: "Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither."

An exceedingly perplexing situation. And so they brought David, and when they brought him in the Lord said: "Arise, anoint him: for this is he." Something is said about David which seems to contradict what I have said. Something good is said about him, about his appearance. It says that he was ruddy and of a beautiful countenance. I wonder why that? And why it should be put in the place where it is put. This is not put in a place where it is a point of commendation for the anointing. It is not made the ground of the anointing, but it does represent something when the command to anoint is given, for it is that outward expression of a secret history with God. That is what I want to get at.

Secret History with God.

You remember later when after the anointing and after seemingly David had gone back to the sheep, for he went back after the anointing and not until probably forty days after the battle had commenced was it that David was sent by his father with gifts to his brethren, and he heard the challenge of the giant, that some of the secret history came out. When Saul interrogated him he spoke about the lion and the bear and how the Lord delivered him. There was that one who amongst men had no place, who was rejected of men, accounted as not having any position or worthiness amongst men for recognition, but who had a secret history with God in the field, perhaps in the wilderness, and that secret history I think is bound up with what is said about his appearance. There is that which embodies something of God, that expression, that beauty, that ruddiness. It is put in that place not as the ground of selection or choice, or approval, but as a testimony to something else in the background of his life. It is true that very often one whom the Lord chooses does seem to have something which commends itself to man; a countenance ruddy, a beauty that others take account of, and they say: "Well, it is quite clear the Lord has chosen that one, it is obvious the Lord has anointed that one," and they begin to think that that appearance, that presence, that beauty, that expression, is the ground upon which the Lord has anointed them: but never, never! The Lord never anointed anyone for what they were in themselves. The Lord only anoints on the ground of a secret history with Himself. David—there was a background with God which brought him into his place amongst

men, but it was not what he was in nature, in himself.

Notice with Saul, he was anointed at the beginning, but the anointing meant that there was something given to him which was not of himself and immediately Saul began to act out from himself apart from God, the anointing was withdrawn. That was the background of his downfall. He did not wait for Samuel, he acted from himself and not under the anointing. And he forfeited the anointing. Note this. While we may have the Spirit, beloved, we may receive the Spirit and the Spirit may abide in us as an indwelling Presence, and failure may take place in our lives, the Spirit may not withdraw from us because of failure now in this dispensation, that is, we may not lose the Holy Spirit because we make mistakes, but we can forfeit the anointing. The anointing is one thing and having the Spirit is another. The anointing represents the equipment for our vocation and we may miss that. The anointing has brought to some the spiritual ability perhaps to teach, or for some purpose or other of a practical vocational character, the anointing has been with them for that, and by wrong doing they have forfeited that anointing and lost, not the power to talk, but the power to *minister*: not the power to preach, but the power in preaching to reach men's hearts. The danger is we might go on with the office and lose the unction; and while we may not lose the Spirit we may lose the anointing.

Anointing implies the setting aside of Man by Nature.

Now the very first thing which comes to us in David's life is this, that the anointing is that which sets nature aside and takes no account of nature. That is very important. The anointing says most clearly throughout the Word of God that all this which follows is of God and nothing of man. And it demands that as its basis. The basis of the anointing is always the setting aside of man by nature. "Look not upon his countenance, or on the height of his stature.....for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." The Lord's eye was upon the heart of David away there following those sheep. "He chose Davidand took him from the sheepfolds." The anointing comes not upon the ground that man is anything in himself, but that everything is of the Lord.

If you follow that through you will see that

it applies. Take it up with the Lord Jesus. The anointing unto His ministry did not come until He had been down into the waters of Jordan. Representatively He was acting as man and was going down into the waters of Jordan. His baptism, typical of His Cross, declared most clearly that everything from that point onward was of God and nothing of Himself, nothing out from Himself. ".....I do nothing of myself." In those waters He has, in type, passed out of sight, and now the anointing takes things up on that ground. Paul received the Spirit when he went into Damascus and Ananias laid his hands upon him. He received the Spirit then, being baptised, but the manifestation of the anointing did not come for some time after that. Probably he was anointed unto his work when he received the Spirit, but the expression of that anointing was not for some time after that. He tarried two years in Arabia. Yes, he testified. You can fulfil an occasional ministry without the full meaning of your anointing being manifested. The anointing is for the specific thing in the purpose of God. The thing for which you are chosen, the elect vessel. And it is not until all that is of ourselves has been put aside, all our judgments, thoughts, preferences, that we come into the fulness of the anointing because it is not until then we come into the fulness of purpose. If Paul was anointed when he received the Holy Spirit in Damascus there were two years in Arabia, although he testifies in Damascus; and then at least a year in the assembly at Antioch. Doubtless he had bits of ministry; doubtless others were seeing that he had the Spirit; doubtless features of an Apostle were developing in him; but then at the end of at least three years the Holy Ghost said: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them," and they laid hands on them and sent them away. And now the anointing is going to be manifested along full and specific lines in ministry; He has waited for that. The anointing may have been there. The Spirit was undoubtedly there, but now he is coming out into the work for which he was a foreknown and foreordained vessel, and for that the full measure of the anointing is manifested. What happened in those two years? I have no doubt that those two years in Arabia were years in which Saul of Tarsus was disappearing very much. Speaking to the Romans, he says that he serves God in his spirit and in newness of spirit. That represents a big change

and you can see the difference between the old spirit in which Saul of Tarsus served God and the new spirit in which Paul the Apostle served God. He was disappearing as Saul. He was coming into a subjection in the House of God which was not natural in a man like Saul of Tarsus. If anything was foreign to a man's nature, subjection was foreign to Saul's nature. You cannot imagine Saul of Tarsus being subject to anybody. But now twelve months in an assembly at Antioch, having had to submit himself for guidance in the assembly at Damascus which he was going to destroy, represents a big disappearance of Saul of Tarsus. And when this is done, this setting aside, he becomes just one of an assembly amongst the rest, then the power of the anointing can be manifested and lead him out into the full work of his life. It is always on that basis. David was not counted amongst his brethren. The Lord Jesus disappearing in the waters of Jordan. Saul of Tarsus disappearing into Arabian desert, and, *as Saul*, disappearing from view even in the assembly of God; and then on that ground, the anointing, that is the vocation, the service.

Now that may take time, beloved. It may take time to get rid of us. There has got to be some deep, secret history with God before the full meaning of the anointing can be known, or manifested. It may take years to do that, to bring us to the place where it is not the work for the Lord, but where we can do nothing for the Lord, and unless the Lord does it all nothing will be done. It is thus that we come into the thing for which God chose us. The anointing can be manifested in all its meaning just as soon as we disappear. And I am not saying merely that we disappear as sinners, but also as preachers, workers, religious organisers, as figures, something to be taken account of. Any kind, any form, any measure of the expression of that horrible self-life, self-consciousness, that wants to be taken account of, that wants to be noticed; there are thousands of ways in which this horrible flesh works to be taken notice of even in the most spiritual of the Lord's people; that spirituality itself very often is taken hold of as a means to be taken account of: to be holy in order that others may recognise how holy we are. To be so burnt up with zeal for God that others may say: "How that man pours himself out for God." The flesh can get into the most holy thing, can come along the most intensely spiritual lines; it can lie back there of all our most sincere aspirations; our

spirituality and devotion to be taken account of. The flesh works so subtly and God only knows when it is mastered, when it is sufficiently subject to allow of Him manifesting the anointing and bringing us into the fulness of our vocation. Some of us have been very devoted to the Lord, and very earnest in service for the Lord, but have had our own ideas about the work of the Lord, and we have come to see afterwards that they *were* our ideas, although we believed at the time that they were the Lord's ideas; that we were in something that we fully believed to be all of God, and the Lord has had to put us through a test that has shown us that with all our honesty and sincerity the thing was not so much of God as we thought. He has had to do it by grinding to powder, until we were in a state really willing to have the Lord's best and fullest. We would have said with tremendous emphasis, with all our heart, we were willing for the Lord's will, and if the Lord had tested us out upon the letting go of some long-standing tradition, something with which we had sentimental associations, something which seemed to us was all right, and He had said: "Now put that on the altar, break with that, let that go" we would not have done it; we could not have done it. The Lord has had to do deep things in order to make those things sink away and lose their hold on us; even the things which we believed to be all according to God's full purpose have had to come to the place where we have let them go. Our judgments about God's work, and our calling, and our ministry, and our work, those all have to go into the melting pot, and we have to get to the place where the Lord can really do anything with us. We cannot come to that place, to that position, by simply declaring we are there. You cannot stand up in a meeting and say: "I am willing for God to do anything with me." These things cannot be done under the emotion of an hour or an appeal. It sometimes takes God years to bring us to that place. And I sometimes wonder how many of the saints that have trodden this earth have ever got there: if there is not some point where, if He put His finger, He would meet with some question. The Lord only knows. This represents a deep work where man, even religiously, as such, disappears and the Lord Himself becomes everything. Then the Lord can move us out into the fulness of His purpose and when we get into the fulness of His purpose then the fulness of the anointing is there to meet

us in that. The anointing is only manifested in the measure in which we are in the purpose of God. The more we are in the purpose of God the more the anointing will be manifested.

The Anointing is God committing Himself.

Now we would not speak about the anointing as some *thing*. The anointing is God committing Himself and when you see that you see why all that I have said is so true. What is the anointing? Acts x. 38: "Jesus of Nazareth, how that God anointed him with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." That anointing meant that God had committed Himself to Jesus of Nazareth. That is not setting aside His essential Deity, but in relation to His ministry that is said. God had committed Himself to Jesus of Nazareth. You remember it is said of the Lord Jesus Himself that He would not commit Himself unto them because He knew what was in man; *therefore*, He would not commit Himself. Do you think God, Who knows all, is going to commit Himself to man in his natural state? What would man do with God? What would our flesh do with God if only we could use God? Think of God putting Himself at our disposal and saying: "You can do with Me what you like." We would make God the very means of making ourselves God. We would seek to make ourselves Very God by using God to that end. We would bring ourselves into prominence. He demands the Cross as the basis of our anointing. There is no anointing without the Cross. There is no anointing only as man in what He is in himself disappears from view, and as the Cross is wrought in us more and more deeply, putting us aside, so more and more we come into the eternal purpose of God and therefore, into the anointing. That is, God commits Himself. It is a great thing when God commits Himself. What is not possible when God commits Himself? That is the anointing. You see the anointing brings with it a dignity. It is God in evidence. But that dignity of God can never mark any life which has its own dignity, its own honour, to consider. God has ever been honoured most in those who are most empty of themselves. Dignity! Why, the humblest and weakest child of God and servant of God, anointed with the Holy Ghost, has compelled the great of this world to acknowledge something greater, something mightier, some factor they could not account for as being

of nature. There is a dignity which comes with anointing. The child of God is not a poor weak, cringing thing that is down on its face to everything else of this world. The anointing carries that which speaks of God; quiet confidence, dignity, assurance; not domination, not assertiveness, but dignity. That marked the presence of the Lord Jesus amongst men. The Rulers and the Authorities did not know what to do with Him, how to get the better of Him. It was quiet dignity. They were up against something more than man. It is moral and spiritual elevation. And meekness which is the meekness of Christ is a mighty quality, a tremendous thing, a powerful thing. Someone said at Keswick that people often interpret meekness as being weakness; but the meekness of Jesus Christ is never weakness, it is God. God has committed Himself. That is the anointing. You see, that is just the fringe of things, but it is where we begin. David, not allowed a look in by man, becomes the chosen of God because of a secret history with God.

Beloved, it is not what you and I are before man, of our own making; it is what we are before God. We have often said that it is personality; but what is personality? Personality is character formed in secret with God. That which comes out of the secret history with God. It is that that registers itself upon others. It is secret history with God. And all our own natural abilities simply have to recede to make way for the Lord, then a new set of faculties comes in, which are born in the secret place with the Lord. To have the anointing then we have got to have a secret history with God, and if others are to be moved by the Spirit of God through us it can only be as we come out of the secret place where we have been dwelling with the Lord and having everything dealt with there by the Lord; judged, corrected, influenced, adjusted; where we have been learning the Lord.

If we were to dwell upon David's lion and David's bear as a mighty conflict in the secret in which the Lord was bound up we know what that may mean. Those terrible conflicts in secret where we learn the power of God in victory over the lion and the bear; those awful beasts of the Satanic realm and of our own natural lives. We have learned the mighty power of God in secret victory. It is that that brings the anointing into public; that, and nothing else.

T. A.-S.

(To be continued.)

GLEANED EARS OF RIPE GRAIN

"It was not long before we began to understand the reality of the authority often exercised, especially at night, by the evil one, our enemy, upon the minds of these lately delivered from his prison house. So far as we knew, the babies were not affected, but older children and converts were. If strong threads of affection bound the heart to anyone in the old life, then there would be at times distress, apprehension of trouble there, perhaps a vivid dream revealing it in tangible form. The immaterial became material, or the material appearing in the immaterial stuff of dreams disturbed, and sometimes seriously injured, the life of the one thus strained. Often we heard afterwards of what had been happening just at that time hundreds of miles away (miles matter nothing where spirit forces play) and were able to trace the influence to its source. Tuesdays and Fridays, the nights given up to demon worship for thousands of square miles in the south, seemed to ask for special guarding by prayer, for the throb of tom-toms which filled the air and the weird cries of the worshippers were sometimes reminiscent, and sounds, like scents, have extraordinary recalling power."

From 'Gold Cord.'

"We ask to be led by the Holy Spirit from point to point, each prayer leading on from the preceding prayer till the particular subject laid on our hearts has been dealt with, and we have the assurance that the Lord will complete all, as Kay translates Psalm cxxxviii. 8.

This way of prayer is just the opposite to the kaleidoscope kind, which darts hither and thither all over the earth or over a number of scattered interests (often within the limits of a single long prayer) leaving the mind which has tried to follow perhaps dazzled, perhaps tired."

From 'Gold Cord.'

"We aspire so high, and fall so low; we suffer so much, but seldom with Christ; we have done so much, and so little will remain; we have known Christ in part, and have so effectively barricaded our hearts against His mighty love, which surely He must yearn to give His disciples above all people."

From 'Gold Cord.'

"He had spoken plain words, and the devil never forgives plainness of speech."

From 'Gold Cord.'

"THERE is always something more in your nature which He wills to mark with the Cross."

From 'Gold Cord.'

"BUT as a company of people set apart for a special purpose, we were, it seemed to me, just dim. There did not appear to be anything burning about us. We were decorously smouldering, we were not vehement flames (were we aflame at all?) and I knew that I burned most dimly of all."

From 'Gold Cord.'

"MOVE out from the full stream of Calvary and you know yourself not only defenceless, but stained."

From 'Gold Cord.'

"Thou shalt have words,

But at this cost, that thou must first be burned,

Burned by red embers from a secret fire,
Scorched by fierce heats and withering winds
that sweep

Through all thy being, carrying thee afar
From old delights. Doth not the ardent fire
Consume the mountain's heart before the flow
Of fervent lava? Wouldst thou casefully,
As from cool, pleadant fountains, flow in fire?

From 'Gold Cord.'

Acknowledgments

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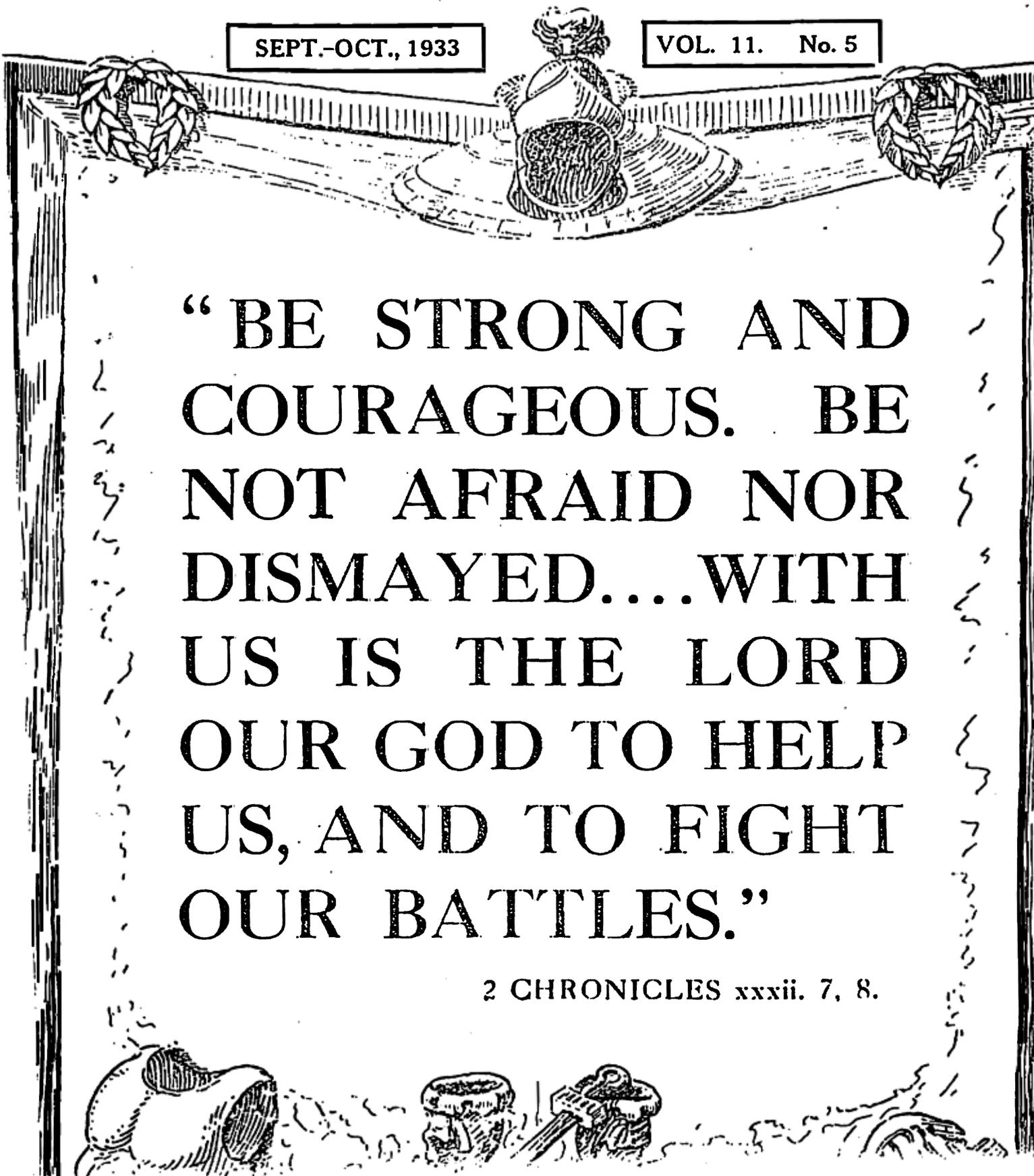
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Witness and a Testimon

SEPT.-OCT., 1933

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“BE STRONG AND
COURAGEOUS. BE
NOT AFRAID NOR
DISMAYED... WITH
US IS THE LORD
OUR GOD TO HELP
US, AND TO FIGHT
OUR BATTLES.”

2 CHRONICLES xxxii. 7, 8.

“What was in the New Cruse”

READING : 2 Kings ii. 19-22.

Luke iv. 20-30.

WE have spoken before in this connection mainly of the new cruse which the prophet Elisha called for, and while we may have our thoughts somewhat directed to the new cruse, it is rather more this time what was in it that is to have our emphasis—the salt. We know very well that salt in the Word of God is a type of incorruption and of the element of permanence because of incorruption. You are familiar with all the details of this story of Elisha and the men of Jericho, and you are also familiar with the details concerning the history of Jericho and what led to the state of things which is here. You will remember the command of the Lord to destroy Jericho, and when Jericho was overthrown and wholly devoted, Joshua pronounced the judgment on Jericho, and held, so to speak, a curse which would come upon the man who would seek to rebuild Jericho. Jericho lay under a curse. That curse was veritably fulfilled in the case of the man who did, years after, rebuild Jericho. He found death coming into his domestic life at its beginning and at its end. Jericho thus lying under a curse partook in its very source of the elements of the curse.

The waters which ought to have been waters of life became the waters of death, and all the produce never reached its full ripeness, but came short; reached a certain point of development and there under arrest fell to the ground and proved all labours to be in vain. Well, that is the situation and we know that story well. In such conditions the men of Jericho came to the prophet, pointed out that the situation of the city was quite pleasant, but all that was overshadowed by the state of the waters and this hand of the curse. Elisha called for this new cruse and for salt, and he went to the spring of the waters and from his new cruse he cast salt into the spring and all the streams were healed. Get the spring right and everything else is right. The features of the curse were removed and life came in the place of death, fruitfulness in the place of barrenness: fruitfulness and joy came in labour where labour had been a very joyless and disappointing thing. That is a parable. A para-

ble, the features of which are very obvious. Carried into the New Testament we find the historic outworking of it.

The old vessel rejected.

That passage which we have read from Luke iv. is one of those fragments which bear upon the old vessel which is being set aside because lying under judgment and a curse. Judaism was that. Israel was now lying under the curse virtually. We know that literally the Lord Jesus in cursing the fig tree showed God's attitude towards Judaism at that time. No longer acceptable. Cursed and dead. Fruitless and of no more service to the Lord. And here in Luke iv. the Lord Jesus is showing that that which *had* been His no more stands in the place of Divine acceptance; that history is closed and Judaism lies under that curse, the marks of which will be right through the dispensation. That is all vanity, failure, never coming to any full issue, disappointing, defeat, breakdown, impotence. That, of course, is very clearly seen in the history of the Jews since that time until now. That as a people they are a removed vessel of the Lord and they lie there where they can never bring forth that fruit to perfection which satisfies the heart of God. But what the Lord Jesus also makes clear in this passage in Luke is that the Lord will have a vessel, and that He goes outside of that people for His vessel, secures it for His own satisfaction, from without, and brings it into the place of life and fruitfulness to His own glory.

These two illustrations taken from the life of Israel are very rich and full in their significance. Elijah and the widow of Zarephath. You will remember the two features of that incident, that the brook failed in one place and the Lord said: “Arise, get thee to Zarephath.....I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.” And when he arrived there was but the remaining fragment of a meal in the barrel and oil in the cruse. We know the issue, but it also is a parable. The meal is the Lord Jesus in type of the bread, and the oil the Holy Spirit, and the Lord Jesus by the Spirit made all sufficient, a never failing supply where the Lord can find that which really serves His own heart

purpose ; though it be outside of what has been the governing circle.

Then the second parable of Naaman the leper. You remember the story. There are three themes in that also. "Go wash in Jordan seven times." Naaman after the flesh felt that that was a very great humiliation. "Are not Abana and Pharpar better.....can I not wash in them and be clean?" The flesh in its pride finds it difficult to bow to the waters of Jordan. The flesh always does find Jordan a great come down. But there was the way, he could take it or leave it. Your salvation is that way and no other way, and the flesh must come God's way, or have no part in the blessing of the Lord.

So at length Naaman was prevailed upon by wisdom to yield to this way, and he went to Jordan, and he got spiritual perfection and blessing. How? Seven times,—spiritual perfection. How? By dying to himself, and being buried, and by rising again. The death and burial of the flesh in Jordan and the rising in newness of life. All these elements are back of what the Lord is saying. He is pointing out that one vessel can no longer serve His purpose. A new cruse is necessary and a new cruse is that which has had one history in the flesh closed for ever in the grave of the Lord Jesus, and is now a new creation in the sense of a life which is from above in resurrection. A new vessel constituted on resurrection ground. That is what the Lord seeks for and that is what is here clearly in view in the Old Testament illustration and in the New Testament historic facts.

The new vessel brought in.

It was that which, of course, came clearly in with the book of the Acts, or with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. A new cruse. God's Christ had died and been buried, and raised ; one whole realm and nature of things had past in His death. Now a new was brought in, and with the book of the Acts, and especially at Pentecost, we see the new cruse with the salt in it. That is, the power of His resurrection, the life which is triumphant over death ; the incorruptible life of Christ Risen, within a vessel, by which all futile labours are turned to triumphant labours ; by which all failing fruitfulness is turned to permanent fruitfulness ; by which all the disappointment of strength and life expended in vain is turned to glorious triumph. Now all those elements are perfectly clear, plain, simply recognised in these passages, and I have very little to do but to just put my

finger upon familiar truth for its fresh emphasis.

We know, of course, the necessity for the new cruse. We know it personally. We know quite well that so far as the Lord's things are concerned we by nature are ruled out, that it is all vanity. Not all will acknowledge that. They still think that they can serve God in the strength and equipment of nature, and are trying to do so. And the destiny is written large throughout the Word of God ; that in the end it will prove to be labour in vain, that fruit will not go right through to full ripeness ; the end will be great disappointment. But we know and have accepted that so that as far as we are concerned the old vessel of our natural lives cannot serve the eternal purposes of God, and we have accepted that quite definitely and have declared our acceptance thereof inasmuch as we have testified to it in our baptism, and inasmuch as Christ died, we died in Him.

That your fruit should abide.

I hope that you are not thinking of trying to serve the Lord without having recognised that principle and accepted that position. You may try and you may do certain things, but you may take it that it will die, it will fail, it does not survive. You will say : We have been working pretty hard trying to do our best, have done all that we could to make the work successful, but nothing seems to come out of it. It is like working in a cul-de-sac, there is no way through. The sooner you recognise it the better ; it will save you a lot of disappointment and wasted time. The Lord must have in us a new cruse, and I trust we can say that we know it is true that in Christ Jesus there is a new creation. Within us there is something which is absolutely new, something which is not of ourselves, it is something of the Lord, a vessel in which the life which is incorruptible, indestructible, unailing ; and that becomes the basis of every kind of fruitfulness that goes through to perfection. Not the energies of the flesh or of nature ; not the enthusiasms of our soul ; but the work that comes out through the Spirit of life in us goes right through to perfection. The basis of every kind of perfection is the life of the Spirit within this new vessel of our renewed spirits.

I will not dwell upon the various kinds of fruits that are borne, or various kinds of perfection to which we come, but comprehend them all in the one statement. All that I want to stress is this fact that what the Lord wants, and needs in every one of us, is that which is the testimony to resurrection, which is the working

power of incorruptible life. That means that your life and mine will never cease in its value. We may go in the will of God, we may be called from this scene at any time, but in so far as we have wrought in the energy of an incorruptible life, our life goes on in its value and its fruitfulness here. That is the explanation and the secret of New Testament lives. Why, these New Testament saints are so throbbing with life to-day! You cannot take up your New Testament at any moment if the life of the Lord is free within you without finding something living. Paul, Peter, John speak in a living way. They are as living to-day as ever they were to men in the days of their flesh. We have as living communion with them to-day as ever people did then: being dead they yet speak. It is because then their hearts and actions were in the power of an endless life. And if this world were to go on for as many centuries as it has gone on their word would be still just the same because the nature of this life is that it grows, increases.

The increase of God.

Incorruptible life does not begin, continue, and end in the same degree. It may begin in a spring and end in an ocean. The river of Ezekiel deepens and widens as it goes on toward the sea: an illustration of the life of the Risen Lord. That is why so often in a new movement of the Lord, say in a conference, we may start with a trickle and end with a river. It works again and again. At the end we find we have a great deal more than we had at the beginning. The natural order of things is just the other way. I am not talking about the physical or mental side of things, I am talking about spiritual things. There may be tremendous demands ahead. We can take it that if we are living on this principle of the risen life of the Lord Jesus, all those demands will be met as they are demands which arise in the way of the Lord's will and call. We are working upon a principle which means increase not decrease; life not death; fulness not emptiness; going through and not stopping short. It is just the opposite of nature. The Lord wants everything on that principle.

Spontaneous: not organised.

And mark you it is spontaneous. It just happens as you go on with the Lord. You find that it comes to pass. The spontaneity of resurrection life is one of the great blessings that it carries with it. Let me especially, for my younger friends, point your attention to the

difference between the old dispensation and the new in this matter. If you had been a member of Israel in the Old Testament, you would have had a mass of detailed instructions and commands put in your hand and been told that you have got to keep all that: to go to this meeting and that: be here on the spot when you are required—you *must*, you *must!* and if not then woe betide you. That is the old dispensation. It was something like a very heavy yoke put upon shoulders, and it was not optional whether you want to the least or not, you had to go. But when you come in to the book of the Acts all that has gone. Don't think those people in the book of the Acts went to meetings because they had to. You do not start with meetings in Acts, you start with living individuals who, because something has happened in them, came together spontaneously and had a good time. The meetings are the outcome of something else. They have gatherings because they are all brought together by reason of one common thing. It is spontaneous. In the book of the Acts they never put up churches and buildings and put notices outside, and invitations, and circularised the district, and went round asking people to come to the meeting. What happened was that a few individuals became possessed of life, they had that in common, and that brought them together, and they had blessed times together, two's and three's in private houses. That is how it grew. And when the Lord saw there was a danger of there becoming something big in itself, and making something of these gatherings as such He scattered them into fragments. His order is always to keep things spontaneous and never fixed; life is His principle. For myself I have long ago finished with that system that demands that I shall do things from the outside. Being paid to preach so many times a week, etc., etc. It must be life or else we will not have it. The new order of God is life. The Lord save us and give us the courage to be perfectly frank, and if we have not got life, to stand back and not allow ourselves to be carried on by a merely accepted system of things. Now you younger folk, do not attend meetings because you have got to. Ask the Lord to put life into you that will turn things that are not supposed to be meetings into meetings. It is a blessed thing to see that done. It must not be something that we must do or we will get frowns and looks and so on. No, but the whole thing inwardly answering to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

The Lord's new vessel is to be marked in that way by His own Divine life.

Local assemblies as vessels.

That has not only to be true in the individual way. The Lord does need to-day to have His corporate instrument after this character. Those companies of His people, local assemblies, and the whole thing spiritually in oneness, in the place where it is not the deadness of the letter but where it is the aliveness of the Spirit.

Israel had all the oracles of God and all the outward framework of things to perfection. It was all going on just exactly as the Word described. The priest still dressed as prescribed in the Word of God, and the sacrifices were still offered, and the orders of sacrifices; the feasts still kept according to the Word, but the whole thing was without life. Everything going on, yet death. It is just possible for us to lose the life and still go on with the order, with the system, the doctrine. We can have all the New Testament doctrine, we may have all the perfection of the framework of the New Testament truth, and just fail to be what is necessary because the power of His life is not there.

Well, what was in my heart was that the Lord wanted a further emphasis upon this, that His thought pre-eminently is that all those who represent Him, and all that which truly represents Him shall have the one predominant characteristic, its hall mark should be the power of Christ's resurrection. I feel that is the place where the Lord wants the hammer to come down once more. It is not in the whole system of teaching that the Lord will find His fullest pleasure, it will be in that that teaching has the life of the Risen Lord flowing through it; and you and I are living vessels of life, His own resurrection life.

It is a new kind of thing and it is altogether a new cruse that is necessary. It is newness of life. The Greek word, *kainos*, means something that never was before; not just freshness. Some people mix the two Greek words. One means freshness like getting up fresh in the morning. This is not the word that is used in connection with this life. It is the word which means a life which never was before, it is brand new. And the Lord does not put His brand new things into old vessels. He must have vessels suitable to the content, and so He must have a new cruse for a new life; and you and I must first of all be renewed by the Holy Spirit, and then His new life being deposited within us will work out in fruit that does not die, life that

does not end, work that does not break down; it goes on.

Divine life for the mortal body.

There is a very great reality about this. Beloved, because you and I are still here in mortal bodies, because as yet our spirits are not perfected, we are still carrying with us a body of death, we are still carrying a soul-life which is not wholly sanctified. It is true that we carry right at the centre of our being something that being of God is complete and perfect, that is in us, the Lord within us; but we are carrying something else and this is subject to all kinds of sensations and variations. Physical weariness; being possessed of resurrection life does not mean you will never be physically weary; that you will say—If I had the Lord's life as I ought to have I shall never feel tired. It is not true. You still know physical and mental weariness and tiredness, and you will still know the need for getting away in detachment and quiet rest. The Lord does not save us from the ravages which come of going beyond our measure in that realm. He demands that we should recognise the need for rest and quietness, and He does not save us from the consequences of ignoring that. We shall still know physical and mental weariness and tiredness though possessed of resurrection life which in a moment when we are in a state of physical and mental exhaustion can rise up and make us as fresh as ever we were. It in itself never tires, is never weary. The testimony to that life is often borne by the background of our own weakness. The glory of that risen life is manifested by the Lord allowing us to know how it triumphs over weariness. We get to know the Lord and His things by reason of the setting of them. We have to consider—Now does the Lord want me to rest or am I giving way? If the Lord is calling to do something, though you may be tired you can know the power of resurrection to do it. There are times when He does not come in with that power.

The variations of soul-life.

Then we carry about this soul-life of ours which causes all the sensations from which we suffer. Oh, the variations of our soul life! Some are more variable than others. Sometimes we feel one way and sometimes another, and sometimes we do not know how we feel and there is a swirl and change in our soul-life; and there are times when without any explanation at all a darkness comes over our spirits and a sensation of the unreality of things. Every-

thing at other times may be most real to us, but we may feel now the unreality of the things which were so much to us. That is all to do with our soul-life. It makes no difference to the inner truth of the Lord and our spirit. We go through these variations. Have we not passed through those experiences thousands of times? While in them we raised the ultimate question: Has the Lord left us, given us up, forsaken us, everything has gone wrong, were we deceived?

You cannot have bigger questions than these: yet that passes. You come through and everything is as clear and positive as ever it was. Which of these two things are you going to take as your ground? The variations of your soul-life or the unfailing faithfulness of the Lord and His spiritual things. Our life is not in ourselves, our own souls, bodies and minds, it is in Him within us, and we have to hold on to the Lord. We may be feeling pretty bad physically, there may be a lot that contributes to our feeling everything is all wrong, all false, and unreal, nothing in it. The Lord abides

and the Lord works deep down in us, we will come up back to that abiding ground. But faith requires that through the time of the changes, the conflicting elements, and feelings, we say like David: "This is my infirmity, but I will remember the days of the right hand of the Lord." This is me, this is not the Lord. This is my make-up, this is not the Lord. His life is unchanging, incorruptible, unfailing, it abides; it is deeper than our consciousness, deeper than our minds, our souls, and far deeper than our bodies. His work is an abiding work. Let us remember the power of His resurrection: that there is that where death has been defeated and robbed of its power. We may seem to be labouring, very little manifestation of the fulness of fruitfulness, but it is going on if His life is in you; it will go on and it will be manifested at some time or another.

The Lord renew us continually as the vessels and make known by us the freshness and fulness of the power of His resurrection.

T. A.-S.

"A Faithful Creator" and the Way of His Eternal Purpose

A Message in Conference.

READING: 1 Peter i. 3-9, 13, 23-25; ii. 6-10, 20-25; iii. 1-12; iv. 12-19; v. 2-4, 10, 12.

My confidence in standing before you, dear friends, this afternoon is the text I am starting with: "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." ".....a faithful Creator" is the expression that has been on my heart. It is an unusual expression to be used in this connection and must have some special significance. You would have expected the Lord to say, in the midst of this paragraph about suffering: "Commit your souls unto the Lord Who has overcome all the power of the Enemy." The Spirit does not say that at all. He says: "Commit your souls in well-doing unto a faithful Creator." A striking and unusual expression to come in there. The thought that lies behind it is that a Creator has got a purpose

in the creation He brings into being. He does not create a creation for no purpose. He has an end in view to be realised through that which He is going to create. The thing is true in its realm, of any man who decides to make something. (Of course he does not create it in the sense in which God created us.) A man does not make something and then think what he can do with it. He has in his heart a purpose. And God, in creating all He did create, had a definite purpose in His heart before He created one atom of that which is created. By this expression the Divine purpose in the creation is brought into view; and that, in relation to suffering. It says, in effect, those who are suffering for well doing, well, let them commit their souls unto Him Who has got before Him all the time a purpose to be realised. Your suffering is in relation to the Divine purpose for which the whole creation has been brought

into existence. Not merely commit your souls unto a Creator, but unto a "faithful Creator," or trustworthy Creator. That has this helpful additional thought, that not only has this Creative One a purpose in His heart but He is trustworthy and able to realise it. Therefore, when you are suffering and have the Divine purpose in view you need not wonder whether it will work out in the end. He is trustworthy. The Lord has a definite purpose before Him, and that purpose He is going to accomplish. That is from the Divine side.

There is another phrase which has brought consolation to my own heart: "If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light." That has been coming home to me lately as a definite promise from the Lord which I have been trying to lay hold of. If thine eye be single, occupied with one single thing, thy whole body shall be full of light. This is the other side. God has a purpose and will realise it, and if our eye is single, occupied with that very same purpose our whole body shall be full of light. And if we want to walk as those who are full of light where the darkness which is in us by nature is driven out, here is the remedy. Your eye occupied with one single thing, the Divine purpose. That is thrown in as the other side of the story from the human end.

The eternal purpose in Christ personally.

It is not so much what is the Divine purpose, that is on my heart this afternoon, but rather an aspect of the manner of realisation. Naturally we must begin by looking at the Divine purpose. We know that in a sense the Divine purpose was realised in the Lord Jesus Christ personally by His incarnation. As an individual Man He did, in one sense, realise to the full the Divine purpose. That is, He was a Man made in the image of God and after the likeness of God in Whom God was fully revealed. That was the Divine end—to manifest Himself; and He did this perfectly in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Him there was a complete and perfect showing forth of the excellencies of Him that had called Him as a Man to walk this earth and bear testimony to what God was. The desire of God to manifest Himself and show forth His excellencies was completely and perfectly achieved in the case of the Lord Jesus, and that represented a step.

The eternal purpose in Christ corporate.

There is, however, something more in the Divine purpose than that. The Divine purpose is that there should be an elect race, a royal

priesthood, a holy nation to show forth the excellencies of Him that has called us out of darkness into light. God's intention never was that one Man alone should be the expression of His Person, but that man as a race should be the expression of Himself; and the fact that the Lord Jesus came in as an anointed Man to make the revelation possible, had bound up with it all that story of what became necessary when man, as first created, failed hopelessly and for ever to come to the place of satisfying the Divine purpose. The incarnation had the double purpose of giving forth in the one Man the perfect revelation of the nature, the character, the attributes of God, and at the same time of undoing the mischief that spoiled the chances of the original creation of man ever to rise to his calling. In the Person of Jesus Christ the thing was done. It is God's purpose to have a race through whom His nature, His attributes, His moral and spiritual character are revealed in the universe.

For our encouragement let us go back to our "faithful Creator"—He is going to achieve it and this time there will be no failure.

Natural elements cannot survive in an eternal purpose.

That is the purpose in view. It is important that we should see in what way God is going to accomplish it, and that is the emphasis on my heart, and I think it is that that Peter is out to tell us. He is a peculiarly suitable person to do it. He had a background to his own personal experience which comes out in the letters he writes. It is out of that we gather all our spiritual make-up. The way the Lord has led us, the mistakes we have made, the problems which have baffled us, etc., etc. Those things have been the background out of which our present spiritual position and character have been formed. The Lord taking occasion by these things has wrought in us whatever we are through the circumstances and trials we have gone through. Peter was a man who had originally had a Divine call, he knew it, had no doubt about it, and responded to that call heartily, zealously, left all to follow the Lord. There was no doubt at all about his full hearted consent to the call of the Lord but there had come in awful failure. A man in whom the original, sincerely meant purpose of heart had enabled him to say: "I will go to death with thee" had come a sudden crash and there was nothing left for Peter at a certain time in his life. That night after his denial he must have

reached almost to the level that would be hell itself. For Peter everything must have come to an end that night.

But then!—as he tells us in this letter when he speaks of being begotten again unto a living hope. A man utterly broken to pieces by his failure and sin, and then the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Himself and all that followed! Peter knew the power of those words: “..... begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” In Peter all the original ideas and desire to follow the Lord had gone into utter death, and out of that death had sprung anew with the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead. He knew what he was saying. Of course, that which had sprung again into life was clinched and made final and absolute and certain and abiding by the work of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. The important point is that the original thing in Peter had gone right down and out and had sprung again into life, and he knows what he is talking about when he speaks of being begotten again unto a living hope. He had a hope of sitting upon a throne beside his Lord with eleven friends, but that hope died. He knows what it is now to have a living hope, a hope that would not come to an end—an eternal hope. So one of the things in this letter of his is the expressions which relate to that eternal and abiding character of things. First of all a living hope, an inheritance that fadeth not away; which has lost the element of time and corruption and mortality and all danger of coming to an end, into a realm that fades not away. “.....the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth.” Gold will perish, but the trial of your faith as in contradistinction will be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. One thing passes away but the other is abiding, eternal; that will stand the test of every kind of adverse thing that can come to it. 1 Peter i. 24, 25 speaks of the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever. Then he speaks of the crown of glory that fadeth not away. Always a thought of the incorruptible something brought in in association with the living hope that came with resurrection.

Eternal elements found on resurrection ground.

That was the background of his own experience? And what was the principle that came out of it? The principle of the abiding and eternal character of that which is truly of God

in contradistinction to the temporal and passing and corrupt character of that not wholly of God. That is the principle that runs through this letter. And that principle runs through and must be recognised in our Christian life and service. The thing that will abide, that will stand the tests, that can go through any fires you like to put it through and which, having gone through the fire will not perish in the using but will go on abiding, is that which has gone through the same experience that Peter went through. That which has passed into death and has emerged in resurrection-life. That is something which is wrought. Peter is writing to people who are in a fire, they are having something wrought by fire. “Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial.....” etc. Here is a people who are going through fires, and are going to go through more, but he says: “Do not be alarmed or surprised, you are going through experiences of trial, but it is in order that that which emerges may be abiding.” The issue of it, the incorruptible the undying, the non-fading fruit of the experience. And he associates what he says with two things.

One is the Testimony of the earthly life of the Lord here in a phrase “The sufferings of Christ.” And the other is the outworking of it, he enjoins again and again a like spirit in the people to whom he is writing. As Christ suffered in the flesh, reviled yet reviled not again, so do you. That is his point. There is to be a pursuing on the part of his readers of the same course that the Lord Jesus Christ took. The Lord was made perfect through sufferings. He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And Peter gives a picture of the kind of life that the Lord lived here on the earth, what it meant to the Lord to live on the earth, having in view all the time the joy and the glory set before Him. He was going to return to the bosom of the Father but not the same as He came, but with the human race in His bosom, with a race of redeemed men and women He was going back into the glory. What was the way that that eternal possession was to become His? A way of letting go, going down into death, in resurrection-power to emerge and take His place at the right hand of the Father and there have in His eternal possession as a Man that which God desired Him to possess; the glory equal with the Father.

But it is not the Lord's own way I am stressing, but the stress the Lord is putting is as to the necessity for us His witnesses to go the

same way He went.

Eternal elements must be inwrought.

We represent a mere sample of the Lord's people for whom He has an eternal purpose that we together should make manifest the excellencies of the Lord Himself. That is the thing He is going to accomplish as a trust-worthy Creator. There is going to be a race, a company of men in the glory as sure as He is there, who are going to reveal the excellencies of Jesus Christ. The point is, what is the way of it here on earth? Think of Peter when the Lord challenged him in resurrection; the Lord said: "Lovest thou me?" Peter's response was: "Lord, You know I am fond of You," and that relates particularly to the heart. The word the Lord used is much more comprehensive, bigger, grander. It is the love that is not the carrying away of the man's heart but the reasonable love that comes when a man's whole being as well as his heart is set deliberately upon an objective--much finer. The Lord was challenging Peter: "Have I got the whole of your manhood set upon Me?" The Lord saw in Peter that which was essentially the basic thing. Peter's heart was touched. That was the ground work of everything in Peter, but that is not the kind of man who is going through the eternal ages to reveal the excellencies of God. The Lord would have a people upon whom He has wrought in such a way that their whole being has become gripped by what He is. You do not fall into that. You become by the discipline and experience of life gripped by the Lord. Probably all of us fell in love with the Lord at a point, but we found that the Lord put some demand upon us we did not like and we rebelled against Him. The people who are going to show forth His glory are the people who love the Lord with that instructed love, the result of a deep experience and of the Lord's dealings with us so that every part of our being has become occupied with the Lord. It has got to be a love that can be tested and proved by any adverse circumstance, even the seeming contradiction of God against us; but it does not touch that love; it abides. To obtain a people who have come through to that kind of relationship to the Lord. He must, He is going to allow them to be subjected to much testing, trial, pressure, seeming contradiction of God; the fruit of that is an inworking of His love in the hearts of His people which is not going to be moved and shaken and upset. The Lord deals with us in ways at times where we

cry out: "Lord, why don't You answer me? Why don't you explain Yourself?" But He is content to be misunderstood. He knows how far He can put the strain upon us. The objective He is after is a love that, having gone down into deep places emerges so set upon Him that no amount of contradiction presently will ever shake our confidence in Himself.

Eternal elements must be proved indestructible.

There is another side to the whole thing. The Lord indwells everyone who is a true child of His. The Lord has set His heart upon each such one being in that company who through eternity will display the excellencies of His character to a wondering universe. The Lord is within you and me if we are truly born again. There is a Devil who has challenged God, dared to claim to be equal with God, dared to set up his claim against the Throne of God, and he is out against the Son of God as found in every child of God. Every believer becomes a battlefield. The Lord says: "Here is a challenge against Me and that child of Mine." Now in that one the Lord allows a battle to be set up against the Son of God as resident within. The Lord allows the pressure to come, allows us to be put in places of difficulty, hardness: and what is the objective? To vindicate Himself in the believer so that however great the pressure the Lord is able to say: "Even in this frail one of Mine I am making manifest My sovereignty over the power of the Enemy who is challenging."

All this is the experience of the individual child of God. Within us there is set up a conflict. We come under pressure, difficulty, trial, and the Lord purposes all the time that through you and through me He should display the excellencies of His Own character. Therefore, as you and I are called into fellowship with God we have on that basis a very strong ground of claim upon the Lord in all pressure. Peter, writing to those who needed something to strengthen their faith in the hour of trial, says: When you are in the fire of testing and difficulty, that is the occasion when God is seeking through you to reveal His Own excellencies. The fire you are going into is that the purpose of the Creator may be realised, therefore you have a claim upon all the fulness of God's power. I think Peter was afraid that under pressure these people would yield their position, would run away from it, their faith would break, but he is out to exhort them. You have the dignity in this present time of manifesting the

excellencies of Jesus Christ, and that is what you are here for, and it is unto a far greater thing that you are being prepared for an eternal day. The dignity of your calling is that in every circumstance of pressure you may show forth the excellencies of the Lord Jesus Christ. But then the point that Peter would have them to note, and we have to note, is the process by which that is to be achieved, the process of death-resurrection. It is not going to be accomplished by people saying: "Lord, You know I am fond of You." That is not going to stand the test of this thing.

Some of us have been rejoiced to hear souls exhorted to surrender to the Lord, but I am feeling that unless there is a deeper basis of things, under trial the whole position is going to break down; unless in our surrendering to the Lord something else is present, we are not going in the hour of test to show forth the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. The Lord is needing, and is going to get, a people who will stand in the hour of conflict. This demands the process of death-resurrection. Peter failed in love to the Lord under trial—that court scene—his whole faith broke down and after it was over, he dared not claim any higher ground than: "Lord, I am fond of You." We need to see that the Lord cannot build up His testimony in a people on a basis that we surrender to the Lord as fond of Him. There must be inwrought into our very being, something else; and if that something else is not present the experiences that will come will break down our position.

We are not moving on into days that will get easier. We are moving into days when the final challenge is coming to an issue. Another key word of Peter's writings is: "That is to be made known at the revelation of Jesus Christ." All your conflicts, all you are suffering—but soon to be revealed is the Lord at His Coming and in that moment all your sufferings are going to issue in their real end. He is exhorting them to keep their eyes there. It is only spiritually reasonable to say that as that day approaches so much the more will the conflict intensify. On the Enemy's side the purpose is to stave off that day. We may count upon suffering, pressure, trial. We anticipate, although we do not invite, the pressure to increase until the issue in the Coming of the Lord. Our objective to-day should be to say: "Lord, if I am to be one of that company to show forth Your excellencies to a wondering universe in the ages to come, I must

have something more than mere affection for You; I must have that done in me which is going to make me able to stand in the time of conflict and pressure."

The law of eternal elements—Death and Resurrection.

What is the thing that has got to be done? Our coming into fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ in a death—resurrection union which takes out of the way the things merely on the plane of nature and brings in things which are incorruptible and eternal. Resurrection life instead of natural life. All service merely in the energy of natural life, sooner or later, will come to an end. The value of it and its results will pass, but that which is the fruit of the activity of His resurrection-life will abide eternally. God puts everything through that process of going into death and emerging from death. He puts our plans, our service, His very promises through that process, so that the promises He gives us to hope on it seems are not going to be fulfilled. The Lord said it and now we are mystified and the thing is dead. But we are going probably to see the thing has merely passed into the place of death to emerge in resurrection and when it does emerge He will fulfil it all on a new plane where it will not suffer decay. It will be a thing that will accomplish irresistible results. Which will you have, your promise fulfilled for a day, or wait for it in resurrection-life. It is the process we have to go through. The recognition that everything of nature—as nature—must pass. God cannot use it; but that which God can and will use is that which having passed into death emerges again in resurrection power.

One practical application of this. Peter enjoins a certain manner of conduct to these people in the light of that which is coming. We have to begin to fulfil our vocation now as those who are showing forth the excellencies of our Lord. What is the basis that Peter is enjoining all the time? Note that he does not encourage the thought in these people that because of their fellowship with a victorious Christ Who has conquered death and overcome the Devil, he does not enjoin that they go about the world as those who say: "I am here as representative of the Lord of Glory and in this place I take charge." Again and again, it is urged that they are in the midst of men as those whose manner has got to be that of the Lord Jesus Himself when He was here amongst men. Our earthly demeanour and talk and walk have to

be as of those who are seeking to fulfil that tremendous destiny of reflecting the excellencies of Christ. Our present demeanour, the way we act, is having a vital effect in the fulfilment of the Divine ends. Peter says: When you are reviled, revile not again; when people say things not true do not threaten them with a libel action, etc., Taking the other side of things, your own attitude toward the folk you are dealing with: you have to manifest the excellencies of Him Who trod this world. The next time I am discourteous to anyone I am unmindful of the eternal calling with which I am called. The next time I am rude in my manner, deliberately or unconsciously, the next time I speak in a way which lacks in true grace I am defeating the calling with which I am called, manifesting the excellencies of Him Who has called me. An important emphasis. Peter says: You are suffering persecution and the easiest thing would be for you to give back as good as given; but listen, you have an eternal calling to show forth the excellencies of Christ; begin to do it now. More than that, that in you which would desire to take a position over those who despise you, let that go into death. At the revelation of Jesus Christ you will be revealed with Him and then will be the day when people will give you the credit and honour due to you; but now you who naturally are yearning to take the place you ought to have, let death work in that; be content. There will come the day when you will be manifested with Him in glory, and He will come to be glorified in His saints, but *now* your attitude has to be that of submission, in fact the attitude that His was when on the earth. Discourtesy means dishonour to the Lord. Sharp words, "justified"

sharp words, if we speak them, dishonour the Name of Jesus. Lack of politeness in a young man who does not raise his hat to a lady when he meets her, the man who does not say "Thank you" when some one has done him a favour—the little discourtesies of life dishonour the Name of Jesus. This is all bound up with this one thought that vindication will come presently. Now the time of seeming weakness. But the principle is "let go." Let that pass out into death. In resurrection the thing will find its value. The moment for resurrection is the Lord's chosen moment. That which will abide and will serve God is that which has passed through death and emerged in resurrection. You and I in spiritual identification with Him must die and be raised in Him; our works, our energies, our everything must be on the basis of death—issuing in resurrection. It is only on that plane that the Lord can build His House.

You may suffer, you may now seem to be in weakness, you may now lose your rights, be reviled, go through fiery trials, but the principle that is operating is that at the revelation of Jesus Christ it will be to His praise and honour and glory. We must let the natural go and trust the Lord to bring in the energies of resurrection. Isaac may go to the point where the promise quite obviously cannot be fulfilled; and even that which God has given must reach the point where you feel it cannot fulfil its purpose. It is just there we come in with our faith hold at the point of the dying. We do not say that death is the end but we wait the moment when the Lord will quicken it. The way of expectation. So Peter's word is constantly: hope!

G. P.

But the more such powers contested, the more surely we knew that the Lord of Hosts was with us. Satan is too wise a strategist to waste ammunition on vanity. Does he see further than we do? Did he see the part this house was to play in the campaigns of the future? And yet he is strangely circumscribed. He does not seem to have known that the Holy Child was safely sheltered in Egypt when he moved Herod to slay the innocents, nor could he show Elijah's cave to Jezebel (comfort to us sometimes when we had to hide a child from the devouring enemy.) So here again he was limited. The house was built and hallowed.

"Bow down, that me may go over," and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over. Bow down—it was spoken by the enemy to wandering Israel; it is spoken many a time to the soul that follows a rejected and crucified Lord. We have come to know this through letters more than through anything printed in missionary magazines or books. We have come to live, as it were, alongside a friend whose face we have never seen, and we know that, for many, a life that is like a trampled road is appointed.

—From Gold Cord.

The Anointing of the Holy Spirit

WE have the Book of Samuel open before us and we take up that one thought—that anointing relates to specific purpose and vocation, and that we are anointed unto—or for—that. So it is necessary for us, in order to understand the working of the anointing, to bring into view the purpose of David's life, and therefore, the purpose of his anointing.

WHY DAVID WAS RAISED UP.

The purpose of David's life. We open the first book of Samuel and we see the state of things in the first chapter and onward. Here we have the spiritual condition of the Lord's people in general gathered up representatively in their spiritual head, Eli. Eli represents the general spiritual condition of the people of God. Eli is in a state of weakness. Weakness characterises him in every direction and every connection. He is unable, through weakness, to rightly govern, lead, maintain the spiritual life of the people, and his personal state corresponds to their state, and their's to his. The people of God are in a state of spiritual weakness and impotence in the days of Eli.

Loss of spiritual vision.

Eli is in a condition of almost entire, though not absolute, blindness. His eyes are dim. His vision had become very much shortened. His natural state of vision represented the spiritual state both of himself and of the people. It says: "And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision." There was this almost entire blindness, the shortened vision, the veil. Eli's hearing of the voice of the Lord was also in a state of ineffectiveness. His spiritual ear had lost its keenness. When Samuel came repeatedly to him about the voice it was not until the thing had happened several times that Eli either jumped to it or drifted into it, that it might be the Lord, it *must* be the Lord. Eli was not hearing the voice of the Lord; Samuel was. And even when Samuel was hearing the voice of the Lord Eli was very slow in discerning that it *was* the voice of the Lord. The spiritual state of the people of God was just that, they were not hearing the voice of the Lord; they had not the ear to hear what the Spirit was saying. There is such a great

deal of difference between having ears to hear doctrine, teaching, and to have an inner ear which hears the Lord. The Lord never said to the Churches in Asia: "He that hath two ears to hear let him hear." He said: "He that hath *an* ear"; which is a different thing altogether; "let him hear what the Spirit saith." We cannot hear what the Spirit saith with outward ears. Only the inner organ hears what the Spirit saith. Eli was dull of hearing, and that was the spiritual state of God's people so far as the voice of the Spirit was concerned. Weakness, deafness, blindness and consequent disorder.

The divine order upset.

The Divine order amongst His people, the Divine order in the House of God was all upset. It says: "And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord." Evidently the custom was for the lamp to go out then, but that was contrary to the Word of God. The Word of God stipulated definitely that that lamp should never go out. But here, as though it were the accepted thing—"And ere the lamp of God went out." We have not to look far for other and more terrible signs of disorder in the House of God; Eli's sons, for instance. And so the heavenly order was not being reflected in the midst of God's people. The heavenly system had no counterpart there. That which was in the thought of God had no representation amongst men spiritually. Contrast that with those great chapters in Chronicles where Solomon completes the temple and dedicates it, and see the state of things at the time of dedication. Oh, what a mighty change. What a difference. Death has given place to life; darkness to light, disorder to order, weakness to strength, shame to glory. There you have got David's life-purpose. David was brought in in relation to things as they were in the days of Eli in order to carry them to be what they were in the days of Solomon; and he was anointed for that. Make that contrast and then you have got the key to David's life.

Hannah—the fruit of Godly grief.

We take up this book of Samuel again and we come upon Hannah. There are the condi-

tions, we have outlined them. And then this woman comes before us and we are again to be impressed with the anguish of this woman's heart. The story is told and placed on record of what was going on in Hannah's heart, and it was not merely a natural thing. It is true that her husband had two wives, and the other wife had children and Hannah had none, and naturally could have none. That might be thought to be the ground of her distress, but not so. If there was some natural element in it, that was not the whole ground. I have no doubt and no hesitation in saying that Hannah's concern and distress was not merely because of the natural state in her own personal life, but it was because of the Lord's testimony. How do you come to that conclusion? By this fact, that here is a woman who naturally could have no child, and then in answer to prayer, by an act of God, that great desire of her life is granted, and then it goes on to say that she weaned the child. Of Sarah, it says that "when the child was weaned," but it says of Hannah that "she weaned the child,"—representing an eagerness—and handed him right over to the Lord, gave him to the House of God and left him there, which would be altogether set against any idea that this woman just wanted this child for her own gratification. No woman with natural ideas about this thing would be so ready to part with the child. Having been looked down upon and despised, scoffed at by others because of her childlessness, and then when she has that which is an answer to that scoffing, which is her vindication, and which could just answer to the life-long desire of her heart, to at once hand that up; you cannot reconcile these things unless there is another factor, and that factor is, she was concerned about the spiritual state of the Lord's testimony, and she saw that in this son of hers, given by an act of God, there was a possibility of removing or changing the spiritual conditions which prevailed in her day. She had come into line with the interests of God through her travail, and she gave her son as soon as she could in the Lord's interests to change that bad state of things. Yes, her concern was for the Lord's testimony as much—and doubtless more—than it was for her own satisfaction and gratification and pleasure. There, then, her natural state is seen—we are speaking of spiritual principles all the time which lie in the background—a great heart-concern for God's testimony, God's interests, spiritual things amongst the Lord's people, and yet

naturally no possibility of serving those interests. Strange, was it not?

God triumphs where nature says "impossible."

Oh, you are reading deeper, some of you are understanding that the Lord may lay upon us a great burden for His interests, for His testimony. He may call us into fellowship with His own heart in its suffering and anguish about spiritual things amongst His people, and then we discover with all our agony, anguish, and travail, there is absolutely no possibility in us by nature of serving that thing one bit; that nature cannot come to help in that thing, that we by nature, are bereft of all powers to fulfil any ministry in that direction. There is comfort for some of us here, but on the other hand there is also warning. This thing applies in two ways. It applies in this way, that if the Lord's great purposes are really going to be served through us, then nature has to be brought to an end, and it has to be God coming in from the other side, all of God. That means humiliation for us. That means our going down to a place where we are very conscious that we can do nothing, the Lord must do it all. On the other hand, the same thing applies in this way, that God does bring us to the place, or He may even constitute us on the principle that we realise how barren we are, utterly devoid of any resources which can avail to serve this great Divine end, and He does it in order that something might be done. Take the Word of God and you will see.

Take the women who were in Hannah's state and you will at once find that there is something there very significant. The fact that Sarah was in the same category, and the typical teaching of the life of Isaac representing the spiritual side of God from heaven breaking in in resurrection, and you see that that came through the utter inability of nature to provide anything. Now Hannah is in that realm and is constituted upon that very basis. You and I have bemoaned our natural uselessness. It may not be that we always knew it and saw it. It may be that we of old thought that we could do something, and we assayed to do it; we had some idea of our ability to do it. God knew how useless we were. The day came when He made us to see it, and we saw that for this work, whatever we might be amongst men on the earth, for this spiritual work we had nothing, we were as barren as we could be and then it was revealed; and we said: "What can be done?" And yet we had a greater concern than ever, we had a

great burden for spiritual things; but now there is this great contradiction in our experience. Now when we are more anxious and concerned for the interests of God in His people than ever we were in our lives, now we are more conscious of our utter impotence. The two things are brought together in the Divine sovereignty. Nature cannot help in this; but when we come to the full realisation of that fact, we have come to the place where God can begin to do something in relation to existing spiritual conditions, and it will be of God. Yes, but this costs. And Hannah had to go through a time of being misunderstood by the official and professing religious leaders.

You see the two things. A great spiritual concern unto an agony for the Lord's people and the Lord's testimony. The deep realisation of utter barrenness to serve those interests, those ends, and yet a pouring out of the heart to God about this thing; not accepting it as closing down all possibility, but taking God into account; bringing God into the situation, and while nature says impossible, and the state of things cries back that you are useless in this matter, yet God is a factor, and believing God, with all natural uselessness and with all the state of things which calls for something, she pours out her heart to God. Her cry to heaven about this thing brings her into collision with the religious powers that be; and as she poured out her heart Eli in his blindness, in his dullness, his lack of sensitiveness to spiritual things, watched her and said: "This woman is drunk," and sought to drive her away: misunderstanding by the official religious class, the traditional order of things. And oh, when some people of God really do become tremendously exercised about His interests, where they look out upon the state of things amongst the professing people of God, when they are hurt by the blindness, dullness, weakness and disorder and find themselves incapable of accepting that state of things as according to God's mind, and their whole being revolts against such a *regime* of spiritual death and disorder, that brings them at once into collision with the religious powers that be, and they are thought to be fanatical, eccentric, extreme, extraordinary, singular, and they suffer. It is not at the hands of the world they are suffering. The world is always ready to appreciate right down earnestness, but religious people are not always prepared to appreciate. The official system of things does not want its condition

upset, broken into; and therefore misunderstands and misinterprets all genuine exercise about the Lord's interests. And such an instrument, a vessel, brought into fellowship with God's heart, has to pass through a time of having all its genuine, true, heart exercise before God interpreted as the motions of an unbalanced mind, or something like that. You are reading deeper than I am saying, but this thing just speaks to our hearts. Well, that is Hannah.

Samuel—the power of prayer.

Now out of that Samuel comes. Samuel comes out of that exercise, that travail, that concern. Samuel comes in spite of that misunderstanding and he is the link between things as they are and things as God intends and desires them to be. Samuel becomes the link between the bad state and God's better state. Samuel marks a transition from one *regime* to another. The book of Samuel is the book of transition and Samuel is the link.

What does Samuel represent in spiritual principle? If we know that, we know what the link is, what that thing is which marks transition from a bad state to a good one, and it does not require a profound study of Samuel's life to get to the predominant significance of it. Samuel represents the place and power of prayer in a day of transition. You can say of Samuel, if you like, his life is prayer. Read Psalm xcix: ".....and Samuel among them that call upon his name:". Read Jer. xv. 1: "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 from my sight, and let them go forth." A tremendous statement. Of all the names of mighty men, Moses and Samuel are thus distinguished. We know how Moses stood between the people of God and interceded so that it even looked, interpreted naturally, as though Moses changed the mind of God, as though through his intercession Divine intentions were changed and God repented Him. Moses stood in the breach, and by his intercession moved heaven. And Samuel is linked with Moses, as much as to say that these two men are the last word in power with God in intercession and prayer. So Samuel comes out as the principle of prayer in a day of transition. That is the link between a bad state and a good one, things as they are and things as He intends them to be. Transition is marked by that mighty prayer. Out of Hannah's travail is brought this transition

instrument of prayer. Mark the life of Samuel and see how he called upon the Lord. "Cease not to pray to the Lord for us," said Israel to him one day. That was a testimony. That was saying, in other words, Samuel's life was a life of intercession for Israel and they said: "Do not stop it, we owe everything to your praying to the Lord for us." So Samuel comes out as the principle of prayer, but remember, in order to have power with God in prayer we have to learn to know the voice of the Lord in our own hearts. Samuel's early years were years of learning to know the voice of the Lord. Even when Eli was not recognising that voice Samuel was being taught to recognise the voice of the Lord; and to be able to speak to God with power we have to have that spiritual intelligence which knows when the Spirit speaks to us. We have to know the Lord's voice in order to be able to speak to the Lord. That is important. It is a basic necessity to a life of prevailing prayer. It is not just a life of pouring out to God petitions and requests, but a life of intelligence, speaking to God because God has spoken within. We speak back to God because God speaks in us. All that brings us to David.

We must not close without mentioning that David comes in through Samuel. David comes in through this prayer link. The instrument of recovery and of the fulness of the testimony comes in through travail in Hannah; through that reaching out to God in spite of all natural disqualifications and uselessness; and through that prayer-life of Samuel David comes in and he is anointed for what?—in relation to all that, to bring the testimony to fulness and to finality. The end of David's life and work is the ark of the Lord at rest in the House of God, constructed entirely according to the Divine dictate. David comes in for that. He is anointed in relation to the testimony of the Lord in its fulness and finality. That is the end which marks his life. The subsequent purpose of David's life and anointing was the fulness and purpose of the testimony of the Lord.

Anointing is unto the whole testimony.

For what are we anointed? To be preachers, evangelists, teachers? Individually anointed to be any one of those, or anything in itself? Never! We may be anointed to fulfil our ministry along any one of those specific lines, but always related to the whole testimony. If an evangelist uses his gift from God of evangelism as something in itself, be sure

that life will be limited. It will stop somewhere, and at the point where that life and that work stops, there will enter something which speaks of that life having missed its fulness and that ministry having failed of the *whole* purpose of God. That is the tragedy of having an organised system of evangelism which recognises evangelists as something in a water-tight compartment and does not carry the work of the evangelist on to the work of the teacher, the pastor, "for the perfecting of the saints." What applies there applies in every other direction of the anointing. It is the whole testimony, not fragmentary. Anointing is one, is relative, is entire, is connected with the fulness and finality of the testimony of Jesus. There will be much gathered into David's anointing, as we shall see; many who come into association with him as the anointed one, and derive their ministry as it were from his anointing, but it will all be related to one thing. Our individual anointing in Christ is not that we should be constituted something in ourselves, but that the full testimony of the Lord Jesus should be realised through every anointed member. The whole testimony is in view.

I think in the Old Testament there is nothing to compare with David's life for revealing the whole purpose of the anointing. There are other wonderful illustrations of it, but when you get to the end of David's life you have brought in the House of God in magnificent splendour, greatness, fulness, completeness and glory as you have it nowhere else in the old dispensation. This time was always referred to as the pivot, the summit of Israel's glory. David is always looked back upon as the very highest peak of Israel's history. Why? Because of that which marked his life. It was the House of God constituted wholly according to God's mind, with the ark of the testimony there at rest having reached finality. He was anointed to that; and it is only the Old Testament figure of the Lord Jesus as the Anointed One, and we coming into His anointing for the purpose of a universal display of His glory. That is the object of anointing—the full testimony of Jesus. Anointing is related to the testimony in fulness. I have no doubt but that to-day you are able to see a parallel, to a very large degree, between spiritual conditions as they are amongst the Lord's people generally and as they were in the days of Eli. The more spiritually alive we become the more we recognise how things are falling short of God's full

thought, and recovery is the order of the day : but it is along the Hannah, Samuel, David line if there is to be a recovery of the full testimony of Jesus. Not in some earthly system of organisation or material representation, but a vessel which contains the testimony of Jesus in fulness. If that is to be, this is the way and the way of the anointing is for that. The testimony may only be represented by a small vessel at the end, but it will be in spiritual fulness, which is spiritual greatness.

I want to close with that strong note. The anointing is for that. Have we the anointing? Have we the Spirit? Why, beloved, if that is so, the Holy Spirit has anointed us within unto that very thing. Think of it. God has committed Himself to that end. God is with us for that purpose. To have the whole testimony of Jesus recovered. That is our hope and assurance. How shall it be? Hannah, and the "impossible." How shall it be? Nature cannot help. We cannot do it. All the time nature comes back at us, much as we

may groan and travail, nature comes back and says: "You are out of it, you cannot do anything." But that makes room for God, and the anointing comes in there. I glory in this that the anointing came in through Hannah and Samuel. It cannot be done by us. The anointing has come for that purpose and there are no limits to the possibility of the anointing because it is another way of saying that God committed Himself to that. How did the Lord Jesus go through to the full accomplishment of His testimony? By the anointing. "... who through the eternal Spirit offered himself." "... God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." God had committed Himself. And unto the Body of Christ, the Church which is His Body, and to those members when they come into a right relationship with Himself, God has committed Himself for the fulness of the testimony.

T.A.-S.

Fellowship

Its basis and some of its Outworkings

No. III.

SCRIPTURES.—1 John i. 3; Psalms ii. 6-8; ex, 1-2; Hebrews x. 12-13; 2 Thess. iii. 5; Revelation iii. 10; Isaiah lxii. 1, 5-7.

WITH the fact still in mind that Fellowship, in its nature and essence, is a mutual sharing, a common participation, our hearts are filled afresh with wonder as we remember that this word is used not only of the relationship between believers, but also of that existing between believers on the one hand, and the Father and the Son on the other. For the practical enjoyment of such fellowship the believer must stand in an active faith appropriation of what Christ is made unto him through the work of His Cross. This enjoyed in and by the Holy Spirit, makes fellowship not only possible, but actual.

There is a much neglected aspect of this fellowship, already lightly touched upon in these articles, and brought into clear relief in the above passages of Scripture, which it is now our desire to consider in fuller detail. It is

fellowship with the Father in His purpose for the glory of the Son in its universal manifestation; and fellowship with the Son in His patient waiting for the full fruit of His Calvary Triumph. Such fellowship is the essence of Sonship and necessitates a deep work of the Holy Spirit in deliverance from all forms of self, whether self interest, or self centredness together with a transcendence of the whole realm of circumstances. Inasmuch as such fellowship is basic to, and prepares the way for God to use us as instruments for the furtherance of His mighty purposes, the enemy seeks in every possible way to hinder our coming to this position, by attacks upon us in the outer realm seeking to get us absorbed with our earthly circumstances, and obsessed with interests less in character than these high and holy ones related to the glory of Christ. Hence the need for us to be brought into a rich and full experience of the rest of God. "There remaineth therefore a rest (lit., a keeping of sabbath) to

the people of God. For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His" (Heb. iv. 9-10). This rest is far more than a life of deliverance from sin. There are many of the Lord's dear people who rejoice in an experience by means of which the power and dominion of sin has been broken in their lives who yet are largely self-centred. In the realm of spiritual blessing they do not know deliverance from self. Their eyes are still turned inward instead of being fixed on the Lord. Their own spiritual growth and state still occupies their thoughts and dominate their prayer life. We are persuaded the Lord would lead all such to the place where Christ, in the glory of His Person and the completeness of His Calvary work, so holds them, that they find in His Cross deliverance from self, and, in Himself, the absorbing occupation of their hearts. The Father finds infinite satisfaction in the Son, and He would bring us into fellowship with Himself in an appreciation of Christ which will lead us into His Own rest.

The Lord's present need.

The Lord needs on earth in this end-time a people so completely satisfied with Christ, so delivered from the self-life in all its subtle forms, and so emancipated from the oppression of circumstances, that He can bring them into fellowship with Himself in His burdens, making them thus an instrument in His mighty hand for the furtherance of His Own purposes. In this respect the great Apostle to the Gentiles is a pattern for us. Was ever man so completely selfless, so entirely devoted to the interests of his Lord? Self? "I have been crucified with Christ...the life which I now live in the flesh, I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God." Possessions? "For whom I have suffered the loss of all things." Circumstances? "I have learned, in whatever condition I am to be independent of circumstances. I am schooled to bear the depths of poverty, I am schooled to bear abundance. In life as a whole, and in all its circumstances, I have mastered the secret of living--how to be the same amidst repletion and starvation, amidst abundance and privation. I am equal to every lot, through the help of Him Who gives me inward strength" (Philip iv. 12-13 way). Infirmities? "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses

for Christ's sake (2 Cor. xii. 9-10). The Lord's interests in His Church? "Yea, if I be offered (poured out as a Drink Offering) upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all (Philip ii. 17). What an example! Well might he say "Be ye imitators of me." No one can even remotely enter into Paul's experience who has not come into the enjoyment of the Rest of God.

Spiritual Intelligence.

A further pre-requisite for fellowship with God in His purposes is Spiritual Intelligence. We must know what the Father's purpose is in relation to His Son, and for the Church in union with its Sovereign Head. It is an amazing and significant thing that, notwithstanding the clearest possible revelation in the Sacred Word regarding these great mountain peaks of truth, large numbers of the Lord's people fail to apprehend them. There can be no question that a real measure of spiritual maturity, together with an inward illumination of the Holy Spirit, is necessary if these aspects of truth are to be understood. Again and again Paul is found on his knees labouring in prayer that this inward enlightenment might be granted to those to whom he had ministered the Word, also for those whose faith and love had been reported to him, but to whom he had not personally ministered (see Eph. i. 17-18 and Col. i. 9). It is a fact to be carefully noted that he is found first rendering thanks to God for the Faith and Love of these saints. "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all the saints cease not to give thanks for you making mention of you in my prayers" (Eph. i. 15-16). See also Col. i. 4-5 and verse 9: "For this cause," etc. The three basic virtues of the Christian life are Faith, Hope, Love. Faith and love are integral parts of the Fruit of the Spirit, and until these have been wrought into the warp and woof of the believer's life, fellowship with God in the Hope is impossible. But where these are found on the Lord's people there is a foundation in which God can build; hence the need of prayer for them that they may go on unto perfection, or have unveiled in their hearts the mighty purposes of God.

A careful reading and re-reading of the Epistles to Ephesians and Colossians in the spirit of Paul's prayers would result in such a shifting back of horizons, such a revelation of the far-flung purposes of God for Christ and His Church, that every other truth would be seen

in its relatedness thereto, and to the governing purpose of the ages. As a consequence everything in personal experience which did not directly contribute to this end would sink into insignificance.

The Governing Purpose.

Is there a governing purpose? Is there some single, supreme, objective, conceived in the Godhead in the counsels of eternity, towards which the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, has been working throughout the ages? Is there some central unifying truth which, when revealed to the heart, brings every aspect and facet of truth into its place, in one complete, harmonious system? A truth which is the keystone to the arch? Or is truth a series of scattered and unrelated doctrines, any one of which men may take up or leave alone as they please, some fighting for a given truth, others ignoring it as unnecessary. If truth is one, what is the unifying principle? What is it that makes the doctrines of Repentance, Faith, Baptism, Laying on of Hands, Resurrection, Eternal Judgment, Rapture, etc. etc., but parts of one ordered whole, the loss of any single unit weakening the whole? It is the purpose of God for the universal glory of His Son, and the relationship of the Church, the Body of Christ, to Him as His fullness in that glory. Perceive that, and all other aspects of truth fall into place in relation to it.

"And He made known to us, in the fullness of wisdom and understanding, the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He had purposed in Himself to fulfil, that it should be dispensed in the fullness of time, to make all things one in Christ as Head, yea, both things in heaven and things on earth, in Him; in Whom we also received the portion of our lot, having been predestinated thereto according to His purpose, whose working makes all fulfil the counsel of His Own will" (Eph. i. 9-11, Conybeare).

Pause awhile, beloved reader, and pray that the magnificence and glory of this revelation may break upon your spirit. Do not hasten on and miss the wonder of it. For it is in relation to the accomplishment of this purpose that God is seeking to bring us into fellowship with Himself. He wills that we should desire this consummation with a deep longing of heart. He desires that it should possess us, that all our activities should be related to it, and governed by it, even as His Own activities are. "Our fellowship is with the Father and with His

Son, Jesus Christ." And fellowship is a mutual sharing, a common participation. Well might the Apostle John add: "These things write we unto you that your joy may be full." The whole vast universe of God manifesting the glory of Christ, and the Church... His Body... the divinely prepared instrument of that manifestation and administration. The Father willed it, the Son has wrought redemption for it, and the Spirit, proceeding from the Father, has been working towards it for nearly 2,000 years.

The Expectant Christ.

The nations have raged, do rage, and will rage against the Christ of God, but the fact abides: "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." Jehovah has said to Him "Sit Thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies, Thy footstool." He is seated there in the Majesty on high "From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool" (Heb. x. 13). His attitude is one of patient waiting. In that waiting He seeks our fellowship. He waits in Heaven. He desires that we should wait on earth. He waits with patient endurance. We should share His patience, not in the sloth of passivity, but in a spirit of active co-operation, and longing expectancy. "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ" (2 Thess. iii. 5, R.V.). Are we "keeping the word of His patience"? (Rev. iii. 10). That is the supreme mark of a Philadelphian testimony in Laodicean days.

We are surely in the end-time of the age. The marks of Laodicea are everywhere apparent. A self-complacent church and spiritual starvation go hand in hand. Lukewarmness: "A form of godliness but denying the power." Bearing the name of Christ, but not possessing His Spirit. Yet, thank God, even in such days there is in the earth a true testimony to Christ. God has His people here and there, faithful amidst unfaithfulness. "Thou hast kept My word and not denied My Name." And... exceedingly precious to the Lord, "Thou hast kept the word of My patience." You have entered into fellowship with me in my patient endurance.

Oh, how little we understand, and sympathise with, the heart of our Lord Jesus. In the carnality of our minds we think of His second advent, His coming for His people, as a thing fixed in the programme of God, to take place when the appointed hour arrives. We forget the patient waiting of the Son on His Father's

throne, longing for the time when He will be able to "present the Church to Himself, a glorious Church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." He purchased her by the Cross of His passion and poured out blood. He waits for her now in the glory with the same intensity of love. The Holy Spirit strives within the Church to prepare her for her Lord, so that she may be as a "bride adorned for her husband." The hour of His coming is related to the completion of that work.

'Midst the darkness, storm and sorrow,
One bright gleam I see ;
Well I know tho blessed morrow
Christ will come for me.

'Midst the light, and peace and glory
Of the Father's home,
Christ for me is watching, waiting,
Waiting till I come.

There amidst the love and glory
He is waiting yet.
On His hands a name is graven,
He can ne'er forget.

There, amidst the songs of heaven,
Sweeter to His ear
Is the footfall through the desert
Ever drawing near.

There, made ready are the mansions,
Radiant, still and fair,
But the Bride the Father gave Him
Yet is wanting there.

We believe that the coming of the Lord Jesus is the next thing in the development of the ordered purpose of God, and that He is moving in these days to bring it to pass. If that is the case, He will surely do what He has ever done when moving in history to some mighty event, viz., bring a people on earth into fellowship with Himself in relation to what He desires to do, and make them an instrument, in His hand, toward the accomplishment of His desire.

Intercession and Testimony.

It is not wise to speak dogmatically as to the great problem of evil in the universe, but Scripture seems to establish beyond question that God's thought is to bring about the overthrow of the whole Satanic system through redeemed humanity. Inasmuch as Satan, and his hosts, are set in opposition to the supreme

purpose of God in relation to Christ, God, in furthering that purpose, at every step seeks to bring men into fellowship with Himself, and acts against the powers of darkness, not in the omnipotence of Deity, but through the weakness of humanity in co-operation with Himself. Hence, He prepares an instrument on earth, and brings it into a close relationship to Himself. That instrument will always have a two-fold task. Intercession and Testimony. Isaiah lxii. is an illustration of this. The purpose of God there is the restoration of Zion. Verses 8-9 make that abundantly clear. "Jehovah hath sworn by His right hand and by the arm of His strength," etc. Yet an instrument of intercession and testimony is needed: "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day nor night; ye that are the Lord's remembrances, take ye no rest, and give Him no rest till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." (vv. 6-7, R.V.). That is intercession. "Say ye to the daughters of Zion, Behold thy salvation cometh; behold His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him" (v. 11, R.V.). That is testimony.

The same principle is seen at work throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. Think of the magnificent testimony Elijah gave to the true God on Mount Carmel. "If Jehovah be God, follow Him, but if Baal, then follow him." "Jehovah, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel." But what lay behind this testimony and made it possible? Elijah's fellowship with God in His concern for his people. Elijah appears suddenly upon the scene with the authoritative Word of God in his mouth (1 Kings xvii. 1). But that was not the beginning of the story. His heart had travailed with God in the secret place over Israel's idolatry. He had learned the will of God in relation to such a state of things. All of which prepared him to be God's instrument. "Elijah prayed fervently that it might not rain" (James v. 17). The word rendered "fervently" is thirty-six times rendered "prayer." He prayed "with prayer." That is he "prayed in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20). The authoritative word of God came through in his praying and he was thereby emboldened and commissioned, having stood before God, to stand before Ahab, and announce the Divine judgment. Note the same method of God in removing the judgment, as in inflicting it. "The word of

God came to Elijah..... Go, shew thyself to Ahab and I will send rain upon the earth." But before the rain came, Elijah is seen prostrate upon the earth on the top of Mount Carmel, with his face between his knees, holding on till the clouds begin to darken the sky. It is always so. God works through human instrumentality, and depends in the furtherance of His purposes upon the co-operation of those whom He has brought into fellowship with Himself. It would be easy to multiply instances, but we forbear.

So in relation to the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus, and all the mighty chain of events flowing out therefrom, leading to the full and universal glory. The Holy Spirit is working in the hearts of many of God's people at this time, giving illumination as to the purpose of God, and bringing them into fellowship with the Father and the Son in the present Divine

movement. To all such a priceless opportunity is presented. We stand in an hour when tremendous things are at issue. To be a part, however small and humanly insignificant, of the instrument God is preparing, and bringing into fellowship with Himself, in relation to the birth and rapture of the Manchild, the completion of the Church and the securing of the glory of Christ, with all the manifold blessings flowing out therefrom to the whole creation, is a thing angels might well covet. We are verily those "upon whom the ends of the ages are come." May we have grace to know the day of our visitation, and purpose of heart that we may not fail our glorious Lord. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

S.A.

"Nehemiah"

A Living Message for God's People To-day

II.

READING: Isaiah lviii. 6-14.

WE come now to the second thing, which is, the vessel of recovery; for it is the recovery of the full and complete testimony according to God's mind which is represented by the work of Nehemiah, especially the recovery of the testimony of God toward the world and men.

Typical significance of Nehemiah and Ezra.

I think I might just repeat this general word, that what we have in Ezra and Nehemiah is the testimony of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ, and that, in a threefold way. The testimony concerning the cross, in the altar; the testimony concerning the Church, in the House; and the testimony to the world, to the nations, to men, as in the wall. So that it is Christ at the centre and Christ at the circumference. It is the fulness of Christ from centre to circumference that is here; and as to the wall particularly. It represents the defining of the limits of Christ, as to what is of Christ and what is not of Christ; as to what is according to God's Son, and what is not according to God's Son; for the wall is the boundary, the line of demarcation as to what is inside of the testimony of Jesus, and as to what is outside of that testi-

mony. Those are general remarks to help you grasp the whole import of this book.

Nehemiah—the man.

Having said that, we come to this second factor of the vessel of recovery. The man, Nehemiah. You will, of course, as we go along, be remembering that Nehemiah is a representation. What he was in his day was what God seeks to be possessed of at the end of this age, not perhaps, in one outstanding individual, although there will be an individual ministry in this respect; but perhaps more especially in a corporate instrument, a company, by which the Lord will recover this full testimony concerning His Son. So that what is said of Nehemiah has its application to such an instrument at any time when that instrument is brought into being by the Lord for His purpose. It is helpful and useful to recognise the difference that there was between the two men who represented this movement of God, Ezra and Nehemiah: and there was a difference. I think we might describe the difference somewhat in this way, that Ezra was more of the character of a priest, while Nehemiah took more of the features of a prophet. If you let your mind

dwell upon the Word in those two connections you will understand what I mean. Ezra was a quieter man than Nehemiah. Perhaps a more restful man than Nehemiah. You might say that he was a gentler man than Nehemiah.

Spiritual energy.

Nehemiah was rougher, he was a man marked by action, and prompt and energetic action. Ezra seems to have been more marked by thought--not that he was not a man of action; but if there was a difference in these two men, Nehemiah was more a man of action than perhaps of thought, than was Ezra. Now Nehemiah, toward the Lord's people was kind and considerate, hospitable and encouraging, and always sought to be helpful, but toward Divine interests, and spiritual principles, and enemies of those interests and principles, he was uncompromising, zealous and jealous, strict and prompt, and there was no getting round him. We mention this because it marks a Divine stage in things. The different types are required for different stages in the Divine purpose, that certain features belong to certain points of progress in what God is doing. For Ezra to be a builder of the House and an adorer, an embellisher of the House, you will find a quietness: so we see a passiveness, if you like, a love which buildeth up; but when it comes to the question of foreign, alien, mixed and inimical elements having impinged upon the things of God, and having brought the testimony of God into ruin and disrepute, and when it is a matter of meeting the forces which are set dead against the Name and the honour of the Lord, then you have moved from the first of Ephesians into the last chapters, you have gone from the love which buildeth up, to the warring in the heavenlies, and you have got different features developed; and so a Nehemiah character comes in for that.

You see that in the taking up of the Lord's interests in a day when the forces of evil are dead set against those interests and that testimony, the Lord has to develop warring elements and characteristics in His instrument, and so a Nehemiah is not such a mild man as an Ezra. Now that lies on the surface, that is perfectly patent, but it does bring to us again an emphasis upon what the Lord needs right at the end when we are peculiarly up against the forces foreign to the Lord's interests, which are seeking to undermine, under-cut, and work the destruction of His testimony; which have already taken hold, as we have seen in those

nine things which we mentioned. So that is Nehemiah. Vigour, downrightness is required in a day like this. There is a mildness which passes by the name of love, which may do a very great deal of harm to the testimony, and allow of a lot of things abiding in secret, under cover, which are working positively against the Lord's testimony; and we smother it over with what we call love and forbearance, when Nehemiah is needed to chase it away. He says: ".....I chased him from me." He did worse than that as some of you recall. Now that is the nature of the man.

A heart-burden.

Then we enter more deeply into his heart and we find that he was a man who had a great heart-burden. He carried on his heart very heavily the interests of the Lord and His testimony. His brother, Hanani, had come to him in his far off exile and reported the state of things at Jerusalem. That is how the book opens, and Nehemiah himself tells us: "And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven, and said....." There is a great heart-burden. That heart-burden is first of all borne in the presence of God alone, then out from the presence of God he carries that burden and it becomes apparent that this man has a concern; in spite of himself, in spite of what was expected of him, in spite of what was unlawful before men, his heart burden betrays itself. "I was the king's cupbearer. And it came to pass..... I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence. Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid. And said unto the king, Let the king live forever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" That is enough to show us this further thing as to the nature and the condition of a vessel to be used by the Lord in recovering His full testimony, the testimony concerning His Son. That vessel, that instrument is one, and must be one upon whose heart, genuinely, the condition of things as so clearly contrary to the thought of God, lies with very great pressure. We have shown the order that this burden took with Nehemiah.

It is one thing, beloved, for us to get a kind of

public concern about things and then begin to make a lot of noise about it amongst men, to advertise, to demonstrate, and to give it a public form in utterance and effort and organisation ; to join ourselves to some cause, or to join some cause to ourselves, and then in that cause to make a great big affair of it ; that is one thing. And that may have all manner of elements which just fall short of that which is quite essential and necessary from the Lord's standpoint. It is one thing to come to a situation from the outside and link ourselves on with it, and take it up and make it our bit of work for 'life, our life-interest. It is quite another thing for the Lord to put into our hearts in secret an almost unbearable, intolerable burden which is His own heart-burden, and for us first of all to bear that thing secretly in the presence of God upon our hearts in a deep out-pouring of travailling prayer ; quite another thing to come to the Lord's interests in that way. There are plenty of people whom you could get interested in a cause, whom you could get to take up a piece of work requiring help ; but it is another thing to have that spiritual fellowship with God which results in God putting His travail into your own soul. The difference is, in the one instance the thing is something objective, and we come along and interest ourselves in it, take it up, but it is apart from us. It has our interest, it has our energy, it has our resources, but it is something objective to ourselves. It is a piece of work, a movement, a testimony (using that word in a technical sense). The other thing is this ; before the Lord we take responsibility. Do you notice that "We"—Nehemiah is a part of this and this is a part of him. You notice how, all the way through, in dealing with this matter he uses the word "we."

Yes, in spirit, in mind, he is apart from the whole thing, that is, he has not accepted the conditions ; perhaps he is not responsible for the state of things, he certainly repudiates the whole thing, and does not for one moment agree with it, and yet he is in this thing as though he *were* responsible for it, as though God could lay it all at his own door. The thing came so near to his own heart that he did not stand here and the situation there, but he found himself as one with it. It was his own burden, and he took the thing in responsibility upon his own shoulders before God in prayer, and prayed vicarious prayer over this situation. That is being on the inside. If the man himself personally had been responsible for the destruc-

tion of Jerusalem, the wreckage of the walls, and the awful moral condition of the people of God there ; if he had been one who had brought it all about he could not have taken this thing more to heart. He is like a man who is convicted of responsibility in this thing.

Not a profession but a passion.

We shall have more to say about that later, but, beloved, that is enough for the moment to see what kind of a vessel the Lord must have to do things. He does not want "workers" to take up His work ; He wants travaillers to travail with Him for His spiritual interests. He does not want employees, He wants sons. He does not want experts, He wants those who have got a passion : those to whose heart the whole thing comes so closely that it bends them down before Him in an anguish ; who are so much in the matter that it is their matter before God ; it is theirs. It is no mere mental apprehension of teaching and of truth, it is a heart burden, a desperate concern for the Lord because of things as they are spiritually amongst His people. Are we exercised like that ? Are we moved like that ? Are we in things like that ? Have we taken up work for the Lord ? Have we associated ourselves with the cause of Christ ? Or, have we come with God's own burden of travail in our souls, that this thing to us is a thing which saps our life, saps our very vitality, the thing for which we are pouring out our very blood, the thing which costs everything, and yet we can do no other ; there is no question of resigning, giving up, the thing is ourselves. God must have something like that at the end, for His purpose, and I think if we said no more, that is a challenging word to our hearts. Oh, let us wipe the slate of all these other ideas of organising something, running something, getting a movement going. Let us see that God brings this into being out of travail. He baptises a soul into an anguish, he throws upon some one or some little company the mantle of His own terrible disappointment, dis-satisfaction and grief because of things as He sees them spiritually amongst His own people. That is how God brings things into being. Men do it in other ways, but that has always been God's way. It has cost the instrument its life every time. That does not necessarily mean that the instrument has died a sudden death, or even laid down its life in martyrdom, but it has cost the instrument its life. Are we in things like that ?

Such is Nehemiah. We are seeing into the

inner secret history of this thing, it is before God not before men. Oh, may the Lord save us from having the preponderance, the greater measure of things before men, and the lesser measure before Himself. May all that is before men come out of what we are before God. That should be a matter of exercise for us, for you, for me, and we should ask the Lord that our secret life with Him over these matters, shall be kept well abreast of all our public ministries and our outward activities. If the balance is on the side of what is public, and toward men, there will be weakness and failure. Strength and effectiveness will be the measure of our secret history with God. Then out from the secret place he carried his heart burden before men. Not initially, not that men might take account of it. He would fain, I think, have covered it up, for there is fear here when he realises that it has been detected; it has betrayed itself, perhaps unconsciously, certainly unwontedly. And yet that has a right place when it comes that way. When outwardly others are able to take account of us and say: "There is nothing put on in this matter; this is no mere professional thing this is not some habit, something they are interested in; this is something which to them is a matter of life and death; this is a matter which goes right to the heart with them." And men *are* able to discern whether it is like that or not. Oh, they know, better than perhaps we think they do, whether we are real or whether it is put on; whether we are speaking out of a book or whether we are speaking out of our hearts; whether the thing is something we have collected or whether it is something born of anguish. I am speaking to brethren and sisters now to whom ministry is committed in a more public way. May I urge this upon you, that you seek ever to have your own heart deeply exercised in everything that you have to say publicly. Yes, it will cost, it will be anguish, it will be sorrow of heart, it will mean a price; but, beloved, it is the way of spiritual fruitfulness and effectiveness, the Lord can make you His messenger in His message. That is, a sign unto the people of the thing that you are saying. Men are able to say: "Yes, that is not something they have read or studied and prepared; that is something that has had a working in the life, and it has cost something." It will cost, but it is the way of effectiveness and fruitful service. And what is true as to public ministry will be true in relation to any instrument that

the Lord will use for any special purpose; it must have the thing wrought into it and it must not be something that it has adopted. The Lord keep us from adopting things, but work the thing right into us. Well, that is Nehemiah, a man with a burden, and a man with a concern, whose heart is deeply wrought upon by God to share His own Divine travail.

Divine facilitations.

Now a word as to the procedure of the man. Here is the man himself, and then his concern for the testimony, and then his procedure in recovery. There was some history before he came out to definitely take up his work, and it is well just to note it because it has a place; a preparatory history we may call it. There were those signs of favour from the Lord which were basic to what followed. The king had discerned his inward state, had diagnosed his trouble as sorrow of heart, had put to him a question as to what he would have, and you notice what follows: "Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven." Instant, prompt, brief touch with heaven—"And I said unto the king....." I believe, beloved, that in those touches of response from heaven which represent Divine favour, those helpful little things we might call them in this whole matter, where God just gives indications that this is His way—He is in this—favourable signs—I believe in that there is represented what very often obtains when the Lord is going to do something new in relation to His testimony.

The Lord prefaces it—shall we say—by certain indications of favour. Presently we shall be up against the grim realities, presently faith will be well tested, later on we may find ourselves in conflict and the difficulties increasing, accumulating; but there have been those little favourable indications from the Lord that He was in it, and this was His way. They may not continue, but there is just that little space where the Lord seems to bear witness in various little helpful ways to this thing. He constitutes something which we always remember in days of difficulty and darkness and adversity as the Lord's way of showing us that this was our life-work, this was the way of His will for us. I think perhaps you know, some of you, what I am talking about, and we can look back to a time when at the commencement of some new piece of life experience, service, some new movement of God in us and through us, how at the commencement there

were marks, clear marks of Divine favour, and things just moved beautifully and wonderfully and it was all very romantic, all very wonderful, and we were filled with wonder at the way the Lord was doing things, facilitating and helping. That passed: that was a phase; it went, and the grim realities followed, but we do not forget that. There was that with Nehemiah. For this short period everything seemed to be on his side, with him; the favourable touches of the Lord. Well, that is very good, that is a preparatory period which should be cherished, but if that passes do not think that things have gone wrong: The Lord was just getting you on the way; now He is not going to keep you on the way by sight, but is going to cause you to walk in the way by faith. It is like that. Remarkable things happen at the beginning and those remarkable things do not always continue. One says that because it is so true to life and experience, and it is a thing not to be overlooked here because we are taking a survey of this movement of God, and very often the heart looks back upon those periods and craves to have them all over again: "Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord," and you want to have the early seals of God repeated again and again. But no, you advance beyond that, and the Lord facilitates to get you on the way, not to get you into a trap and leave you. You have got that life in the background and you know it was all the Lord, the Lord did it.

We are not here by your own urge, effort, endeavour, scheming, planning; the Lord brought us in and with marked indications that it was His way; at that time the signs of this way being the Lord's way were unmistakable, there is no doubt about it, the Lord marvelously put our feet on this road and although there came a point where we ceased to have those conspicuous signs of Divine acts and undertaking, yet there was no doubt about it that our coming into this way was of the Lord. Nehemiah met grim things later, but doubtless he always remembered the wonderful way in which the Lord facilitated the realisation of that into which he was Divinely brought. Do not expect—may be the Lord will continue to give you a lot, but it will be the exception and not the rule if He does—do not expect that you are going to find your path strewn with flowers all the way. Very likely you will find an end of the roses and the beginning of the thorns, but the Lord has indicated that it was right,

it was His way, by helping at the beginning and now we have to go on in faith. That was a preparatory stage with Nehemiah.

Two sides of prayer-life.

Now I want just to recall his prayer-life. How basic this prayer life was to everything. You should read through the book again just to take account of this matter. You find that Nehemiah's prayer life was a very real thing and a very persistent thing. You might almost say a continuous thing, but it was not always the same kind of thing. In this first chapter you have the deep, secret outpouring of his heart to God. He is away with the Lord alone and in a strong heart-emptying power he pours himself out. He can do that, remember. That is a phase of his prayer-life; he *can* do it and he does it, but as you read on you find that it is not always like that. His prayer is frequently what we may call ejaculatory: "So I prayed to the God of heaven." It is like an ejaculation, a sudden lifting up of the heart. There is no time for the outpouring of the heart. Here is a situation—but he is in touch with heaven—an emergency, a difficult situation, something arising which allows of no getting away to God and pouring out the heart, but only permits of a lifting up of the heart to the Lord on the spot in a moment; a touch with heaven. Those two forms of prayer must go together. We hear a lot of people saying: "Yes, well I can pray anywhere; I can pray in a bus or a tram or walking along the street," and very often those people say that to excuse themselves from that secret outpouring of heart before the Lord. Beware of that.

I do not believe that we shall get heaven's sudden responses to sudden ejaculatory prayers unless we have got a background of prayer. I do not believe that we can have an emergency touch with heaven if we have not got a deep background life with heaven. And Nehemiah's prayer life brings these two things together, that because he had that prayer-life in the back, in secret with God where he did, as he could, pour himself out to God, then in the time of emergency he was already in touch with heaven, and heaven responded. It is important to see that. But when we have said that we must note the general fact, that an instrument, the vessel, or a work like Nehemiah's in an end-time in relation to the Coming of the Lord, is essentially a vessel and instrument with a strong prayer life in secret with God, and in bringing heaven in in emergencies

it is essentially a prayer ministry. It seems to me that Nehemiah did nothing without prayer: it seems that in every turn of the way he lifted his heart to the Lord; in every situation, question, difficulty; he was in touch with the Lord about it. He was a man who made prayer his ground of action on every point in every direction.

Now whether this interests you or not is not the question. The question is, are we going to be for the Lord an instrument for His deepest heart purpose? If so, there has got to be a life of prayer. There has got to be the place with the Lord apart and alone in heart outpouring, and there has got to be from that, that constant touch with the Lord as we move in His interests from point to point. The prayer-life of Nehemiah is something to study.

Taking action.

Then, taking action: the action which Nehemiah took. He did take action, and that is something to take account of. There are a lot of people who have burdens and concerns who never do any more than bemoan the situation as it is; who never get beyond deploring things; they are everlastingly talking about the bad condition, they say nothing but how wrong things are, and so they go about bemoaning, talking and never doing anything. Nehemiah was not like that. Nehemiah was very keenly alive to the situation and took it very much to heart, but he did not simply bemoan it and he did not merely preach about it. We must not fall into a way of criticising the Lord's people who are not where we think they ought to be, who do not know what we think they ought to know, and have not arrived at the place at which we have arrived, and therefore they are down there and we talk about them. "They have not the light you know." "They have not entered into the truth you know."

Yes, we might even go beyond that and denounce them for their backwardness, denounce them because they have not got the light. It is easy to get into a way of condemning, a spirit of condemnation, judging. All that does not cost anything. What are we doing about it? I see Nehemiah with all his perception and discernment of things, and all his heart-ache about it, not going to the people and saying: "Look here, you are all wrong, you are all out of the way, you are in a bad state." He went to them and he said: "We are in a bad state; we are in a bad way." He got down by the

side of them as though he were where they were, and he was going to help them up to where he saw they ought to be, and to the place where he, in spirit, was.

Now this is a matter we must recognise (just bear with me for a minute, I said I was coming back to this). You see here one of those laws of what is called the Church the Body, and the physical body is taken as an illustration of the Church which is Christ's Body. Now look; that hand and that arm have all gone wrong, perhaps out of joint and all down that side is affected, and things are not working right; there is disorder, perhaps disease, may be a very painful malady in those limbs, in that part of my body. Now if this hand and this arm should get up and say: "You are all wrong over there, you ought not to be like that; I do not belong to you at all, I have no association with you, no connection." Is that true? "The body is one." You cannot separate two or three of your limbs from your body and put them over there, and the rest over here and still have a complete body. No, the very fact of the organism means that you are one body, and if one member suffers all the members suffer with it, and being an organism and not an organisation, every member, although its condition may not be as bad as some other members, every member is involved by its very life, in the state of the other. It has one life, it has one nerve system, it is a corporate whole. Now that principle is here. "We"—and the law of the Body is this, that if there are those who are out of the way, who have not light, truth, life, as we think they ought to have, being a body, beloved, we cannot live in detachment from them, we are by the very organism of things spiritually bound to them, a part of them, and the Lord is not going to cleave this Body right down the centre and cut off that half which is more backward than the other. Oh, no! That is not the Lord's way. The Lord does not divide the Body, the Body is a whole, and you will notice that all the way through the Lord's Word, the Lord brings some members into a place of real concern for the others, in order to bring the others to a place where He would have them. And Nehemiah, although spiritually far above these people in his state, far beyond them, comes down there and he says: "we."

Now do believe me, I feel so strongly that what the Lord wants is that there shall never be the sign of that division which is the fruit and outworking of any kind of superiority of

light and knowledge and truth, that puts others who have not got light, and that truth, in an inferior place and relegates them to another quarter, and regards them as something apart from the Lord's people. That must not be, and our attitude, the attitude of any who may have been given more light for ministry purposes (and not only for themselves) to the whole Body, the attitude of such to others must be of being in the place where they are, to help them on, and not to judge, to criticise, to condemn. Oh, no, the Lord will never take us to glory because we have got more light; the Lord will take us to glory according to what we have done with the light He gave us. There will be many of the Lord's children in glory who have not half the light that you and I have, and they will be sharing His glory as much as you and I will, and the basis of their being there will be what they did with the light they had. Responsibility is according to light; and it is just as difficult for some people to live up to a little light as it is for others to live up to a lot of light. Our responsibility will be all the greater if we have more light.

It is a word that I do feel is necessary. I close with it. That our attitude toward all whom we may feel—and have good reason to feel—are far short of what the Lord would have for them, must be one of earnest, humble, yearning over them and getting down helpfully alongside of them, and not detaching ourselves and living apart and regarding them as those who have not got the light. We must go out as Nehemiah did and say: "We are involved in this." If there is a bad state, we are involved in it; apart from the light that we have; we are involved in it. Our responsibility for the light involves us in it and we must take it, and work with God against it, in love, in fellowship. So did Nehemiah.

Oh, may the Lord speak to our hearts very directly through this word, and make us to see

that there is something that He needs, something that must be if He is to be fully satisfied: that things are not—with His people—as He would have them; that the full testimony of His Son is not represented as He would have it represented. In order that it might be so He must have an instrument, a vessel; and these are the things which must characterise such a vessel; energy against all compromise and mixture in the things of God; a great heart-burden for the Lord's testimony; taking personal responsibility for the bad state; a deep and continuous touch with God by prayer; taking action in fellowship with God for recovery, and not merely bemoaning the state of things.

T. A. S.

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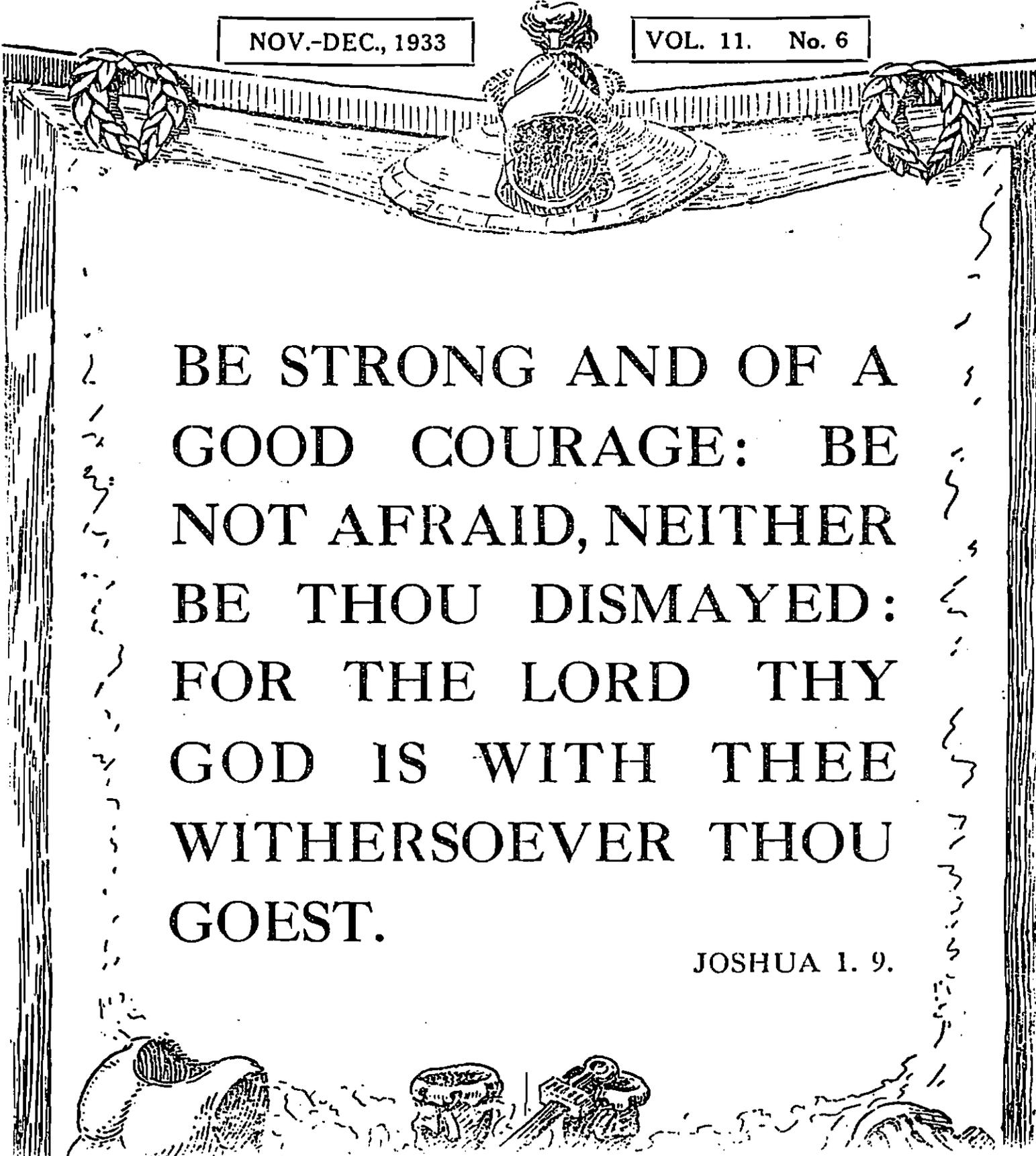


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BE STRONG AND OF A
GOOD COURAGE: BE
NOT AFRAID, NEITHER
BE THOU DISMAYED:
FOR THE LORD THY
GOD IS WITH THEE
WITHERSOEVER THOU
GOEST.

JOSHUA 1. 9.

The Spoil of Battle

READING : 1 Chronicles xxvi. 27.

So we gather that the House of the Lord is constituted out of our conflicts, out of our battles ; the Lord builds from the fruit of conflict. Thus it was in the temple, given through David to Solomon. When that temple was completed, it stood as a monument to universal victory. Its very substance declared triumph on the right hand and on the left. The silver and the gold and all the precious things of which it was comprised had been taken in battle and wrought into the House of God. And what is illustrated in the Old Testament is true in the reality of the New. The greater Son of David, the greater than Solomon, Who is here, builds the House from the spoil of His Own warfare, and the warfare of His saints.

I was impressed as I noted in this first book of Chronicles, chapter xvii. 10, the Lord is speaking to David, and one of the things which He says is : " And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be moved no more ; neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more, as at the first, and as from the day that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel ; and I will subdue all thine enemies." You notice that the Lord refers to the judges over Israel. The Lord raised up judges, as you will remember, to do that which Israel had failed to do completely under Joshua. Under Joshua they were meant by the Lord to utterly destroy all the nations in the land, and completely subdue every enemy. They did not do that. They had suffered enemies to remain, they had compromised, and then the Lord raised up the judges to save them from the terrible results of their having failed to make a complete work of destroying all their enemies. But the judges failed, and the book of Judges is a sad story of the work still incomplete. The Lord raised up the judges to do that which had not been done, but again the judges did not perfect the work. And then it is tremendously interesting and illuminating to notice how in 1 Chronicles xviii. and xix., when the Lord had spoken to David about building the House, then David definitely and positively took in hand to over-

throw all those other nations which the judges had not overthrown, and they are mentioned in these two chapters. You go over them and you have a list of the very nations and peoples mentioned in the book of Judges, and David, on getting the vision of the House of God seems to be moved instinctively by the Spirit of God to see that that House can never be realised until these enemies are subdued, until they are entirely overthrown ; and the Lord fulfilled His word to subdue all his enemies, and those very nations were taken in hand and dealt with. When the Lord had given David victory on every side round about, then he handed the plan to Solomon to carry out the building of the House, and the spoil of those battles was the material for the House. The enemy had the resources for the House of God, and the enemy had got to be despoiled that the House might be built. That could lead us a very long way and be very illuminating. I want to seek to reduce it to a few words and a small compass which, nevertheless, will provide you with a great deal for future helpfulness and contemplation.

The Twofold Building.

There are two aspects of the building of the House of God. We are rather inclined to take more account of one than the other. That is, there is the numerical side. We think of building the House of God, we think of gathering in of people, the adding of souls by their salvation and being brought into the truth, and so we think of the House of God being built alone in that sense referred to by Peter : " Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house....." that is, we think of the numerical side, the gathering of the individual stones and their coming into their place in the spiritual edifice. Well, that is a true side to the building of the Lord's House, but it is only one side, and only half of the truth. There is another side which is equally important, without which that will be altogether an inadequate thing ; that is, there is the spiritual and moral side of the building of God's House. You may have a great number of individuals saved and still fail to have the truest meaning of the House of God. You may have congrega-

tions and not have a church. You may have numbers, and not have spiritually the House of God. The House of God is not only a numerical thing, it is a spiritual and moral thing. That is, it has a character, and that character is what makes it in very essence the House of God. It takes its character from its Head, and will eventually in its consummation be recognised, not as a great multitude merely of saved souls, but as something which bears the character of its Head, the Lord Jesus. The time is coming when the Lord will cause His Name to be upon all His own; that is, we shall receive a white stone and in that white stone a new name; we shall have a new name, and we shall be called by His Name, and His Name will be in our foreheads. That is all symbolic language and its meaning is just this; the Lord Jesus will be so fully manifested in His own, that as you look at them all, and each, you will say: "That is Jesus," "That is the Lord Jesus," you recognise so much of Him, He will be so much in evidence that you simply have to say: "That is the Lord Jesus." You have met Him in them, and in meeting them you met Him. And so He will be universally revealed through His own, and His Name is His character, what His Name embodies spiritually and morally will be resting upon them, they will take their character from Him, and so it will be one universal displaying of the character and nature of the Lord Jesus. It will not dispense with His Own individual personal being, but they will be a channel of His own universal expression.

Character Through Conflict.

The building of the House of the Lord, therefore, is not only a gathering of people but it is a spiritual and a moral building up, and that side of things is only done through conflict. The Divine economy has so ordered that although the Lord Jesus has in Himself a universal triumph over all His foes, the foes are still left for us to deal with. The enemy has, although been defeated, still been left for the saints to have something to do with, and the Lord has not put out of the universe our foes, though in Himself He has triumphed. He has left them for us to deal with in His triumph, and it is in that that you and I get our spiritual and moral development. It is by conflict, by battle, by grim and terrible warfare spiritually that the moral excellencies of our triumphant Head are brought out in us. We triumph in His victory, but we know that faith is so tested

in a conflict, so deeply tried in a battle, that it is something more than just objectively holding on, or believing in something in Christ; that very exercise of faith brings out from Him into our own souls, the strength of His victory, so that we are made morally one with Him in His triumph by a test of faith which is so grim and so terrible that nothing that is not of Him in us would be sufficient to carry us through. It has to be wrought into the very substance of our being, and that is done through conflict in which faith is drawn out: and so we spiritually and morally build through conflict, through adversity, in the Divine and sovereign ordering of our lives.

The moral side of things is that which comes out in exercise, and exercise of faith in the value of Calvary's victory. It is one thing to have a theoretical appropriation of Calvary's victory and say in an hour of emergency, "I take the victory of Calvary." But very often nothing happens, and although you take a position like that you find yourself called upon to hold on, and hold on, and hold on, and during that time of being called upon by the Lord to hold on, faith is being tested, and Calvary's victory is becoming something not objectively taken hold of but inwardly established, and at last that victory is in us as it is in the Lord. But it has become a moral quality in our being and the next time it is not a trying to get hold of something, it is there with its roots in us, something has been done in us which is a part of us.

The Battle over Revelation.

Now this works in various ways and numerous directions and connections. You get a revelation, an unveiling from the Lord in relation to truth; an opening of the heavens to see Divine truth as you have never before seen that truth; perhaps it is a new, an entirely new thing, or perhaps it is new light upon an old thing. In any case, it is a new revelation revelation which comes to you with all the freshness, and all the joy, and all the inspiration and all the uplift of the opening of the heavens; and for a time you delight in it, you glory in it, you bathe yourself in it and you have nothing else to talk about but the new revelation which has come to you, and then a point comes where you go right into an awful conflict in connection with that very revelation. It seems that the first glory of it has gone and you are left asking all sorts of questions about it. You are cold, dead, dark; the thing has lost its grip and looking at it now from this standpoint, the standpoint of this experience, you wonder

whether after all it was right. What strange creatures we are! Things which have come to us as the mightiest things in our experience can under given circumstances be the things which are questioned by us as to whether they are really true at all, or whether we simply picked up something, ran it for a time, had a freshness about it, and its freshness was its own momentum to carry us on, and now it is all unreal, and we go into a time of conflict over truth given to us by the Lord. In that time of conflict we are searched, our hearts are looked into, we are tried. Remember Joseph: "Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of Jehovah tried him." The Word of the Lord tried him; and we have to go over the things which we have been saying and believing and ask ourselves all sorts of questions about them.

The Word of the Lord tries us, but it is in that conflict that spiritual and moral elements are developed, features are brought out. Conflict secures the spoil for further building, and then we come back again, not only on to the original ground of our apprehension of that truth, but on to a very much higher, and into a much deeper and stronger apprehension of that thing, so that that thing is more to us than it was before, because we have gone into the battle with that, and we have come out with building spoil; there have been fresh heavenly factors put into it. Something has been introduced into the original thing, through the conflict, which has given it extra value: the power of resurrection. The thing of God comes as from God, with all its Divine glory, beauty, strength, and we rejoice in that light for a season, and then we go into death with that very light, but in the battle, in the conflict, the death, being searched, tried, tested, found out, and driven down to the place where, if that goes, we go, it is our life; then the power of resurrection begins to operate and we come back with that thing stronger than ever, but with spoils for building. We know the value of that thing as we had never proved the value of it before, because we had never been into conflict with it, we had never tested that armour, never tried that sword; but now something has been given to it of value which we never knew until we went into the conflict with it. It does work that way with a revelation. How many people we have seen have jumped at the revelation, they have leaped to it, embraced it, could talk about nothing else but that new revelation that had come to them. We are very glad, we

are delighted when people do this, but we say, "Yes, presently, they will be tested on that, and that thing will test them," and they go into a time of awful conflict and darkness, full of questions as to whether after all the thing is true, is right; and now the Lord is putting the thing inside. It was on the circumference very largely: it was, in a sense, in a measure, objective; but now the Lord is planting the thing into them and them into it. They will come through and say, "Before it was something given to me but it belonged to someone else, now it is mine," and they begin to build with the spoil resultant from the conflict.

The Battle over Vocation.

It is true in the matter of a vision as to purpose. The Lord gives a vision as to His intention, His purpose unto which He is calling us as His servants, and the vision captures us, the purpose lays hold of us, and for the time-being we have nothing to think about or talk about but the purpose unto which we are called; the whole sense of vocation and service has mastered us—we have got a vision. Well, we go on with that by the momentum of the vision for a time, and then it seems that the vision fails; or we get into such a realm of conflict over that vision, and such a battle rages that the thing seems to go into death, we pass through a deep and dark experience in which the whole question comes up again: "Well, was there anything in it after all; have we not been mistaken?" "Is this the thing to which the Lord has called us?" "Was it not something we leaped at and after all the Lord did not mean it for us?" "Have we been wrong?" I expect most of you know those experiences of conflict, of battle over the vision, but it finds us at length in a stronger place in relation to that Divine purpose than ever before.

Our history is just that; many times we have been into death and conflict with our vision in which experiences it seemed that the vision altogether went, many questions arose about it, but we came through and we found ourselves more solidly bound up with that Divine purpose than ever we were. We have gone into conflict and there are spiritual and moral elements by which there is the building up as a result of the trial.

The Battle over a Position taken.

We take a position, we declare ourselves—and how easy it is in meetings and in conferences to take positions, amongst the fellowship of the Lord's people to declare ourselves,

that we are going in a certain direction, that for us this is to be the course for ever: "I never, no never will leave Him." We can sing these things glibly in hymns; to-morrow may find us contemplating the whole thing, looking round to see if there is not some back-door-way out. It is true, these hearts of ours are at best inconsistent, and we take our attitudes, we take our positions, make declarations. For the time being; in the strength of that we go on, and then we are challenged in our position: "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel....." They got to the other side of the sea and all Israel sang, and what did they sing? A song of absolute victory. You would have thought that they were in the land already, but it is not long before they are murmuring against the Lord and Moses. They were tested, challenged, tried by the position which they had taken, and they went through a dark time. So we, whenever we make a declaration, shall sooner or later be tested by it. (I hope the effect of what I am saying will not be that you will say: "I will never declare myself again." If you do take that attitude that may simply circumvent the Lord.) It is necessary, to get the spoil, that we go that way. The qualities are only going to be drawn out in that way, and it is quite right that in the measure of devotion we have, we make a declaration, take a position; the Lord calls upon us to do that, it gives Him the ground for testing us out. Somehow in the order of things, it seems that the Lord requires declarations before He can do much. You have never declared yourself, you have always had a reservation, you have been so cautious—the Lord has never been able to do anything with you. It is when we take our feet off the bottom and launch out into the deep, and say that we are out with the Lord that the Lord can begin to do things. We are tried by the position we have taken, and tested by our commitment and those qualities are brought in which are building qualities, the spoil of battle.

I was reading the following; it is a quotation from 'Streams in the Desert.'

"Many people are wanting power. Now how is power produced? The other day we passed the great works where the trolley engines are supplied with electricity. We heard the hum and roar of the countless wheels, and

we asked our friend, 'How do they make the power?' 'Why,' he said, 'just by the revolution of those wheels and the friction they produce. The rubbing creates the electric current.'

"And so, when God wants to bring more power into your life, He brings more pressure. He is generating spiritual force by hard rubbing. Some do not like it and try to run away from the pressure, instead of getting the power and using it to rise above the painful causes.

"Opposition is essential to a true equilibrium of forces. The centripetal and centrifugal forces acting in opposition, to each other keep our planet in her orbit. The one propelling, and the other repelling, so act and re-act, that instead of sweeping off into space in a pathway of desolation, she pursues her even orbit around her solar centre.

"So God guides our lives. It is not enough to have an impelling force—we need just as much a repelling force, and so He holds us back by the testing ordeals of life, by the pressure of temptation and trial, by the things that seem against us, but really are furthering our way and establishing our goings.

"Let us thank Him for both, let us take the weights as well as the wings, and thus divinely impelled, let us press on with faith and patience in our high and heavenly calling."

That is only another way of putting it. Light and power come from conflict. And so the Lord builds His House with the spoils of battle, and allows the enemy to remain for our overcoming, inward enemies and outward enemies, in order that He may get the beauty for His House, the glory for His House.

The Lord lay His finger upon this word and show us that He gives a vision, a revelation, a call; we respond and then reverses come in, difficulty, opposition which is no contradiction of God's revelation or call, but which is intended to bring us into something which is more than merely an emotional realm in relation to truth and service; into a place of strength where we can be counted upon. "I will build my church; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it," because of its moral quality. Because of its moral virtue it is established for ever.

T. A.-S.

“Nehemiah”

A Living Message for God's People To-day.

III.

A Model Prayer of Intercession

READING : Nehemiah i. 4-11.

THIS prayer looks to me as though it can be gathered up in six different features, or characteristics, and you might just discover what they are as we read together. “And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days; and I fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.” Wept, mourned, fasted. That is certainly anguish, passion, travail, but it is the first feature of intercessory prayer. That is where all intercessory prayer begins, in a state of heart like that. We have spent some time in seeking to make clear that everything in the book of Nehemiah is a result of this passion, this concern for the Lord's interests, that it all comes out of prayer, and that prayer is the prayer of travail, anguish, concern. We have to stop every time and ask ourselves first of all: “Have we got that anguish?” Have we got any such concern, or anguish, or travail? Does the spiritual state amongst the Lord's people give us deep heart sorrow? Have we ever wept for the testimony? Have we ever mourned over spiritual conditions in the Lord's people? Have we fasted? The usefulness to the Lord represented by the work in this book comes out of that, and that is undoubtedly the ground of usefulness.

Knowing the Lord.

Now the next thing, verse five: “And said, I beseech thee, O Lord, the God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments”: what does that represent? A very important law operating in true intercessory prayer; a knowledge of the Lord. That is, knowing the Lord, knowing what kind of God we are dealing with, to know the Lord. You will find that as this prayer develops that knowledge of the Lord comes out very much more fully, for Nehemiah takes the Lord back to His own Word in the book of Deuteronomy and shows that what the Lord had said then to His people has literally come to pass here, and he bases his prayer upon that. What the Lord

said was: “If you forsake My commandments I will scatter you among the nations and you shall be no people to Me,” and Nehemiah says: “You keep covenant.” “Moreover, you said that if we came back to Your commandments You would re-gather us” (Deut. xxviii. 64; xxx. 13). You see he knows the Lord, Passion, anguish, travail, but he knows the Lord, that is the background. Take that and dwell more fully upon it.

Persistence

“Let thine ears now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee at this time, day and night for the children of Israel thy servants, while I confess the sins of the children of Israel.....” The central clause: “.....which I pray before thee.....day and night.” That is persistence in prayer, perseverance, if you like—impertunity. It represents the unwillingness to let this matter pass lightly, to let it be taken without seriousness; it means that he is holding on to God about this thing. Of course, much more may gather round it, but intercessory prayer is not a thing which is fulfilled by rushing into the presence of God and saying something and rushing out again. Intercessory prayer which brings in the Lord's purpose is something which is a continuous burden day and night. Here, again, our hearts are very challenged I am sure. I do not know how many will be able to stand up to this challenge. That is for you to decide before the Lord, as to whether in waking moments in the night, spontaneously your heart goes out to the Lord, it may be only a sentence, only a cry, but it represents the fact that that is your ever present burden, that that thing is there all the time. You might think of a thousand and one other things when you wake up in the night, but the first thing is a heart travail to the Lord concerning His interests, his testimony. “.....which I pray day and night”: this thing is ever present. There is persistence, continuation; that is a feature of true intercessory

prayer, that we have travail, and we have understanding or knowledge of the Lord, and then we have persistence or importunity.

Vicarious Repentance

Now we go to the next thing finishing verse 6: ".....while I confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: yea, I and my father's house have sinned." Identification is in confession of this kind. When a man is found confessing what is not wholly his responsibility, something for which many others are responsible as well as himself, when he is confessing it as though it is his sin, that is identification; and when it is confession of this kind it is acknowledgment and it is repentance. So I think we may speak of this as the feature of confession. If we were using a phrase instead of a word, we would speak of vicarious repentance, repenting in the behalf of others. But confession is sufficient, it carries with it all that. We have tried to tell ourselves in these messages—that we must not regard ourselves as something apart from the rest, something that is detached, and that looks on at things in any kind of judging, condemning, critical way, as though we had no part in it; but being members of one Body, if one member suffers all the members suffer with it, and the suffering is the suffering of the whole Body. So far as Christ is concerned I am quite sure that that is true, that Christ suffers in the measure in which any part of His Body comes short, because He needs the whole Body in fulness for the fulness of His expression and realisation. So that He suffers, and if the Body is in any part coming short we are suffering in the suffering of Christ. And is not that what the Apostle meant when he said he was filling up that which was lacking of the sufferings of Christ? That is real intercession, prayer of confession and identification.

Faith in God's Word

"Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandest thy servant Moses, saying, if ye trespass, I will scatter you abroad among the peoples, but if ye return unto me, and keep my commandments and do them.....yet will I gather them.....bring them unto the place that I have chosen to cause my name to dwell there." What I had seen in this word was faith, because it is bringing God's Word as the basis, taking up a position in God's Word and saying: "I believe that, I stand on that," and you find so often that is the ground of effectual prayer. I was impressed the other day in

reading Psalm cxix. and underlined the occurrence of that word: "according to thy word," "Quicken thou me according to thy word," "Strengthen thou me according to thy word," and so on. David was pleading with God on the ground of His Word, and fastening his faith in God. God and His Word are alike, they are immutable, they are unchangeable, they are established and faithful, and if we can come with the Word of God under our feet, we have got a ground of confidence, the ground of a sure faith, and it would be a very good thing for us to be more exercised along that line. "Quicken thou me according to thy word." That is Romans viii. 11. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." You have got it under your feet. "Strengthen thou me according to thy word." "Strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." Faith in God's Word; and the Lord honours that, and when we come we should have a ground of confidence. Now Nehemiah is simply bringing the Lord to His own Word, and Oh, how true it was to the Word of God. We read Isaiah lviii. Now Isaiah lviii. went along ahead of Nehemiah (the arrangement of books, of course, may throw you out in that, but it was a long way before Nehemiah) and Isaiah lviii. spoke of "If thou shalt" do certain things which Nehemiah certainly did: "If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger.....if thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, doing thy pleasure on my holy day," etc. Then what? ".....thou shalt be called, the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in." That is Nehemiah. Well, Nehemiah brought the Lord to His Word, and actually the Lord fulfilled Isaiah lviii. through Nehemiah. You see that is the ground, pleading the Word in faith.

Utter Surrender.

Now finally in verse 11: "O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servants.....who delight to fear thy name....." The fear of the Lord, when you study it in the light of the whole Word of God, simply means that you utterly yield yourself to God's will, that God's will takes pre-eminence; and when the Lord Jesus said: "Deliver me.....nevertheless not my will but Thine be done" He was heard "in that He feared." That was utter and absolute sur-

render to the will of God whatever the cost, and that is the fear of the Lord, the beginning of wisdom. Now here you have as the central thing in this 11th verse, delight in the Lord. You can use one word, either abandonment or consecration, whichever you prefer. Hear the prayer of thy servants "who delight to fear thy name." That is abandonment to the Lord, consecration to the Lord, and we know quite well that in intercessory prayer we never get there until we come to that place where everything that is personal, our own delight and satisfaction, is set aside and the Lord's interests alone govern our hearts. That is, I think, a transcendent cry in this prayer because for true intercessory prayer we must come to that place. You have prayed, you have been impetunate, persistent, passionate, travailing, and you have stood upon God's Word, and yet withal there may be just some little bit of your own desire that gives heat to the travail, the earnestness, and makes you pray thus and continue holding on, and you never get through because that is there. However right your position may be as to the Word and all the rest, these things may all be quite right and yet the Lord has to wait until every bit of personal interest has been ruled right out, eliminated, and then when we come down to the place where it is true that it is only the Lord's good pleasure that is in view with us, and that the Lord can do what He wills, all that we desire is that His will shall be done and our delight

is in Him, to fear His Name, to be utterly abandoned to His will, then you have got a clear way with the Lord. And isn't this just a perfect prayer. You see we get so far and the last thing the Lord has to say to us is: "Are you in this?" "Have you got some personal interest in this matter?" Then our hearts have to be searched as to whether we want it or whether after all it is only the Lord's personal pleasure and delight and if this thing is not for the Lord's pleasure we do not want it. When we have got there we have a clear way and the prayer is complete.

So you see we have a model prayer of intercession here and you will be able to understand by this little analysis what we meant yesterday when we said that in order for the ejaculatory prayers to be effectual—those ejaculatory prayers that come out later—there must be this deeper background of prayer where everything is like this. You construct all other prayer upon this foundation, and because this is the foundation all other prayer is here. Everything has been sifted out beforehand.

I trust this meditation will bring to our hearts anew the Lord's desire that the instrument to be used in a peculiar way for His satisfaction, shall be a prayer instrument after this sort. Everything that is brought to us by the way of light has got to be prayed in and prayed out, prayer has to be behind and before in the fulfilment of our ministry. The Lord write that in our hearts. T. A.-S.

"AND of one thing we are certain: if prayer be hindered, and we go on insensitive (he wist not that the Lord was departed from him), or in cowardice we shrink from whatever it must cost to recover loyal unity, then this Fellowship will perish. For a while, but only for a while, it may continue to seem to be. But to the clear eyes of the spiritual watchers, from that first hour of insincerity it will appear as a vanished thing and its Lord will say of it, "How is the gold become dim. How is the most fine gold changed."

So we must end on our knees: O let me hear Thy loving-kindness betimes in the morning, for in Thee is my trust: shew Thou me the way that I should walk in, for I lift up my soul unto Thee. Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee, for Thou art my God: let Thy Loving Spirit lead me forth into the land of righteousness."

From 'Gold Cord.'

Sanctification and the Lord's Second Advent

SCRIPTURE READING : 2 Thessalonians ii.

"Sanctification is glory working in embryo : glory is sanctification come to birth, and manifested."—Dean ALFORD.

It is a matter of great moment that we, as the people of God, should see the close relationship that exists between the second coming of our Lord Jesus, our practical sanctification, and the glory to which we are to be brought when He is revealed.

A careful reading of the second chapter of Paul's second letter to the Thessalonian Church shows that these three things are the dominant notes in that portion of the Word, and that they are set over against the present working of "The Mystery of Lawlessness" in the world, with its inevitable issue in the manifestation of "the Man of Sin.....the son of Perdition." It is as if the Holy Spirit would paint an exceedingly dark background, in order to throw into clear relief the flaming glory of the purpose of God for His saints. All the way through the chapter ultimate things are in view, both in relation to the "Kingdom of Darkness" from which we have been rescued, and the "Kingdom of the Son of His Love" into which we have been translated. All that is here set down grows out of verse one : "touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him." There is not a single word in the whole chapter which is not related to that great and blessed theme. It is the goal towards which the Holy Spirit is working in the Church, because it is the greatly desired object for which the Lord Jesus waits on the right hand of the Majesty on High. Never for a moment does the heart of our Lord cease to long for the time when "He will present His Church unto Himself, a glorious Church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Never, therefore, does the Holy Spirit, the other Paraklete, relax His mighty energies in the members of Christ's Body to perfect them in preparation for that glorious hour.

Having painted in the dark background, and shown how Satan is preparing for the consummation of his purpose, when the "Man of Sin" will sit, as God, in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem, and receive world-wide worship, the

Apostle shows what the Holy Spirit is doing in preparing the Saints for the coming of the Lord ; which work is summed up in the phrase used in verse 13 !

"Sanctification of the Spirit."

Before we come to consider this phrase in detail it should be observed that it is immediately followed by the words "and belief of the truth." The truth, and faith in relation thereto, have a very important bearing on sanctification, and therefore on the second coming of the Lord Jesus. Truth is one and indivisible. The "Filling of the spirit," "Sanctification," "Chastening," "Sonship," and "The Lord's Second Advent" are all so bound up, one with the other, that it is impossible to deal with one item alone. The interrelation is close ; and the heart, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, sees that they are not separate subjects but parts of one living whole. Nothing is static, or happens, as it were, automatically or independently, but all are parts of an organism, through which the Holy Spirit breathes as the Spirit of Life. So the Lord Jesus prays, "Sanctify them through Thy Truth, Thy Word is Truth."

Further it should be noted that sanctification is not mentioned in the passage we are considering as an end in itself, but rather as a means to an end, and that end not an earthly, but a heavenly one. The end is stated to be "The obtaining of the glory of the Lord Jesus." That is, of course, the end so far as the individual believer is concerned ; but again, amazing as that statement is, and supremely wonderful as a goal for the child of God, it is related to the larger purposes of God for the Church of Christ, in union with its Sovereign Head.

We are always in peril if we take any single truth from its setting, and, either ignore it as non-essential, or, on the other hand, press it unduly to the exclusion of related truths. The Holy Spirit is "The Spirit of Truth," and of Him the Lord Jesus said, "When He is come He will guide you into ALL Truth." It must ever be borne in mind that any truth pressed unduly, and out of proportion, is first cousin to error. The mark of a truly spirit-

taught soul is balance and proportion, truth in its proper setting, and as leading on to the goal of God's ultimate purpose.

Now coming closer to verses 13 and 14, let us see the setting of this great truth of Sanctification. The phrase "Sanctification of the Spirit" is part of a great statement reaching back into Eternity and going on into Eternity. This statement is a most comprehensive one. Note the range indicated by its leading words: "Chosen", "Salvation," "Sanctification" "called," "The Gospel," "Glory." It describes a process leading to an ultimate; a goal marvellous beyond all telling. For the sake of clarity we will divide the statement into three parts and consider them in order.

I. Where the process, leading to the ultimate, commenced.

The process, in the experience of the believer, commenced with Salvation, using that word in its initial sense. It ends with the obtaining, or, the acquisition, of the glory of the Lord Jesus, salvation! Yes, but we need an enlarged apprehension of salvation. All the chief words of Holy Scripture have an immense content. Our salvation commenced in the heart of God; not when we believed into Christ, but when we were "chosen in Him before the foundation of the world." So here the apostle thanks God that these Thessalonian Believers had been "chosen" to salvation. All our difficulty in relation to the doctrine of Election, or, the choice of God, is occasioned by the limited character of our apprehension of what salvation is. Salvation must not be thought of only in terms of deliverance from sin and from Satan's power, but viewed in relation to that, too, and for which, it is brought to us. Note carefully in the statement we are considering there is no stop after the word salvation. We were chosen to salvation, in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, and called thereunto by the Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of the Lord Jesus. It is all one mighty statement, and the choice of God in eternity past has the ultimate goal in view.

Now, while the fact that the choice of God was made before the foundation of the world is one of great comfort to the believer as he battles day by day with all the forces that obstruct his onward march to the goal, there can be no resting back in this fact, as if the reaching of the goal was a certainty apart from his willing co-operation and active faith. The

apostle declares that it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure, but uses that very declaration as a reason for his exhortation. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Peter describes the saints as "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," but also exhorts them to "make your calling and election sure." Here the balance and proportion of truth is of vast importance. The carnal mind can quite easily go astray and miss the whole desire and purpose of God. The fact that we were chosen in Eternity with the goal in view, should be a great incentive to that continual yieldedness to the Holy Spirit's working which alone will bring us to the divinely appointed end.

H. The ultimate, "The obtaining of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ."

The goal that God had in view in choosing us to salvation is stated in these plain yet amazing words. The thought here is not that we are destined to "bring" glory to the Lord Jesus, though that is, of course, true also; but we are to "obtain" it, that is, *to share in it*. This is a statement of the Divine intention which, filling us with wondering amazement, should bring us low on our faces in adoration; but it should also inspire us to great carefulness of life. The word rendered "obtaining" has the sense of "acquisition" and is used also of salvation in 1 Thess. v. 9. There the apostle exhorts to sobriety of life and the using of the hope of salvation as a helmet. "For," he says, "God hath appointed us to 'obtain' salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." That which is God's appointment for us, becomes our hope, and must govern our conduct. So the believer's life must be lived to-day in the light of the fact that he is called of God to share in the glory of the Lord Jesus. That which is to be in fulness then, must be true in measure, and in a constantly increasing measure, now. "Without holiness (the sanctification, R.V.) no man shall see the Lord." Union with Christ in glory as an ultimate, demands a process leading to it. God has "predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first born among many brethren." Being children in the family of God, we are joint-heirs with Christ, "if so be that we suffer with Him, that we might be glorified together." Why is suffering stated here as a condition? Why "if so be"? He, the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings,

and, if we are united to Him, we can only expect to arrive at the goal by the path He trod. Our union with Him necessitates this. As Dr. Handley Moule so beautifully says, "The suffering with Him must imply a pain due to our union. It must be involved in our being His members, used by the Head for His work. It must be the hurt of His 'Hand' or 'Foot' in subserving His sovereign thought." The end is "that we may also share His glory for which that path of sorrow is, not indeed the meriting, but the capacitating, preparation."

III. The effective means (or state) by which the believer will arrive at the goal.

If, then, by the choice of God, we have been brought into the experience of a salvation which has such a marvellous goal in view, the question arises as to what constitutes the link between the beginning and the end of the process. What is required in us that we may arrive at that, for the obtaining of which, God chose us to salvation? In other words, how shall that salvation become effective in bringing us along the road which will finally issue, not in a glory which we—behold, but in a glory which we manifest, because it has been wrought in us. The answer is found in the words "In (R.V.) sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." To these things we were called by the Gospel and these are the means, or, putting it with greater accuracy, the state, in which glory becomes inherent in the believer. Sanctification of the Spirit is not the sanctification of the human spirit, but the sanctification wrought by the Holy Spirit. That is the Divine side of the operation. The human side, indicating the believer's response to the work of the Holy Spirit is "belief of the truth," i.e., faith in operation. The believer can receive nothing apart from the grace of God. The sanctifying work of the Spirit is an activity of free, unmerited grace. The original Choice, the Call by the Gospel, salvation and sanctification, are all works of pure grace; and yet none become effective apart from the response of the human soul. So when the Apostle has postulated the gracious work of the Divine Spirit as the first element in that state which leads on to the goal, he completes his statement by postulating with equal emphasis the responsibility of the believer to co-operate with the Holy Spirit in "belief of the truth." Faith is always a functional thing, never a merely intellectual process. We never really believe anything until we surrender ourselves to it. It is sadly

possible to have an intelligent grasp of facts, and hold them tenaciously as part of our creed, and yet never to "believe" in the scriptural sense by committing ourselves unreservedly to all the implications of those facts.

Now what is the "truth" as to sanctification which must be "believed" in the full sense of volitional surrender, if these two elements, the Divine and the human, are, in combination, to bring us along the road which leads to the goal? The Word of God states it first objectively. What we are as "in Christ" is presented. That, grasped by the believer and yielded to in an activity of faith, becomes subjective; doctrine is translated into experience, and leads on to the consummation.

In the lives of many Christian people, sanctification consists of a threefold experience: Crisis, Process and Goal, and the crisis is often a tremendous conflict. This is largely because of the partial nature of the Gospel proclaimed in the just place, under which the soul has been brought to Christ. This leads to an inadequate experience of salvation. Where the Gospel is proclaimed in fulness, and Christ is presented as Saviour and Sovereign Lord, the initial surrender to Him is so complete that the crisis phase of sanctification is scarcely felt, and the process begins from the first moment of the new life. This is as it should be in every case. But even so it is only as objective truth becomes subjective, that the sanctifying process develops. Christ is made to us all that we need. In Him we are perfect before God. Paul addresses the Corinthian Church as "Them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints," i.e., "saints by calling." We are "sanctified by the offering of the Body of Jesus Christ, once for all." "Christ is made unto us.....Sanctification or Holiness." This is all objective truth. It is presented in order that faith may lay hold of it, and that we, entering into it by the gracious activity of the Holy Spirit, working in response to our faith, may become in experience, what we are in Christ. As C. H. Macintosh puts it, "The more clearly we enter by faith into objective truth, or, what is true of us in Christ, the deeper, more experimental, and practical, will be the subjective work in us, and the more complete will be the exhibition of the moral effect, in our life and character."

Sanctification and holiness are practically interchangeable terms. They both have the twofold thought of "purification from" and "separation unto." They look backward and

forward. We make a great mistake if we limit the thought of either to purification from sin. Yes, it is a great thing to know deliverance from the power and dominion of sin. The purifying work of the Blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, in a present and continuous cleansing is a precious truth, and one calling for a whole-hearted activity of faith. But that which is thus purified is also separated unto God in order that, by the blessed activity of the Holy Spirit, it may be made glorious, and therefore suited to be a vessel for the manifestation of the glory of Christ.

The delightful definition of sanctification quoted at the head of this article is very far-reaching. "Sanctification is glory working in embryo! Glory is sanctification come to birth and manifested." Sanctification is that gracious process whereby the spirit of Christ works into the warp and woof of the believer's life the moral glories of the Son of Man. Thus are we "conformed to the image of His Son." It always has the goal in view. It is bringing the powers of heaven down to earth, and making the believer heavenly in nature, in disposition, in character, in conduct, so that Christ is manifested now in measure in the individual, as He is to be manifested in fulness by His Church in the coming ages.

This truth then has to be "believed." Faith must operate in relation thereto. We must reach out to the glory and never rest content with the present level of attainment. All the unchristlikeness of which we become conscious, as the Holy Spirit reveals the truth in us, will become the occasion of deep spiritual exercise. It is certain that we shall never drift into holiness, though we may very easily drift away from it.

But, it may still be asked: "How does the Holy Spirit sanctify?" The process is a simple, though often a painful, one. He illumines the heart of the believer, reveals the truth and makes it live. He becomes "the spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the knowledge of Christ." If we may so put it, He creates the opportunity for the response of faith, and so sanctification is both by the Holy Spirit and by the truth. The whole process may be summed up in three words: Revelation, Appropriation, Actualisation. The Holy Spirit unveils the truth, that is Revelation, the child of God responds in an energised working of appropriating faith, and so the truth becomes actual in experience. This process is going on all the

time, it is a series of progressive unfoldings and realisations. And so we come ever closer to the glory that is to be.

To take a simple, familiar, and yet radical illustration. The Holy Spirit reveals that the question is not one only of indwelling sin. This is not the only thing that hinders the inworking of the glory. It is far more a question the flesh in which sin dwells. How shall this be put out of action? It is possible to know a life of deliverance from conscious Sin, thinking of "sin" as transgression of the known will of God, and yet for the flesh to be extremely active, even in the realm of Christian service. When the Holy Spirit makes the believer to understand that (quoting Andrew Murray's comment on Romans vii. 18): "In my flesh, in the old nature which I have from Adam, there dwells literally no good thing that can satisfy the eye of a Holy God; and this flesh can never by any process of discipline, or struggling, or prayer, be made better than it is"; and further that (to quote old William Law) "It can hide itself under all forms of goodness, can watch and fast, pray much and preach long, and yet often gets more life, and strength, and more immovable abode, in these forms of virtue, than it has in publicans and sinners"; when that is realised, then faith steps in with an act of complete surrender of the whole of the self life to the death of the Cross. In its outworking that is often a most painful process. Being conformed to Christ's death, however costly it may be, is a necessary accompaniment to knowing the power of His resurrection. And it is only on resurrection ground that we know life in, and by, the spirit. The spirit-taught man will abandon all attempts to educate, refine or improve, the old nature. "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh, I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. ii. 20, R.V.). This is his thankful declaration. He walks now, not after the flesh, but after the spirit. The sanctifying process becomes for him a continual revelation of what is flesh and what is spirit; and, in the energy of faith, he refuses the one, and walks in the other. So sonship is developed; for "As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit always has Sonship in view. "Sons in glory"

is the Divine objective. This is vitally linked with the coming again of the Lord Jesus, because it is for the manifestation of the sons of God that the whole creation waits. "For we know the whole creation is groaning together, and suffering the pangs of labour, which have not yet brought forth the birth" (Rom. viii. 22, Conybeare). "For the longing of the Creation looks eagerly for the time when the glory of the sons of God shall be revealed" (v. 19, Con.).

If glory in the sons is "sanctification brought to birth and manifested," how urgent the question of the sanctification of the believer, in view of the Lord's coming.

Is this not the explanation of the intensifying discipline of so many of the Lord's people in this day? Suffering abounds on every hand. No consideration of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit can be complete, without a recognition of the fact that this process involves the chastening of the child of God. So many of the richest blessings have accrued to us in the school of affliction. If any degree of spiritual maturity is found in us, it results in great measure from the chastening hand of God, when He deals with us as with sons. Hebrews xii. makes it abundantly plain that growth, maturity, sonship in experience, is that which our Father in heaven is seeking to develop. Holiness is the great aim. "That we might be partakers of *His* holiness." Tremendous word.

It is an interesting and revealing fact that the word "chastening" (Gr. *Paidevo*)—really child-training—occurs in Titus ii. 12, there translated "teaching" in A.V., "instructing"

in R.V. Here the second coming of our Lord, in its comprehensiveness, is in full view. "For the grace of God.....hath appeared.....'teaching' us that.....we should live.....looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." It is grace that teaches—child-trains, chastens, if you will, till the believer's life has this one aim, hope, goal, ambition; till the coming of His Lord is his one supreme objective; till he waits on earth for that appearing, manifestation, revelation, for which both Father and Son wait in the glory. The sanctifying process, whether operating by the revelation of truth, and its inworking, or by child-training in the school of suffering, has the glory of the Lord Jesus in manifestation, as its goal. The nearest that we shall get to that on earth is the bridal spirit, that spontaneous upleaping of desire for the Lord that responds to His declaration "Surely I come quickly" with the prayer "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." The bridal spirit is that perfect symphony with the Holy Spirit found in the words, "The Spirit and the Bride say, come." When the Holy Spirit has brought His work in the saints to completion, and this perfect symphony with Himself is reached, then the "Salvation ready to be revealed at the last time" will burst forth from its covering vail and the saints will "obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

All in marvellous completeness
Added to the Lord,
There to be His crown of glory,
His supreme reward.

S. A.

But new questions came: "Are you prepared to perish with Me, to be counted a fool and worse than a fool by your own world, your missionary world? May I deal with every shred of your reputation just as I choose, and will you be silent? Are you willing to obey in everything, every time, everywhere?" It was like hearing over again the word of the withered leaves in the pool, the word of that far-off Keswick day:

There is no life except by death,
There is no vision but by faith,
And that eternal Passion saith,
Be emptied of glory and right and name.

From 'Gold Cord.'

The Anointing of the Holy Spirit

READING: 2 Samuel xvi. 13-18.

The Anointing gives the Value to Life.

JUST to take one step backward in our meditation in this matter of anointing, may I remind you of that all-inclusive truth that in the purposes of God it is the anointing which gives the value to the life. It is not natural gifts or qualifications, or anything inherited or cultivated. It is not what we have by birth or what we gain by training that becomes the basis of the value of our lives in relation to the purpose of God. However much afterward the Lord may make use of any such things, the Lord never makes them the essential ground of the value of our lives to Him. This, of course, is quite patent from the fact that very often it has been men and women without any of these things, either by birth or acquirement, whom the Lord has used very mightily for very great purposes. It is true, on the other hand, that men and women of natural gifts and acquired abilities have been used, and the fact that it is true in both cases means that there is necessarily something other; and that something other is the anointing. I just want to re-emphasise this, that it is the anointing which gives the value to life. It is very important that that should be settled in us once and for all. I know how elementary that is, and yet I am quite disinclined to say it and just pass on. It is a thing that can be said, of course, in a mental way; that is, a thing which we recognise as a bit of truth, and say it. On the other hand, it can be a thing that is said out of some very deep work of God in our lives, the result of a good deal of painful history. And inasmuch as there is a great deal of that painful history back of that truth, when it is a spiritually apprehended truth, therein is the value of the fact. It is the anointing which gives the value to life. Immediately any man or woman begins to regard anything they may have as natural gifts or acquired quality or ability as being in itself the ground, or basis of their being used, they are on the high way to disaster and sooner or later the bottom will fall out of everything for them, and they will find themselves in such a position as to make them say that they wished they had never touched the

work of God at all. On the other hand, it is a blessed fact that the anointing does give a value to life which may never be possible of acquiring or attaining in any other way. If we have the anointing we have an equipment and a value given to life which is something more and something different from all that we may attain or obtain by nature. Forgive the repetition, but it is basic to all that we are saying, to see that the anointing gives value to life. The Lord kept David to that. Even toward the end of his life when he had a great deal of prosperity and success and came into a great place, and the Lord had done wonderful things both for him and through him, and he had a long and illustrious history behind him, the Lord sent His prophet to David and said: "I took thee from the sheeppote, from following the sheep, that thou shouldest be prince over my people, over Israel"; reminding him of his humble origin and that it was from a very ordinary—we might say outside position—place, where others gave him no recognition, it was from that that the Lord took him and brought him into all this; and He kept that fact before him, that the basis of all that was done in the life of David to make him the greatest king that had ever sat, or ever would sit upon the throne of Israel (with the exception of the Lord Jesus) was in virtue of the anointing, and not because of anything in David himself. It was the anointing which gave value to his life.

The Apostle Paul readily admits that that was the secret of everything in his life. Whereas naturally there might have been some claim made to greatness, ability, and we know how natural men have made a great deal of the natural abilities of Paul, he himself is brought by the Lord to the place where he is the first to admit that the secret of anything and everything of value in his life for God, in the purpose of God, was the anointing, it was not in himself.

One mentions this that we should come back to God's zero unto God's full purpose.

The Anointing relates to the Testimony.

Then we have said that the anointing is connected with the testimony. We said that David's life purpose was the bringing of the

testimony to fulness and finality, and it was for that he was anointed. Now because of familiarity with these things I am afraid we take a good deal for granted, and I am in danger perhaps more than any other of assuming that you know what I am talking about, and I have to be pulled up now and then and reminded that I am assuming too much. This phrase, the term "testimony" with which some of us are so familiar; we may perhaps be taking for granted that people know what we mean by this phrase, therefore it becomes necessary to say a word or two about the meaning of "the testimony."

When we say that David was raised up specially to bring the testimony to fulness and finality and rest in the House of God, what do we mean by "the testimony"? Of course, we know David was a type of the Lord Jesus and that looking on to the Lord Jesus, the Greater David, we see that He came and was anointed for the bringing of the testimony of the Lord to fulness and finality and rest in the House of God. The testimony is one testimony whether it be in David or in Christ, whether it be in the Old Testament or in the New: it is one testimony. In the Old it will be in types and shadows and symbols; in the New it will be in spiritual principles and spiritual values; but the testimony is one and it is called ultimately "The Testimony of Jesus." That phrase, as you know, occurs five or six times in the book of Revelation. Then it is used in the Epistles also. "Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you." Now what is the testimony of Jesus? To answer that fully would take very much time. I want to summarise it into three or four phrases, or sentences. The testimony of Jesus is firstly, Who Jesus was and is; laying the emphasis upon the Who. Secondly, the testimony of Jesus is what Jesus was and is, with the emphasis upon the what this time. Thirdly, the testimony of Jesus is what Jesus did in His cross. And fourthly, the testimony of Jesus is what God eternally purposed concerning Him. As far as I can see those four things cover the whole ground of the testimony of Jesus. You will recognise what a tremendous amount there is gathered up into that. The first, Who Jesus was and is, relates to Himself and covers all the ground of the Person of Christ; and that has engaged and employed theologians ever since Christ came into the world, and is still the battleground of truth. The Person of Christ.

I should like to just say here, especially to my younger brethren, that there is a very important place for spiritual theology. Do not think of theology merely as a technical line of study. Sooner or later you will find yourself involved in the tremendous conflict which rages over the Person of Christ; you will not escape it. You will find that the Devil's deepest and most acute subtleties which he seeks to introduce into the highest realms of spiritual interpretation are related to the Person of Christ, and if he can trip up the most highly spiritual men upon the question of the Person of Christ he has wrecked and ruined that man's ministry for all time. Remember the Devil's trap most deeply and carefully laid for the most highly and deeply spiritual of God's servants is concerning the Person of Christ, and the more you go on with the Lord the more the enemy will seek to catch you on that question, because he knows that caught on that matter he has struck at the heart of everything, and you are a finished man if you wobble on the Person of Christ, or if there is the slightest suggestion of untruth, error, in your apprehension of or presentation concerning the Person of Christ. It is the most consecrated and spiritual men and women at whom the Enemy strikes that particular attack to get them somewhere out of the straight concerning the Person of Christ; and spiritual theology (I put those two words together because I do not mean theology merely as a technical study but theology spiritually pursued) is an important thing for our consideration.

Well now, "Who Jesus is" as being the foundation of the testimony has to do with Himself, the Person of Christ. Let me say it again, that every error, every false teaching, every false system, every opposing religion in this world will be found to have right at its heart the question of the Person of Christ. Many will go a long way in the recognition and acknowledgment of Christ, but the ultimate thing that Christ is God is denied, is not admitted, and that is where there is a parting of company. Well, now I am not going further on that. Number one in the testimony of Jesus is as to Himself.

Number two, as to WHAT Jesus was and is, is as to what He is in relation to man, and there is one word which explains that, it is the word representative. In what He was in Himself He did something altogether apart from man, as God. But what He did as representative

He did as in organic union with man, and the deep meaning of the incarnation is that ; that He organically came into—as a part of—the race, and therefore became the representative. And there is the representative work of Christ in His birth, in His life on earth, in His work, in His death, burial, resurrection, and heavenly position and work now, as representative. The testimony of Jesus embraces what Jesus was and is, and that relates Him to man.

Thirdly, what Jesus DID in His cross. That embraces the universality of His death, His burial, His resurrection and His reign. That is the testimony of Jesus. The universality of His death, burial, resurrection and reign.

And finally what God has eternally purposed concerning Him relates to His sovereign Headship over all nations as King of kings and Lord of lords. That is the testimony of Jesus.

Now in those four sentences you have summed up all that is in the Bible, and that is the testimony of Jesus. You can trace those things throughout the Old Testament and throughout the New, from Genesis to Revelation. But there is a further word to add. That testimony is deposited in a vessel. That vessel is called "the Church which is His Body," and the testimony is deposited within that vessel in two ways. One, as the sum of revealed truth ; and two, as the power of that truth inwrought. The deposit of the testimony of Jesus within the vessel is the truth as the truth is in Jesus, inwrought by the Holy Spirit. So that it is not truth that is only objective, apprehended by the mind ; but truth that has become life, our very being, made a part of us in experience, that by the Holy Spirit. Of course, you have only got to sit down now and go back over that ground. The testimony deposited within the vessel—the Church which is His Body—of which I am a member, revealed and inwrought by the Holy Spirit concerning the Person of Christ, what He is in Himself. Has the Holy Spirit revealed the Lord Jesus to you ? Not just that you believe in and assent to the proposition that Jesus is the Son of God, but has that come to me by the Holy Spirit ? Has that become a part of you by the Holy Spirit ? As to His representative work ; have you seen, or are you seeing, by the Holy Spirit, what Christ was and is representatively, and is that becoming life to you ? That all wants breaking up.

Take any one aspect ; the Lord Jesus there at the right hand of God as our representative ; there as the sum total of all the spiritual and

moral perfections that God will ever require of us, and He is there as us in the presence of God, perfect. God already has perfected humanity in His presence in the Person of the Lord Jesus ; and that stands to our account ; and God is not now trying to get perfect humanity. He has got it and He is trying to impart it to us. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to impart Christ to us through obedience and faith. Has that become a part of our very being ? That is to be revealed and inwrought. It is not a suggestion, not part of the Creed ; when you see that it makes all the difference to you. That is what I mean by revealed and inwrought. That also in every other phase and aspect of what Jesus was and is. As to what He did in His cross ; something revealed to us by the Holy Spirit and made a part of us. We see that He died not only *for* us but *as* us. Has that been revealed by the Spirit, and has that entered into us so that we know that when He died we died, when He was buried we in Him disappeared from God as a thing upon which the judgment of God rested ; when He was raised we appeared in Him on a basis where there is no more condemnation, judgment passed for ever, and now no condemnation on resurrection ground ? All that may be "Romans six," still in the Bible, but it may be revealed to our hearts and become a part of our very life. That is what I mean by the testimony of Jesus deposited within the vessel, the Church which is His Body of which we are members. We are called to have a deposit of that truth revealed and inwrought into the vessel of the testimony.

Now when we said that David was raised up in type for that, we see that realised with the temple built according to a revealed plan ; David received the pattern of the House by revelation, and then under his orders, instructions and energies the House was constituted according to that plan, and you see it carried out to a detail, and then the ark of the testimony brought there, at last at rest in the House of God. The staves drawn out, never to take another journey, at the end of all its movement, in rest, in finality in a perfectly constituted House. David is a type of Christ in Whom the testimony is fully realised, perfected, brought to finality in the rest of God, in the great comprehensive : "It is finished." The testimony of Jesus : unto that David was anointed ; unto that Jesus was anointed ; unto that we are anointed. The testimony of Jesus in fulness and finality. Well, that is a large parenthesis

by way of seeing the objective, the purpose of the anointing. The Holy Spirit is in us as the anointing in relation to that.

Now two things immediately follow anointing, when anointing is intelligently or spiritually apprehended.

The first is this; hell is provoked. In the light of what we have said about the testimony of Jesus that is perfectly understandable, you do not expect anything else. If there is a rival to the Lord Jesus in this universe, and if there has been from before this world was, an unholy ambition and determination on the part of that rival to have the place which God has eternally appointed for His Son as King of kings and Lord of lords, and then the anointing means that it is unto God's intention concerning His Son, it brings us immediately into conflict with the rival, and the rival immediately comes into active opposition to us. So that hell is provoked immediately the anointing is apprehended spiritually. And that works out in experience. Find anybody who has any measure of apprehension of the anointing and enters into it, and that one enters into spiritual conflict. Here is David. "And the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon David from that day forward." What is the next thing? There commenced that long drawn out conflict in which the evil spirit in Saul was after the life of David. (I hope the statement: ".....now an evil spirit from Jehovah troubled him (Saul)" does not occasion you difficulty. Everything in this universe is under the sovereignty of God, the Devil, demons, and all things. It does not mean these evil spirits are in favourable co-operation with God intelligently and intentionally, but it does mean that God sovereignly uses them.) Here is an evil thing, an evil intelligence which obviously is dead-set against the object of the anointing, and that comes into positive and direct activity and operation from the day of David's anointing. He is a marked man, and now that thing is after his life because of the anointing. The anointing has provoked that. The anointing has drawn that out. The Adversary has come out into the open because of the anointing.

Take the Lord Jesus; anointed at Jordan, the next phase is an Adversary in the wilderness, the mighty assault of hell. Take the Church. Anointed at Pentecost; next, hell stirring up, not against men and women as such, but against the anointing. Take Paul, a vessel chosen and anointed; he is pursued and perse-

cuted by every possible device; hell is after that man because of the anointing. Yes, one of the immediate issues of the anointing is that hell is provoked, and mark you, what I have said about the measure of apprehension very largely governs the measure of hell's provocation. The larger your apprehension of the eternal purpose concerning Christ, the larger your spiritual grasp of the testimony of Jesus, and your stand in that, the larger the measure of hell's antagonism. Or to put it another way the greater will be your experience of suffering at the hands of the Enemy. If you have but a small apprehension, a fragmentary apprehension of the testimony of Jesus, and are standing for that fragment you will have opposition proportionately, but if you have a large revelation you will have a large antagonism. The higher you go the more directly you meet the naked forces of hell. The Church of the Ephesian position comes to wrestle with principalities and powers, the world rulers of this darkness and the hosts of spiritual wickedness in a naked way. That may explain a lot.

Now this very provoking of hell has to be considered in two ways. It has to be considered firstly along the line of Satan's antagonism, for undoubtedly he is with all his being and resources antagonistic to the testimony of Jesus unto which the anointing is given. There is his antagonism and we have to recognise that. But there is this second fact, that God's permission is granted to that antagonism; which means that God is over all, even the antagonism. God's permission is given because the very anointing itself has a specific relation to Satan's overthrow. Satan has got to be overthrown in this universe. How will he be overthrown? By the anointing. The anointing is for that. How can he be overthrown unless he is given permission to come out into the open and fight? Yes, the Lord Jesus is anointed. Shall we say He goes out into the wilderness and Satan comes out against Him? No! The Spirit led Him into the wilderness. What for? The fact of Satan's antagonism and animosity is patent. But the fact of the anointing is also patent, that Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit. The anointing has now been manifested experimentally in power over the Enemy. We may say that we are anointed for conflict, and the anointing for conflict is for the overthrow of the Enemy, and God's permissions are not given to the Enemy to overthrow us but that he might be over-

thrown. I think that is grand. Of Pharaoh it is written: "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth"—and so Pharaoh is given a fairly free hand to go a long way so that the Lord can show how much further He can go. These are things which we do not always bear in mind when we are up against the Enemy and he is up against us. But let us remember that God's permission is given the Enemy to come out against the anointing in us that in the power of the anointing he may be overthrown. In this matter we cannot help but feel that the Enemy is very blind. The Lord has blinded him. If he knew the very anointing he is attacking is to overthrow him, where would be the wisdom of keeping on his attack? But that is where the sovereignty of God comes in.

So we find David after the anointing very soon brought into the place where his life was assailed and threatened, simply because of the anointing. David might well have said: "Well if I had not been anointed I would not have had all this: it is this anointing that has caused me all this trouble." The question is raised, would I sooner not be anointed and have an easy time and escape the Devil, or do I choose to abide under the anointing because of the purpose of God in view? David was put into the throes of those alternatives more than once. When he went down to Achish, the King of Gath, on two occasions it was because he was in the throes of that conflict, he was up against the consequences of the anointing so acutely that the flesh broke down and sought a way out; faith wavered and looked for an easier path, a covering from the consequences of the anointing. We shall often perhaps be in that position. If only we were not in this thing God has called us into we would have an easier path. Yes, we should, but at the expense of the testimony of Jesus and God's eternal purpose. Which shall we choose? Our comfort or God's glory? Our ease or God's heart desire? I want to remind you that the anointing which brought, and brings into conflict, is the very secret of the ultimate triumph. Not our might or power, but the anointing. Yes, we may waver like David, we may break down sometimes; inwardly, we may know we are not on our feet, we have collapsed. We may seek some resort of quiet from the battle, inwardly faith may tremble, but blessed be God, David's wonderful history shows how that man under the anointing

though in himself often weak, sometimes failing, breaking down, yes, sometimes sinning, nevertheless triumphant, not because of what he was but because of the anointing, while the heart is right. And no one can read the Psalms, which are the life of David, without seeing that although David was a man of weaknesses, faults, not without sin, he was a man whose heart was right toward the Lord. If he sinned there is no man who is more deeply grieved, anguished, over sin than David. His heart is right and the anointing goes on and brings through. The anointing brings into the trouble but the anointing brings out into victory in the end, and the Lord does not by the anointing bring us into trouble to let us get out of the trouble in our own strength, or to get through on our own resources. It is the anointing which brings us through. In the end we shall all have to say: "Lord, I am finally in triumph but not because I did it; there was that Other, that Someone in me responsible for this; that was the anointing."

There is the second thing immediately following the anointing or running parallel with it, or is interwoven with it. It is our training. Call it discipline if you like. I want you to notice that the anointing comes first and then the training. This is a reverse of things from the world order. When the world is going to choose a man or woman to occupy a high place, all their training has to be done first and they have to have reached a place of efficiency and qualification to occupy that position. The Lord's order is just the opposite. He anoints, and then on the ground of the anointing starts the training. It may not be that we have entered into the full consciousness that we have been anointed, but having been anointed, without any feelings or sensations whatever, without any consciousness of it, in relation to the purpose of that anointing God begins spiritual history and we pass through a great deal of spiritual history which is connected with the purpose for which we have been anointed. That is not so complex and difficult as it may sound. You and I here to-day, in the day that we consecrated ourselves to the Lord, in the day that we received the Holy Spirit, in the day in which we were made actual members of Christ's Body and came under the anointing, God in His mind had a specific phase, aspect, or fragment of the one great purpose, the testimony of Jesus, for us. That is, we were individually in the mind of God

marked out to fill some particular ministry in relation to that whole testimony, to make some peculiar contribution to the whole, we were marked out in God's mind for that and we were anointed for that. We may not have known what that was, and we may not have been conscious of the anointing, but God from that day began history, and if the Lord has His way and we do not get in His way, do not put our minds, wills, desires, in His way, but if He has a clear way with us, a response, a yielding, a willingness to have Him and all that He wants, the history through which He passes us and which He passes through us is all in the direction of bringing about the purpose of the anointing, that the power of the anointing might be made manifest in that connection. It might be years after we are able to look back and say that we know the Lord has been with us, we know we have had the Spirit, but now we can see in the light of the thing into which the Lord has brought us, that particular work, that particular aspect of the testimony to be fulfilled, that particular thing by which our lives are marked and characterised. We see that everything in the meantime has been calculated to fit us, prepare us, make us ready for this, and now in this the Spirit of the anointing is operating, in power, in freedom. Yes, but that was all there in the mind of God in the beginning. The anointing was there for that, but the anointing required training.

Beloved, if God took us through that training without having the anointing there would be nothing of us left. If you and I had not got the Holy Spirit in us as the Spirit of anointing, and God put us through that history we would go out; moreover we should lack that essential intelligence which is a part of the anointing. I do want you to recognise that the anointing carries with it spiritual intelligence. "And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things." "And as for you, the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that anyone 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" (1 John ii. 20, 27). Three times over this thing is emphasised, that intelligence is a part of the anointing. ".....and ye know....." What do we know? Well, it may be the barest knowledge, which amounts to this: "I know that which God is putting me through is related to something, I know that, but I do not know what it is, I do not know

why it must be this way, but I know that this is not outside of the realm of God, that there is something in view; that thing holds me." It may be just that, but that is the value of the anointing. You have that much intelligence. You may be able to see by the anointing how things are working together. How two things are just harmonising in relation to the purpose of God. You may be able to see why it is necessary that certain things do happen. God has called us to something which is to be utterly of Himself. Then His training of us for that is that there shall be utterly nothing of ourselves. Now when the Lord is doing that emptying out and grinding to powder so that there is nothing left at all, but for the intelligence of the anointing we might go right out, but the anointing says to us: "Yes, this is all in line with the thing and the end is that all is to be utterly of God and therefore there must be nothing of you; it is all logical and you will have to expect this." God trains upon the anointing because the anointing brings that support, and that growing intelligence concerning the Lord's discipline, chastening, training.

Now take David. All his real experimental history in relation to the ultimate purpose came out of his anointing. I mean that from the time of his anointing he entered into the real training, the real discipline; all that he went through was training. Why I am so drawn to the life of David is because—shall I say—it is so human. I mean that there are few, if any, in the whole Bible apart from perhaps Paul who are more autobiographical than David. He is always talking about his own spiritual experience—in a right way. Always telling you his heart. You have a wonderful unveiling of what went on in the man, what he went through, and when you read it (I think that is why the Psalms have gained such a great place, because they are heart-talks of personal secret history with the Lord) you see that it was all so in keeping with the anointing.

Is David to be the prominent representative type of the Lord Jesus as King? Oh, then the Lord will have to deal with him in a peculiar way, take him through strange experiences, bring him to the place of such absolute dependence upon Himself where the man is so humble, so lowly, so self-less, and the Lord is everything. How I would just love to be able to wander through David's life here for an hour or two touching some of those magnificent points which carry so much value when you look at them

in the light of the purpose of God. An anointed man must not vindicate himself; see how the Lord vindicates an anointed man when he does not try to vindicate himself. On many occasions David was very near to trying to vindicate himself and the Lord saved him, and the Lord saved him simply because of the anointing. You remember that occasion when David rejected, pursued, hunted, one day sought help, sent for help from a man who had plenty, and was refused; not only refused but insulted. And David in himself was so provoked that he determined to have his revenge and he went with his men, and the wife of that other man heard of it and came out to plead with David, and reason with him and dissuaded him from his revengeful act. Only a little while afterward that man died by reason of his own excesses and David thanked God that he had never laid his hand upon that man, that he had left it to the Lord, that he had been delivered from revenge. An anointed man must not do that sort of thing. The Lord saved David from doing a thing which would have been for ever a blot upon the anointing. The Lord intervened and took the matter in hand, and beloved, if we are really anointed the Lord will look after our interests, we need not seek to revenge ourselves. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." That sublime instance of David refraining from touching Saul when Saul was in his hand! The man who was making his life well nigh a misery to him, right in his hand, and he could have delivered himself of that nuisance. But No, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed....." An anointed man must not do that sort of thing. Now all

that is full of meaning, full of illumination concerning the anointing; the experiences through which we are led to train us here. How can you and I spiritually and morally reign if we have been guilty of revengefulness because some personal desire of ours has been thwarted? We can never come to God's Holy Hill if we have been guilty of that as the Lord's anointed. It is training you see, on the ground of the anointing, in keeping with the anointing. And so we might touch this life at almost any point and see how the Lord is training in relation to the anointing, and see that all that dark period was permitted of the Lord as an essential part of training for the throne. It was connected with the anointed purpose, and in our difficult, dark times (I wish the consciousness of it was always with us, I wish it was as easy to abide in it as to say it) the dark time of suffering, rejection, desertion, ostracism, through which even the anointed are allowed to pass is part of the training in connection with the anointing. It is all related to the testimony of Jesus. David is, as we see, so rightly a type of the Lord Jesus in this. He is anointed, but the anointing did not deliver him from rejection and suffering. It led him into it that he might reign—the sufferings, and glory. Anointed ones do not escape suffering. The anointing means suffering, but the suffering is not the end, it is the way of triumph for in the end: ".....if we suffer, we shall reign." The anointing involves those two things. So the two first things which immediately follow, result from the anointing, are (1) the provocation of hell, and (2) the commencement of training unto the purpose of the anointing.

The Lord make this all very helpful to us and bring us by it to a fuller apprehension of our calling in Christ, the fulness of the testimony.

T. A.-S.

Foundations

READING: *Psalm xi. 1-7 (Note verse 3)*; *1 Cor. iii. 11*; *2 Tim. ii. 19*.

"If the foundations he destroyed, what can the righteous do?" "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." "Howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth....."

In referring to this eleventh Psalm we cannot be sure exactly as to when it was written; that is, as to exactly what the incidents were, or the historic events which gave rise to it; but whenever it was written, it was clearly written in a time of very severe stress, when the circumstances were very difficult, and the Psalmist's position from man's standpoint was a very precarious one, full of peril, and as man judged, full of pending disaster. It was a time when whatever those foundations were literally, the foundations were assailed; the very foundations had become subjected to a bitter assault; and again, from the human standpoint the foundations were destroyed; as man looked at things, the foundations had been destroyed. David was in the vortex of that tumult with which we are not unfamiliar, made up of all external things seeming to prove that the situation was hopeless. Yet inwardly there was something holding which would not give consent to that, simply an unexplained, undefined reality in the heart which in effect said—It is not so. Because of the appearances and all the external evidences which would go to prove that it was so, David was counselled to flee, to abandon the whole situation to save his face, to save his very life; to flee to the mountain, to take refuge in some earthly place of security. A mountain sometimes looks to be a very secure place. It is not always so from the spiritual standpoint, and here is one of those occasions when however substantial a refuge a mountain may appear to be, it is a place of weakness if hiding in it is the result of fear. They advised him to flee to the mountain, to take refuge in the mountain; and David refused the counsel and said: "In Jehovah do I take refuge."

We gather from the Psalm, and the one preceding it, that a wicked one, or wicked men occupied position and power. The tenth psalm contains some half-a-dozen references to the

wicked, the wicked one. Whoever this was, or whoever they were, they occupied a place of great power and were menacing the heritage of God, and striking at the very foundation of God's inheritance. Now in the midst of it all one question arose. It is the only question; and the whole situation is gathered up into this one question: "If the foundations be destroyed what can the righteous do?" That does not mean that David consented to the suggestion that they were destroyed: although there is a marginal rendering which would make this verse a part of the advice and counsel of his fearful friends. The marginal rendering would make it follow on as a statement: "For the foundations are destroyed"; if so, "what can the righteous do?"

Well, if that is the right way to read it it all the more exempts David and shows that he is not involved in it, but if it is a question into which David enters simply as a matter of consideration, for it is perfectly clear that he does not yield to it, it gives us some very valuable basis for a very important consideration. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" The answer, of course, is obvious; there is only one answer to that question: "Nothing." If the foundations are destroyed the righteous can do nothing, the situation is utterly hopeless; then the advice of these men is good advice. Abandon the situation and take some ground of earthly security, give it all up, abandon your vision, you vision is a false one, it offers nothing. Now that is one line along which consideration must be pursued for a little while. The other line is by placing a very strong line underneath the note of interrogation. That is, it is still a matter of question: "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" "If the foundations be destroyed....."; are they after all, in spite of all appearances, are the foundations destroyed? No matter how things seem to be and what men say about things as to the hopelessness of the situation, and as to the great power as well as the treachery of the Evil One, are the foundations destroyed? Is there reason for abandoning the vision? Should we take what men would call a safer course, and

find us some line of greater security in this very precarious situation ?

I am quite sure that those of you who are thinking, and looking with your inner eyes into things as they are to-day, have already caught the meaning of this Psalm, and of this verse. There is undoubtedly a tremendous onslaught from the Evil One upon the foundations ; the foundations of God's heritage are assailed bitterly, fiercely, and treacherously--for you notice in the Psalm the elements of treachery associated with the activity of the Enemy, of the Wicked. He shoots in the dark. He does not come out into the open, and his is not warfare, his is murder. He is hiding himself. He does not give a fair and square chance of battle. He keeps out of the way and shoots in treachery from dark places. And his antagonism, his treachery is directed at the very foundations of the life of the people of God.

Now there are two ways in which we have to look at this question of the destroying of the foundations. In a sense, and in the deepest sense, that is an absolute impossibility. It is impossible to destroy the foundations. The other two passages have been drawn in to support that side of things. "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Can that be destroyed ? Never ! Everything has been allowed to test its power of destruction upon Him, every hammer of Satanic bitterness and treachery has fallen upon that anvil and the anvil has broken the hammer and remains itself without a scar : "Howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth." So that from one standpoint, the true standpoint, the foundations cannot be destroyed.

But there is another standpoint from which this has to be regarded which does amount to a virtual destruction of the foundation, not an actual destruction, but a virtual destruction, it amounts to it in effect. I mean this, that the Enemy is so against the foundations for their destruction, that he is doing everything he can to get the people to put up a superstructure of profession, of a supposed Christian life, of an assumed relationship to God without any foundation at all. And that is a treachery in the train of which will come unspeakable disaster, because all those who do that are bound to come down, they are bound to collapse, and then they will blame God. The Enemy will rush in at once into their minds and say : You put your trust in God ; He has let you

down. In that sense the foundations are destroyed, they are nullified by being kept out. There is a great deal of that going on to-day.

Now it is from those two standpoints that we for a moment have to look at this primary proposition : "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do ?" That means that right at the outset we have to give very special attention to the matter of having God's foundation. That foundation will become impregnable and indestructible once it is established, but it is of importance beyond any other importance for you and for me that we have God's foundation, and that foundation well and truly laid ; the whole situation is entirely hopeless unless that is so.

We are fast entering into the period of this world's history when the foundations of faith are to be subjected to the ultimate test. God's great emphasis to-day is being brought to bear upon the state of His own people. He is centering His attention upon His people. There have been great periods when His whole attention was directed through His people upon the multitudes of unsaved ; they were great days of ingathering through the evangel. There may yet come in the ordering of God's purposes still further emphasis of that kind when again He will reach out in a special way to gather in lost sheep. He is not entirely ignoring that work to-day, and He will not have us ignore it. But anyone who knows the present situation will see that God's main work to-day, for which He is giving Himself, is not for the ingathering of multitudes of unsaved souls ; but you do find that everywhere there is a growing movement of God in stirring the hearts of His own people, deepening the hunger, making manifest weakness and need, and putting Christians everywhere to the test. Are you facing times of spiritual trial and testing ? Are you finding it easier to-day to live the life of the saint than it used to be ? If we are honest in our hearts we will say : No, it is certainly more difficult and our spiritual lives are very rarely out of the fire. We seem constantly to be brought back to the place of testing, and every testing seems to be a deeper one than that which preceded it. The Lord is centering upon His people and the effect of it all is to get down to foundations, and, in a day when God is focussing upon foundations, the Devil is particularly concerned to get people without foundations, and that explains great movements of to-day which have no foundations. We are passing swiftly into a time

of the ultimate test of our foundation. The question for every one of us will be as to really whether we have God's foundation adequately, sufficiently laid as the basis of our faith. We have to see, of course, what those foundations are, or what that foundation is inclusively, but I simply now draw attention to the necessity. Superficiality of spiritual life will not last long; it will go. The winds of God are going to blow and then we shall discover how deep our roots are. Therein then is the need for considering the question of foundations.

Then on the other hand, the other point of view: the foundation being laid, whatever may be the appearances, the circumstances, the human vortex, man's opinion, there is no reason whatever to abandon the vision. It is just there that I want to place my finger for a minute or two, not intending to go into the nature of the foundation at present, but just to point out what is raised by this question.

There is a counsel of despair to-day over spiritual conditions, and David was not exclusive in this sense, one by himself; we all know what that counsel is. I mean that we all know what it is to have the suggestion made to us: "*You are seeking to realise an impossible thing, your standard is an impossible standard: that which you have set up as your goal is impossible. Your vision is the vision of an idealist, but it is altogether impracticable, impossible of realization. Look, look at the havoc that the Enemy has made. Wherever there was that which represented something extra, something fuller, something larger, deeper, greater of Christ, whenever there was that which aimed at the ultimate end of God and went beyond what obtained in its day, the Enemy made an awful mess there, the Enemy assailed and made havoc. History has repeated itself again and again and again in that way, and look at the mess that the Enemy has made on the earth amongst the Lord's people. Look at the situation, the power, the cunning and treachery of the Enemy, and how he is in the place of power, how much he has things his way, how hopeless, how weak you are in the presence of this. Look at the spiritual state of the Lord's people to-day. By far the greater majority of them are without real spiritual hunger, are content with their merely formal religion, and even where there are any who are spiritually hungry and honestly want to go on with God, when they are put to the test they will not pay the price. Somehow or other that hand of tradition, long standing acceptance, that hand of*

a historic system, reaches out just as they are beginning to move out with the Lord, and although they have indicated their desire, their wish, their longing to go on with the Lord, and have really honestly intended to do so, just at the moment when some step is to be taken which will lead them out and lead them on with the Lord, something happens, some subtilty of the Enemy, some treachery of the Adversary, some fear within them at the consequences of their step, and that hand brings them back. You had better abandon your vision, you had better take some lower ground. You had better find some place of greater assurance, some mountain of a more normal and natural course of things. You are aiming too high, the situation is hopeless, abandon it!"

I suppose most of us know something of that counsel from within and from without. The Lord Jesus knew something about it. That was the sum total of His temptation for forty days and forty nights in the wilderness. He had stepped out into a realm which was the highest that this world had ever known, and the Enemy's whole object was to bring Him down—by suggestion, by treachery, by argument—to take a lower level. He would say: Your course is an impossible one: Have more sure ground under your feet than that. He would turn Him aside. The whole question arises in the presence of such arguments: "Are the foundations destroyed?" If they are, well then the counsel is good advice, we had better give it all up; if they are not, then there is no reason for abandoning the vision. Are the foundations destroyed? Let us press that in this practical way. Has God laid a foundation? We may lay many foundations and find that they are no good. The question is: Has God laid a foundation? The Word tells us quite clearly that He has. Does God lay a foundation without intending a superstructure? Surely that would be folly, and who would charge God with folly? Then if God has laid a foundation and His foundation is indestructible, He intends that foundation to be built upon, and intends to have a building upon it. Can God's intention eventually and ultimately be frustrated by the Enemy? No more than His foundation can be destroyed! He will have His object. What is God's foundation? It is Jesus Christ. He is now beyond the reach of all the forces of destruction. What is God's superstructure? It is Christ. Call it by other names if you like; the Church which is His Body, the Company conformed to the image of His

Son ; but whatever you may term it, it is in the intention of God, Christ developed to fulness in the saints. That can never be destroyed. That can never be overthrown. God will have it. If we are thinking of the superstructure as some movement, some organisation, some formulated system of Christian work and enterprise, well, we have a wrong conception of God's superstructure. God's superstructure is saints growing in the image of His Son, and while Christ remains, the purpose of God concerning those who are Christ's remains, and God's purpose can never be defeated. If we have abandoned ourselves to see something on the earth achieved, accomplished successfully, well then we shall come to the place where the counsel will be quite good counsel to let it go, and we shall be very unwise to hold on to it. But if we have abandoned ourselves to presenting every man perfect in Christ, we are not on a hopeless line. That is God's intention, fixed and settled before ever this world with all its changes and its Devil came into being. ".....the works were finished from the foundation of the world." Are you trying to make work for the Lord? Are you trying to increase the Lord's work? Give it up. Enter into the works that have already been finished and you have got a clear way right through.

If you are contemplating some call which the Lord has given you to ministry, let me tell you the secret of getting through, coming out at the other end in triumph, with fruit. Yes, certainly—you may not see it—but you will do so. Start by saying: "Lord, this was all done before the world was; I am coming into the things done and I am working with You in the realisation of the accomplished thing. I am going to enter into the thing that has been done in eternity, in the counsels of God, which relates to this specific ministry, I enter into it by faith; working out from the settled purpose of God in eternity past." And you will come out of that ministry with fruit. God will never send you anywhere by His Holy Spirit, where there is not fruit. You may not see it now, you will later; God knows. He works upon a known accomplishment. He says to an Apostle, leading him into a heathen city of wickedness and pollution: ".....be not afraid.....for I have much people in this city." Not, "I am going to get much people," but "I have much people in this city." Lord, when did You get them? Before ever you came into being, before this world was! That is

the principle of God. The necessity for doing the works of the Lord and for a Spirit-governed and directed life. That is to get right on to the foundation concerning which there need be no argument of despair and abandonment; it is standing upon something solid which cannot be destroyed.

Oh, to have our life founded upon that; our faith for salvation, to have all our service, our ministry founded upon that. Oh, to be delivered from things which being of man, even religiously, will not stand the test; and to be brought into the things which are of God and which will go through all the testing. ".....the firm foundation of God standeth." It cannot be destroyed. To be on that there is no need to give up. There will be times of sore trial and testing when the counselling of our own hearts will suggest a fleeing, abandoning, giving up, but that is the counsel of fear. There is one thing about the counsel of fear you may always bear in mind. Fear never sees *everything*. Fear only sees one thing. Fear only sees the present thing and is blind to all the other factors. Fear, on the part of the spies who first went out into the land, made them see just one thing, the difficulties, and blinded them to the Asset, God. Faith sees all the difficulties and, while faith does not see God perhaps as imminent, it always sees Him as transcendent. Fear is short-sighted. Fear is very limited in its apprehension; and this was a counsel of fear: "Flee.....to your mountain." Why? "Well, look at things; look how things are. Isn't it obvious that you are on a wrong course and the Enemy is just doing as he likes." Fear could say that well enough, but David had another side. It was the side of faith, and he said: "In Jehovah do I take refuge: How say ye to my soul, Flee as bird to your mountain." Faith sees that God's foundation cannot be moved, cannot be destroyed, and whatever the appearances may be, faith looks beyond the appearances, beyond the circumstances, cleaves to the Lord and makes Him the Refuge, and comes through. Some people have suggested that the 11th Psalm was written by David in the day when Saul was pursuing him. I cannot see how that can be because when Saul persecuted David he fled, and here he is saying he will not flee. Others say it was in the day of Absalom's treachery and the advice given to David was to flee. Well, he did flee then, but here he is saying that he will not flee. You have to find some other historic setting for it.

He did not flee, that is the point. Why didn't he flee and abandon that situation, and say: "Yes, you are right, he is making a mess, he has struck a blow at the very foundation of things; I had better find some line of less resistance." Why did he not take that attitude? Simply because the eyes of his heart were fixed upon the Lord and he had no personal interests to serve; no organisation, no society, no movement to which he was so attached that if it were blown to pieces his whole life would go with it. No, it was the Lord. It is a great thing to be with the Lord and to be delivered from lesser things, to be one with the Lord in His purpose. What if all the other goes up in smoke? You were not in that at all, that is not the thing upon which your heart was set. What you were after was not a temporary thing, something on the earth; it was a spiritual and eternal thing and nothing can destroy that.

Now, beloved, you see the issue of this. You and I have got to be founded upon God's objective. The thing which has got to be the thing which determines all our life, all our activity has to be God's end. And what is God's end? Let it be settled once and for all that God's end is not to have something anchored to this earth, even with His Name upon it. Everything anchored to this earth will go with the earth. God's object is to have a spiritual thing in the life of His people; something which relates them to His Son in a growing and increasing way—the increase of Christ. It matters nothing about all the rest. All the merely temporary aspects of the work are of very little importance at all. The thing that matters is that men and women are being perfected in Christ. We are not here to put something down and then try and get men and women to join that, attach themselves to that, —not even a "Testimony," as we might call it. Let us be careful that we start at the right end. We are not here on this earth to set up a teaching, and then try to get people to come into that teaching. If you go to your New Testament you will find people came together because they were in it already. They did not come to join it. The testimony is not something that you join. You are joined by being in the testimony. Do you get that? That is a tremendously important thing in connection with this whole matter which we are now considering. We shall be disappointed, and will have a hard time if we try to get people to adopt something,

take it on, accept it. Let us, in the power of the Holy Spirit, give our witness, let the Lord do the work in our hearts, and when He does His work in our hearts we will cleave to one another. You will have the expression of the Church here on the earth as a result of the work done inside and not in something you have brought together, even in a teaching, a testimony, or a system even called a "Fellowship." Let us be careful in thinking we can join a fellowship. Fellowship is a thing that *is*; it is the result of something inward. Now I gather up all I have said into this law. The objective is to have an inward life in God, and if we are on that line we are on something that can never be destroyed. If your objective is anything else, to have some outward form or order, you are on a line that will be destroyed, it will suffer, it will be broken up. That is why we find so many splittings up in things. Here is a pure thing which has been wrought into a few lives, and because the same thing has been done in that little company they are together in a beautiful oneness, and there they do represent something very much of God; but then others begin to join it, to attach themselves to it, or to accept the teaching. Then another generation comes along and takes up the teaching of that generation, and the thing has not been *done* in those who adhere or succeed, and so you get the carrying on of a teaching, or a tradition, without the inward thing. What happens? Before long the thing is divided, and the divisions are endless. You cannot divide a thing which is *THE* one thing of Christ in each heart; that makes for fellowship, that is indestructible. But if it is anything external merely, historical, traditional, doctrinal, it can be split into as many fragments as there are people in it. The foundation is Jesus Christ; and Jesus Christ in the heart, growing, developing, being fully formed in the saints. That is an indestructible line—Christ as the foundation within us.

I think that we want to be far more concerned with the spiritual growth of one another. Everything must come within that object. The spiritual growth of one another. Every thing else will come that is good and right; any kind of outward expression will be a result of it, but this is the basic thing, our mutual spiritual development, the increase of Christ, and that all hell's activities and treacheries can never destroy. It is God's foundation in us which stands.

T. A.-S.

(To be continued.)

The Bible Study Course

WE have had a tremendous response to the announcement that this course was in contemplation, and some hundreds have enrolled and have received the first set of papers. But we fear that we were not explicit enough and did not give as much detail in our announcement as was necessary. This has had some results which have frightened us. Really, the undertaking of this fresh phase of ministry was to try to meet the need of so many young Christians who, from time to time, have asked us how they should go to work to get a basic knowledge of the Word of God. Of course, there are many correspondence courses of Bible study to which we could have referred such enquirers, but we feel that something more is needed than just a knowledge of the contents of the books of the Bible, or of general Bible outlines. We feel that a spiritual understanding of the Scriptures is necessary if the heart as well as the mind is to be enriched. Well, our response to the "Beginners" has brought enrolment requests and remittances from many life-students of the Word, and from not a few full-blown ministers of the Gospel. Imagine how they feel when they receive papers which represent the A.B.C. of Bible study, (True, one brother who has been the Lord's for a good many years said, on receiving the papers, "Well, if this is the A.B.C. then I do not know the A.B.C. of Bible-study.")

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Although we cannot take up correspondence in connection with the studies, we shall be glad to hear from time to time how you are getting on, and whether you find your studies helpful. Should you decide to discontinue please let us know.

Acknowledgments

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